

Lifestyle

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In Africa's fashion capital, Lagos, 'trad is swag'

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Iraqi boys read a copy of the Quran as they attend a reading class at the Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-jailani mosque in central Baghdad during the Holy Fasting Month of Ramadan. — AFP

Prophet's cloak attracts Ramadan faithful in Istanbul



People look at and offer prayers beside what is believed to be the sacred cloak of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in a mosque in Istanbul. — AFP photos

A long queue of men and women standing in separate lines extends from an Istanbul mosque to see a centuries-old garment pressed down flat inside a glass exhibition case: the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) sacred cloak made of linen, cotton and silk. The Hirka-i Serif (the Noble Cloak) was brought to Istanbul in the seventeenth century, at a time when the Ottoman Empire controlled much of the Islamic world deep into today's Saudi Arabia. Every year, during the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, the cloak is put on special display at the Hirka-i Serif mosque in Istanbul, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors.

"I was here last year. God willing, I will be here next year as long as I am alive," 78-year-old Nimet Sahin said, as caretakers warned visitors selfies were not appropriate. Neziha Polat, 76, said she felt as if she was in Mecca, the holy Islamic city to which all Muslims are required to make a pilgrimage in their lifetimes. "I come here every year and have the same feeling. Let God not diminish this feeling in our heart," she said in tears.

From Yemen to Istanbul

The garment had been entrusted to Uwais Al-Qarni, who went in the seventh century to Medina to see Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but had to return to Yemen due to his mother's illness without seeing the prophet. Impressed by the story, Muhammad gave his cloak via companions to Al-Qarni as a present and he received the garment in Yemen. Al-Qarni had no children and the relic was then preserved by his relatives, Istanbul mufti Hasan Kamil Yilmaz said.

In 1611 Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I brought the holy cloak to Istanbul from Kuasadasi in western Turkey where Al-Qarni's relatives had preserved it. "Since then Hirka-i Serif has been in Istanbul," Yilmaz told AFP. And in 1851, Sultan Abdul Majid built the Hirka-i Serif mosque in the Fatih district with the goal of preserving and exhibiting the cloak. "There are two keys to the cloak-one held by the foundation and the other by the family," he said.

The sacred garment has passed on from one generation to another and its current head keeper is Baris Samir-the 59th generation grandson of the al-Qarni who was first given the garment. "It's a very honourable duty. We are very happy to perform it, and have such a responsibility," Samir told AFP. "It's also a tough job, it is a tough responsibility, morally and financially."

'Spread the goodness'

An old man, wearing an Islamic skullcap and waiting his turn in the queue to see the garment, said he was at peace. "What can be more precious than this in life?" he asked. "I have seen this before I die." Zehra, 48, said it was a great happiness for the Muslims even to lay eyes on the Prophet's cloak. "I believe that brings us closer to him." Every year, over one million believers come to see the sacred garment from all over the world.

"People from Siberia to Africa, from America to Far East come and see the Prophet's cloak," Samir said. "The number of visitors usually exceeds one million. We receive many visitors especially on the Laylat Al-Qadr (Night of Destiny marking when the Koran was revealed) because the cloak can be seen till the morning."

Loukman Hakim, 49, a businessman from Malaysia, was among the visitors, along with a group of around 20 Malaysians. "Of course it makes us closer to Prophet Muhammad," Hakim told AFP outside the mosque after seeing the sacred cloak. "It makes us happy, it makes us feel that we have to do something to be with him meaning to say that we have to spread the love, spread the teaching, spread all the goodness that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had brought into this humankind," he added. Samir said the cloak's display was a meeting point between the Prophet and the believers. "We are happy to bring them together." — AFP



Bizarre News

Millionaire scratch card winner mistook winnings for pint of milk

A pensioner, who won £1 million on a scratch card, thought he had won a pint of milk. Bill Bett, from Markinch in Fife, Scotland, scratched off the numbers on his Monopoly Millionaire card, but believed his prize which read '1 mil' was a milk freebie, according to BBC News. Mr Bett insisted his shopkeeper had to drill it into him that he had in fact won the top prize and was now a millionaire. He said: "When I saw the amount it didn't really click at first. On the card it reads 1MIL and I thought what does this mean - I've won a pint of milk? I went back into the shop and asked them to check it. They confirmed that I had won and that I'd have to call the Lottery line. I couldn't believe it but I actually remained quite calm."

Family offer staggering sum for live-in nanny at haunted house

A family is offering a staggering £50,000 for a live-in nanny to look after their kids at their haunted home. The homeowners from Scotland are desperate for a minder to live at their home for four nights a week to look after two children aged five and seven after five previous nannies quit their role due to reported supernatural activity at the home, including strange incidents including noises, broken glass and moving furniture. The job advert on childcare.co.uk reads: "We haven't personally experienced any supernatural happenings, as they have been reported only while we've been out of the house, but we're happy to pay above the asking rate and feel it's important to be as up-front as possible to find the right person."

Ravensbourne grad scoops once in a lifetime Travel guru role with comparethemarket.com

A Ravensbourne University graduate will jet across the globe after he won comparethemarket.com's Travel Advisor competition. Joe Thompson, who studied Digital Photography, has secured the once in a lifetime opportunity and will capture his experiences on video, after receiving thousands of votes. Joe is delighted with his forthcoming venture, and said: "I was extremely happy to get the news that I have won the Compare The Market competition. Not only will it be an amazing trip, it will set up my career as a travel and landscape photographer after Uni and improve my portfolio immensely." In addition, he's also secured £5,000 for his Student Union. "The £5,000 will be put to good use at my universities SU, who have done a fantastic job in looking after us during our time at Ravensbourne. Thanks to Compare the Market for this amazing opportunity!"

Father's Day cards show shift in dads role in modern home

Archive analysis of Father's Day cards by Clintons, the national gift and card retailer, shows the extent to which dads' roles have shifted in the modern home. Depictions of dads as aloof, pipe-smoking, newspaper-reading, besuited men 'enthroned' by the fireplace have disappeared from all cards, with the exception of parody cards, and have been replaced by casually-dressed, soft-in-the-middle, sofa-dwelling figures, often likened to Darth Vader and far more likely to be comically inept. Clintons looked at thousands of depictions of dads on Father's Day cards since the 1950s. The research found the following:

1. Dads appear to have put on 10-15 kilos in body weight.
2. Dads have dressed down.
3. Dads' leisure time preferences have shifted from reading the paper in slippers on an armchair to barbecuing or watching the football on the sofa with a drink.
4. Dads have a much stronger emotional connection with their kids are often the subject of affectionate jokes.(PBUH)