

# FREE ENTRANCE

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Minaret

## Exterior of the Mosque

**Minarets:** There are two minarets each with two balconies. Originally these were covered with lead however following a restoration project at the end of 19th century they were replaced with stone covering. These minarets are tall and slender towers to make the call to prayer. Originally 4 people made the azan (call to prayer) simultaneously towards different directions from the minarets. Today, with the use of current technology, one person stands at the bottom of the minaret and makes the same announcement which was made centuries ago. The muazzin emphasizes the unity of God 5 times a day and invites people to worship with a beautiful melodious voice.

The announcement is always made in Arabic and is roughly translated here:

- **Allah is greatest. (x4)**
- **I bear witness that there is no god except Allah. (x2)**
- **I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. (x2)**
- **Come to prayer. (x2)**
- **Come to success. (x2)**
- **Allah is greatest. (x2)**
- **There is no god except Allah.**

\* Morning call to prayer has one additional sentence which means "Worship is better than sleep". This is a motivational reminder that waking up nearly in the morning to worship God is more beneficial than sleeping.

The call to prayer signals the beginning of a prayer period. For example from noon time (Dhuhr) until afternoon ('Asr) call to prayer there is a period of 2-4 hours (depending on the time of the year) to fulfil prayers. Calculation for the times of prayer was made by professional astronomers and the announcements were made by the muazzins.



Main Gate

## Main Gate

The main gate of the prayer hall is also the visitors entrance. Here there is extra clothing available for mosque visits such as scarves and skirts. Also free brochures about the mosque and Islamic culture can be taken from entrance.

On the main gate the Arabic inscription describes the purpose of the mosque:

**Indeed prayer has been decreed upon believers at specified times. Qur'an 4:103**



## Ablution Facilities

Muslims are required to be physically pure and clean at all times but especially before worship. Therefore they wash commonly used parts of their bodies including the hands, arms up to elbows, faces, and feet. Hair is simply rubbed with a wet hand. This also avoids the dirt to be carried into the prayer hall as well as disturbing smell from feet. The fountains can be seen on the side of the mosque. The ablution facilities for Muslim women are in a covered area for privacy.



## Special Times for the Mosque

Mosques are used regularly for 5 daily prayers throughout the day. Islam is a very social religion and Muslims are encouraged to pray together to keep in touch with the community. Those who cannot attend a mosque due to family or work commitments can also pray at their work place, home or any available and clean space during the period between two calls for prayer.

Mosques are more active every Friday when Muslims are required to attend a congregational prayer at noon time. After prayer, people go back to work so it is not necessarily a holiday.

Other important times include two festival days at the end of Ramadan 'Ramazan Bayrami' and on annual pilgrimage days 'Qurban Bayrami'. People come to the

mosques for congregational prayers on these occasions and glorify and worship God in thousands.

Ramadan is the name of a month in the lunar calendar and it lasts 29 or 30 days. Muslims practice fasting during the day and attend long night prayers. Women, men and children young and old meet and gather in mosques so Ramadan is a very active time for Muslims around the world.

Pilgrimage to Bacca (earlier name of Mecca as mentioned in the Qur'an) and sacrifice are traditions of Prophet Abraham and still practised by the Muslims worldwide. The meat from sacrificed animals is shared with poor people in the community and even internationally.

