

Najaf:

A City Blessed By The Tombs Of The Prophets

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When you visit the holy city of Najaf, located 180km south of the capital Baghdad, you will be amazed by the sites you can visit. The most famous mausoleum of the city is that of Imam Ali bin Abi Taleb, in the centre of the city, with its golden dome and gigantic minarets. There are also the tombs of the prophets, saints and the Companions of the Prophet. The most famous include Adam, Noah, Hod and Saleh. The cemetery of Wadi As-Salam is the largest and oldest in the Muslim world. It occupies a large area of the city, attracting hundreds of visitors daily.



The courtyard

جانب من الصحن

The offices of the great religious scholars scattered throughout Najaf have a resemblance to the Vatican. Hundreds of visitors go to receive blessings, answers to religious questions, to get fatwas, or simply to greet the learned men.

The libraries of the city, such as the library in Al-Rawda Al-Haidariya, are unforgettable sights for visitors, not to mention religious science students, who flock by the dozen every day looking for references.

North of the city one finds the "Tarats", or elevated land forming caves, previously used by hermits and ascetics in the 4th century AD. Below the site of Zine El-Abidin you can see a green space near a lake called "The Sea of Najaf". Finally, the city walls, of which only small parts remain, are regarded by the people of Najaf as a monument.

Adam and Noah

God sent Adam and his wife from Heaven down to Earth, when they did not comply with His order not to eat the fruit of a tree: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and enjoy (its good things) as ye wish: but approach not this tree, or ye run ▶



The graveyard around the shrines of Hod and Saleh **المقبرة المحيطة بمقعد النبيين هود وصالح**

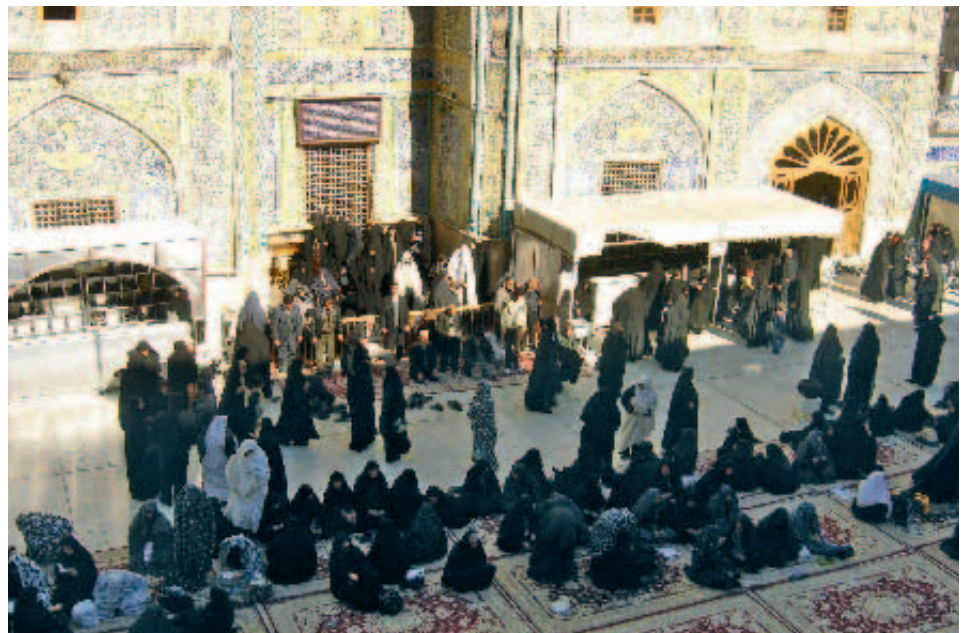


The shrines of Hod and Saleh **قبة مرقد النبيين هود وصالح**

into harm and transgression." Some historians indicated they ended up in India; others argued that they were sent to Arabia. Noah was sent by God to a people who engaged in practices that God hated: obscenity, idolatry, apostasy and drinking wine. They deviated from the path of God so much that they perished in the deluge, while Noah and his followers were saved thanks to the ark he was able to build with his hands. The bubbling of the oven was one of the signs of this flood. According to some accounts, this oven was Kufa, located only 8km of Najaf.

Ibn Battuta described the city of Najaf, during his famous travels in the following terms: "It's a beautiful city, established on a vast solid ground, one of the most beautiful cities in Iraq and whose construction is the strongest." He also said he had seen three graves side by side: the first is of Imam Ali Ibn Talib, the second of Adam and the third of Noah.

