

Aerial images reveal virus emptying famed sites

6 March 2020



This combination of pictures created on March 5, 2020 using handout images released on March 5, 2020 by Maxar Technologies shows a crowd at Mecca's Grand Mosque and the Kaaba on February 14, 2020 (top) and a much smaller group of visitors on March 3, 2020, a day before fears over the novel coronavirus led to the suspension of the "umrah" pilgrimage. (Satellite image Maxar Technologies/AFP/File)

Empty public squares, a ghostly train station and deserted holy sites—a series of striking satellite images have revealed the impact of the coronavirus epidemic on some of the world's busiest spaces.

The [aerial photographs](#), released by Colorado-based space technology firm Maxar, show normally bustling spots from Mecca to Beijing thinned of people.

One image shows a handful of pilgrims circling the granite Kaaba at Mecca's Grand Mosque—a sacred site usually thronged with worshippers from every

corner of the Muslim world.

Saudi Arabian authorities have suspended the year-round "umrah" pilgrimage to Islam's holiest place, in a bid to stop the spread of the virus which has killed more than 3,000 people worldwide.

An image above the Hazrat Masumeh Shrine in Qom shows one of Iran's most hallowed places virtually empty as its famed golden dome shimmers in the sunlight.

Streets and courtyards around the shrine are similarly vacant.

Photos above Wuhan, China—the epicentre of the global outbreak—show dozens of trains parked up at the city's deserted Dongdamen Station.

With the city under lockdown and virtually cut off from the outside world since January 23, the usually bustling [station](#) has been transformed into a make-shift depot.

Elsewhere, Tiananmen square lives up to its name as the Gate of Heavenly Peace, with only a couple of dozen cars passing by and no pedestrians to be seen.



This combination of pictures created on March 5, 2020 using handout satellite images released on March 5, 2020 by Maxar Technologies shows people in the courtyard of Hazrat Masumeh Shrine in Qom, Iran on September 25, 2019 (top) and a nearly empty courtyard on March 1, 2020, during the coronavirus outbreak. (Satellite image Maxar Technologies/AFP/File)

on February 25, 2020, with trains parked in the station, during the novel coronavirus outbreak. (Satellite image Maxar Technologies/AFP/File)



This combination of pictures created on March 5, 2020 using handout images released on March 5, 2020 by Maxar Technologies shows pedestrians and cars in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China, on February 21, 2019 (top) and an almost empty square on February 11, 2020, during the novel coronavirus outbreak. (Satellite image Maxar Technologies/AFP/File)



This combination of pictures created on March 5, 2020 using handout images released on March 5, 2020 by Maxar Technologies shows Wuhan Dongdamen Train Station in Wuhan, China, on October 17, 2019 (top) and

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