

# Muslim Marriages in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina tend to marry in their early twenties and they tend to marry quickly, so traditional wedding ceremonies reflect the desire for an effortless transition from life as an individual to life as one half of a couple in love.

Known as Bosniaks, Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are both eager to get engaged and respectful of what that promise means. When a young man asks a young woman to marry him, there is no going back because in less than a week they will be husband and wife.

All weddings in Bosnia and Herzegovina take place the Saturday after the couple gets engaged. There's no waiting, no planning, no dress rehearsals - they get engaged and, in less than seven days, they begin their new lives together.

In the days leading up to the wedding, the bride will find a suitable dress and her family will begin preparing the wedding feast. That feast is often held at a restaurant, but, if none is available, it may be held in her family's home, in a garden, or park as well. The groom will look for a suit and start searching for a home for the couple to move into once they're married. Often they'll end up living with the groom's family for some time but, either way, the wedding usually marks the end of the bride's time in her family home.

When the day of the wedding arrives, separate celebrations for the groom's and bride's families will be held at both their homes. A large breakfast will be served, after which both the groom and bride begin getting ready. This often means the bride will head out to a beauty salon with her female relatives for the full treatment. For the groom it means a celebratory drink with his family and the gathering of a token dowry.

Sometime in the afternoon the groom will arrive at the bride's house. Generally there's a re-enactment of traditional celebrations such as him browsing all the women of the household and choosing his bride-to-be to marry, presenting a dowry to the family, accepting theirs, and carrying his new fiance away.

The bride a groom, best man, maid of honor, and a small group of friends will then head to City Hall while the bride's and groom's families get the wedding feast ready. Generally it is the groom's family that serves as hosts of the feast.

At City Hall the couple will wait and line, generally with half a dozen or more other couples waiting to tie the knot. Once inside City Hall and before the municipal official they'll spend about 15 minutes going through the motions, signing the paperwork, and finally legalizing their status as husband and wife.

Once they leave City Hall the real fun begins. They'll climb into a decorated car and lean out the windows waving an Islamic flag and cheering to passers-by on the street - many of whom will throw money to the couple as they pass by. They'll be followed by all those who attended the wedding ceremony at City Hall, all of whom are blowing their car horns and blasting folk music - so it's quite a noisy parade.

When they arrive at the reception, everyone will line up to kiss the bride. This the way the groom's family welcomes her as one of their own and once she's done being kissed by everyone she'll sit and be served a drink by one of her new, female in-laws.

Then the party begins and continues well into the night - music, dancing, and celebration enjoyed by all.

Additionally, many couples opt to have a religious ceremony as well, which are not legally recognized but perfectly acceptable in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this case they'll go the mosque most frequented by the groom's family and have a religious ceremony before an Imam - a Muslim spiritual leader. These religious ceremonies are extremely rare (most Bosniaks will go their entire lives without ever having attended one) and are often held the day before or the day after the legal, civil wedding.

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