

One of the five pillars of Islam is Salat, the obligation to pray five times a day once a Muslim has reached puberty. The Adhan, or the call to prayer, is an integral part of the Muslim faith; no-one in Abu Dhabi will find themselves further than a few hundred metres from a mosque, and five times a day the Adhan will be heard from its loudspeakers. The Adhan will be one of the most lyrical, inspiring moments any Muslim can experience; the clearer and more melodious the call, the more powerful the Adhan will be.

A hadith recounts that one day the Prophet's companions were discussing how to gather everyone for prayer. The alternatives discussed included using a bell as Christians do, or the ram's horn employed by some Jewish and other sects of the time; but the Prophet agreed that the best option was to have one person call others to prayer.

This person is the Muezzin and he is selected for his good character as well as his voice and skills. He is not a cleric, however – the leader of the mosque and usually of the community is the Imam, and it is the imam who leads Friday prayers and gives the Friday sermon.

Prayer is performed at dawn, noon, in the afternoon, at sunset and at nightfall. (The Arabic text of the Adhan is similar for all five recitations, with a slight difference in the first prayer of the day which adds the line "prayer is better than sleep".)

Clearly the exact times of the prayers and therefore the calls will vary from day to day and according to the geographical location, so newspapers and other sources helpfully publish the timings ... though there will usually be six or maybe seven times given for the five prayers.

Dawn (Fajr) will be the first time cited, but the second is likely to be Shuruq or sunrise. That's because the dawn prayer can be performed any time between dawn (defined traditionally as the point at which you can distinguish a black thread from a white thread) and sunrise (the moment when the leading edge of the sun appears above the horizon).

The other times will be Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib and Isha. You may also find a time for Zawal, which defines the exact moment when the sun reaches its zenith; Salat cannot be performed at Zawal.

Dhuhr (or Zuhr, or Zohr) can be performed after Zawal and before mid-afternoon – defined as the point when the length of the shadow of an object becomes equal to that of the object itself in addition to the length of the shadow of that object when the sun was at its zenith. For example, if the length of your shadow when the sun is at its zenith is 1m and you are 1.5m tall, the Dhuhr prayer time ends when your shadow is 2.5m long.

On Friday the Dhuhr prayer is replaced by Jumu'ah, usually part of the Dhuhr prayer preceded by a Khutba or sermon and followed by a communal prayer.

Asr extends from mid-afternoon to just before sunset. Maghrib runs from sunset – the point at which the entire disk of the sun has disappeared to nightfall (when the last touch of red has gone in the western horizon). Isha or Isha'a starts at nightfall and runs through to dawn.

The Adhan

Allahu Akbar Allah is Most Great

Allahu Akbar Allah is Most Great

Allahu Akbar :Allah is Most Great

Allahu Akbar :Allah is Most Great

Ash-hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah :I testify that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah

Ash-hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah :I testify that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah

Ash-hadu anna Muhammad-ar- Rasoolullah :I testify that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah

Ash-hadu anna Muhammad-ar-Rasoolullah: I testify that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah

Hayya 'alas-Salah : Come to prayer

Hayya 'alas-Salah : Come to prayer

Hayya 'alal-falah : Come to success

Hayya 'alal-falah : Come to success

Allahu Akbar : Allah is Most Great

Allahu Akbar : Allah is Most Great

La ilaha ill-Allah : There is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah

As-salatu khairum minannaum : Prayer is better than sleep

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If you find this information has changed or have anything useful to add, let us know via editor@AbuDhabiWeek.com and we'll post an update.

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