## Islam: What is it?

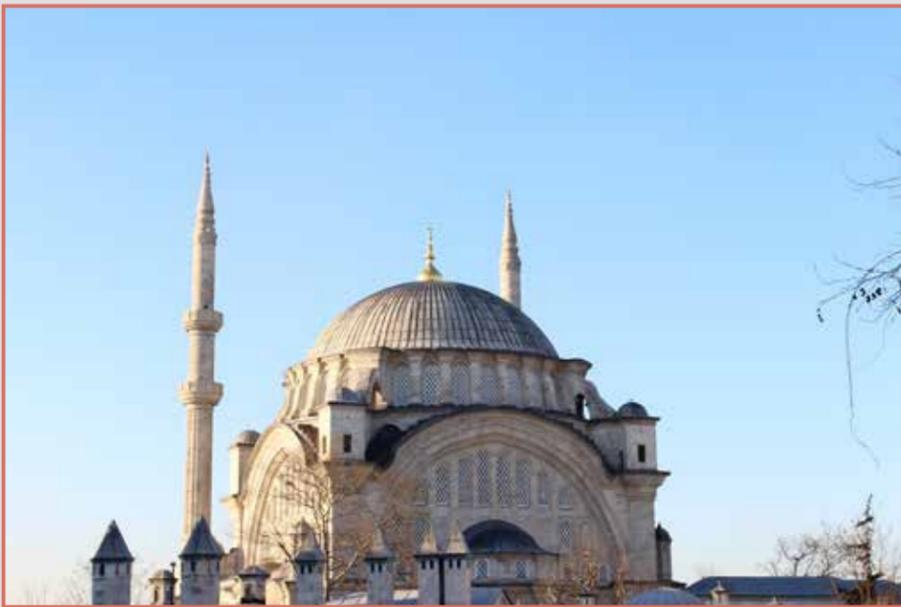
"Islam" is an Arabic word which means peaceful, willing submission to the will and way of God. So Islam is a complete way of life based upon a voluntary relationship between an individual and his Creator. It is the way of life ordained by God which was taught by each of His prophets and messengers such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and finally Muhammad. Islam emphasizes the exclusive worship of the one God who created the entire universe and to whom all creation will eventually return. It refuses to accept any form of creation whatsoever as a deity worthy of worship.

Islam as a religion covers two areas of responsibility: the relation between creation and the Creator (worship or servitude), the relation between individual and the rest of the creation (deeds or actions).

# NURUOSMANIYE MOSQUE



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Signature of the Sultan

## Mosque Complex (Jami')

The mosque was built on a slope and there is a vast empty area under the courtyard, probably intended as a market but was never used.

The courtyard of the mosque is in an innovative shape of horseshoe which was not seen in traditional Turkish mosques. It does not contain a fountain inside and the ablution areas are on the outer wall of the building. These imply that the courtyard had a more decorative purpose than practical.

The marble niche is in a small room covered with a semi-dome on top and extends outside from the wall of the mosque. On the corners of the niche there are two wings as well.

The design of this particular mosque is very different from classical period royal mosques. In Nur-u Osmaniyyah Mosque there is strong influence of Baroque style from Europe which entered into Turkish architecture in 18th century. The semi-circle design of the courtyard, the window and door panes, upper sections in the niches of large gates and the decoration inside have all been made according to Turkish-Baroque artistic style.

What can be observed as one of the classical Turkish arts is the calligraphy. Calligraphy by the best masters of the time can be seen inside the prayer hall and outside in the courtyard.

### Waqf system and its relation to the mosque complex

In the Islamic understanding the good deeds of a person end with death. However if there is a charitable organisation, the good deeds continue as long as that organisation lasts. Therefore the Ottoman Sultans as well as the rich members of the society desired to serve their community with charitable organisations known as "waqf". These could be hospitals, mosques, schools, fountains, or a combination of these in a complex.

The mosque in Ottoman understanding was not just for worship but also for providing social services to the community. Therefore each place of worship would be surrounded by some social facilities. In this particular complex there were the following sections:



Madrasah

- Masjid: The central place of worship famous for its original design
- The elegantly designed Royal Pavilion
- Madrasah: A school
- Imarat: A kitchen with a dining hall
- Turbah: The tombs of the Royal Family
- A fountain
- A huge library of manuscripts



Tomb

According to some experts design of the mosque complex with the place of worship in the centre symbolises Muslim understanding of life as well. Worldly activities revolve around religion and spirituality. People scattered to meet some physical needs gather at certain times and unite for the remembrance and worship of their Creator. It also reminds people daily of the Day of Judgement during which people will be resurrected, gathered and will stand in the presence of God to give account of their deeds on Earth.

The madrasah and the imarat (kitchen/dining hall) lie in the outer courtyard. Baroque style can be seen with less emphasis here. The school follows a square plan with 12 student rooms and a lecture room. The trust deed of the madrasah included a condition which was to teach calligraphy. This duty was performed by some famous calligraphers in a special room reserved for this use.

Adjacent to the school is the imarat where the workers and the students would eat. They would also serve food to those in need.

Between the library and the Royal Pavilion there is a square shaped tomb covered with a dome. It was mainly built as a grave for Shehuvar Sultan, mother of Osman III. With time there were also other members of the royal family buried here.

