

Mosques were not always constructed as buildings. A mosque can simply be defined on the ground with a neat line of stones to mark the shape including the **mihrah** to give the direction to Mecca, the **qibla**. There are several of these mosques to be found particularly around Jebel Hafeet and on the gravel plains around Al Ain. The area within the stones was cleared to provide a clean surface for the **rak'ah** (prostrations) of the faithful.

SHEIKH ZAYED'S PALACE

The palace of His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, which is located on the western edge of the Al Ain oasis, has been restored and is now a museum. It is open to visitors and guided tours are provided.

The palace is a complex of courtyards, arranged to provide the privacy required for the Sheikh's family whilst also allowing selected access for people to meet the Sheikh for business in his position as ruler's representative. The palace was Sheikh Zayed's base in Al Ain from 1937 until 1966.

The external courtyards have a number of different **majlis** meeting rooms. An original majlis has a palm trunk ceiling whilst a later majlis block of two storeys had rooms for receiving local dignitaries on the ground floor and a similar room above for receiving foreigners. The latter has western style furniture rather than the floor cushions which were more traditional and which were provided downstairs. A room for the coffee maker is near to hand, an essential ingredient of local hospitality.

An inner courtyard contains the main kitchen and storeroom for the complex plus the family rooms. The Sheikh's private quarters are within a further courtyard to provide the privacy required.