The tombs of Adam and Noah are located near that of Imam Ali Ibn Talib. The mausoleum housing these three tombs is surrounded by a wall with five gates: the Northern gate, called Sheikh Al-Tawsi Gate, the Eastern Gate or the Great Gate, called Ali Moussa Ben Ar-Rida Gate, the Muslim Ben Aqeel Gate, the Southern Gate or Al-Qibla Gate, and the Western Gate or Al-Faraj Gate. Within a 12m brick



Prayers in the courtyard

صلاة في الصحن

wall there are various buildings: Al-Khadra (Green), Al-Hussayniya, and Omran Ben Shahin mosques and the library.

This wall has two levels. The ground floor houses a number of flats and the upper level room is used for studies and for the residence of students of religious sciences. Going beyond these doors, there is an open space of 5000 square metres, with a marble floor that preserves a balanced temperature during summer and winter.

After this esplanade, you will enter the hall covering an area of 300 square metres, 40 cm high from the level of the plaza, covered with beautiful green marble. At the end of this hall, there is a walkway with five doors, overlooking the square-shaped mausoleum. It is 13 metres long, surmounted by a dome based on four foundations. In the centre, there is the tomb of Imam Ali and close by the tombs of Adam and Noah. ▶

The mausoleum is made of gold and silver, and is decorated with beautiful Islamic decorations and flowers in bright gold. From the East and West, there are four windows, separated by decorated beams. Above these windows, is a silver plaque, a golden plaque with Koranic verses, and a concave plate which has flower engravings. The mausoleum is crowned by a bouquet of 104 roses in gold on which are engraved the glorious names of God. Ali's holy shrine is distinguished by its fine architecture. The architectural form is such that if the shadow of the sun reaches a point on the plaza, it indicates mid-day prayer. In addition, sunrise is directly over the tomb, in summer and winter.

Tombs of Hod and Saleh

The prophet Hod was sent to the A'ad people who lived in eastern Yemen. He called them to pray to God and warned them they would be punished if they did not praise God. But they did not believe him and made fun of him. They had even accused him of madness for warning them of the eminent punishment. So God sent them a violent tornado, which lasted seven nights and eight days, and only spared those who believed in his message.

Prophet Saleh, was sent to Thamoud to the

people who lived in the region of al-Hajar, between Hijaz and the Sham. He had called upon them to refrain from idolatry and to believe in one God. But they did not follow him and even humiliated him by killing his camel. So God punished them severely by wiping out everybody.

The tombs of Hod and Saleh are in the city's cemetery, some 600 metres away from that of Imam Ali. This cemetery, called Wadi As-Salam, is one of the largest and oldest in the world. According to historians, the first to put wood on the tombs was Sayyid Mohamed Mehdi Bahr ▶



The courtyard

جانب من الصحن



The mausoleums of Hod and Saleh

مرقد النبيين هود وصالح



The courtyard

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The mausoleums of Hod and Saleh
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Al-Uloum. The building of mausoleums followed.

In this shrine, there was a black rock with Kufic writing indicating the graves of Hod and Saleh. It was built inside the shrine so that it would not be stolen. But at the blockade of Najaf by the British in 1918, the tombs of Hod and Saleh were destroyed and it was said that this rock was stolen and smuggled out of Iraq. It has never been found. The Indian Ismaili sect (Al-Buhra) built the shrine in its present form in 1986 and in 2005, it was further developed by a Kuwaiti.

The mausoleum is rectangular and has a single wooden door on the right side of the facade. At the top, there is an iron grille, on which is a sign bearing the names of Hod and Saleh.

The edges of the door are covered with kashani tiles and fine decorative motifs. The front of the mausoleum is covered with marble. At the top of the mausoleum, there is a dome covered by the same kashani, whose top has a metal plate on which is written the word "Allah".

There is a wooden box over the tomb, above which is a silver grid. Near the tomb, there is a small space, where visitors perform prayers.

Najaf is privileged to host holy sites. It has a unique rich Islamic heritage. No wonder it was chosen as the city of Islamic Culture for 2012. ■



The Qibla gate

باب القبلة



Visitors around Imam Ali's Mausoleum

زوار حول قبر الإمام علي