The courtyard opens to the Grand Bazaar. Here a fountain with stone carvings on marble and brass sections can be seen which is an elegant example of the Turkish Baroque style. The fountains serving drinking water are called "sebil" in Turkish meaning "way" or "path". This refers to an Islamic tradition from early times. When water was difficult to find and transport and people had to fetch water from distances or dig wells, it was usually rich Muslims who would sponsor a water canal project. The water brought then would be distributed to public from these fountains. This good deed was done "fee sebil Allah" literally "in the way of Allah". This tradition still continues today and around Istanbul you can still see some shops with water containers which say "sebil" on top.

### Nuru Osmaniyyah Library

Mahmud I. started building a large library within his mosque complex project. He even ordered some books to be placed in this library. However he died in 1754 and the library as well as the mosque complex was completed by his brother Osman III.

Osman III. achieved a record of his time by placing a great number of books in this library, 5031 at the opening. Some books were later lost from the collection but there were also some donations to the library which makes the current number of books 5048. What is very special about these books is that they are very old and have high artistic value –some were written on vellum from deer. Some of these were later transferred to different museums such as the Topkapi Palace Museum and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts.



Library

## Interior of the Mosque

Inside the mosque there are some common mosque features. These will be briefly explained.

**Mihrab (Niche):** It looks like an elegant cavity in the marble wall and the structure reflects the voice of the imam (pray leader) to the people praying behind. The direction of the mihrab is the 'Kabah' in Mecca which marks the reference point for all Muslims around the world for ritual prayers.

On top of the mihrab there is a verse talking about Prophet Zechariah and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

**Every time Zechariah entered upon her in the prayer chamber (he found with her provision). Qur'an 3:37**



Niche



Niche

**Allah:** On the right hand side of the mihrab there is the word Allah in beautiful Arabic calligraphy. It refers to the creator of the Universe and everything inside. This word acts as a proper name and cannot be made plural or does not have gender forms (masculine or feminine). It is a common assumption that the word "Allah" is only used by Muslims. However Arabic speaking Christians and Jews use the same word to refer to God. In the Arabic Bible on the first page of Genesis it can be seen 17 times.

**Muhammad:** On the left hand side of the mihrab there is the word Muhammad in calligraphy style. Muslims believe in a chain of prophets from Adam until Muhammad (including Abraham, Moses and Jesus). Muhammad was the final member of this chain. Like other prophets he was sent to declare the message of Allah and to act as a role model in his daily life. Today Muslims around the world study his biography to follow his example and decorate mosques with his name also to remember his example.

**Calligraphy:** The original calligraphy in the mosque was made by the most famous calligraphers of the time Rasim Abdulhalim, Muzahhib Ali and Mehmed Rafi Efendi.



Calligraphy

The calligraphy inside contains some verses from the Qur'an, the words Allah and Muhammad as well as names of the four caliphs (Abubakr, Umar, Osman and Ali).

**Minber:** It looks like a tall staircase however it is used as a raised platform to deliver a sermon on congregational prayer days. These are every Friday noon time, the Feast of Ramadan and the Feast of Sacrifice. On these three occasions all healthy Muslims are encouraged to attend the congregation. From this high location the imam can be seen and heard easily by the worshippers inside.



Minber



Royal Pavilion and Entrance to Royal Lodge



Kursi

**Hunkar Mahfili (The Royal Lodge):** Some Muslim rulers in the past were assassinated during prayers and therefore, as a security measure, royal lodges were built with a separate entrance. It enabled the Sultan and leading ministers to pray with the congregation without fear of assassination.

The entrance to this section is from the Royal Pavilion adjacent to the mosque where the Sultan would have meetings, rest and take ablutions. When the call for prayer was made he would walk through the corridors and join the congregation to pray together. Again there is elegant design and decoration in this part of the mosque.

**Kursi (Chair):** It is used to give a talk/lecture by scholars of religion and usually used when there is a high number of people attending the mosque. In this particular mosque it is made from marble and is located under the royal lodge on the left hand side.

**The dome:** The central dome is about 26 meters in diameter. In Turkish Islamic architecture the dome is usually considered a representation of the heavens. The shape (hemisphere) and huge distance between the dome and the floor are two clues which somehow confirm this opinion.

The dome has a diameter of 26 metres and is surrounded by 32 windows. The height is 43.50 metres. On the dome the verse from the Qur'an says:

**Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things.**



Centre of Dome