

Hajj Guide and Packing List Hajj Assistance Services

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This is an information package including an extensive packing list prepared by a Hajji who went to Hajj in 2001 and 2006 with HAS. Although this guideline can be used for all Hajjis, special emphasis and references have been made for those flying out of Toronto, and to women. This is a guideline only by one Hajji with advice to future Hajjis.

InshAllah you will be travelling for Hajj this year. As you prepare for Hajj remember you will be embarking on a journey visiting the grave of our Holy Prophet. You will be walking where Prophet Ibrahim has walked. You will circle around the birthplace of Imam Ali A.S. Do not perform Hajj as a series of empty rituals - understand and enjoy your Hajj. For me, the best way to do this is to be prepared and equipped with knowledge and not be overcome by the difference in behaviour, temperature, and culture of this new land.

My dad, Inayat Daya, has been going for Hajj every year since I was five. I won't tell you how old I am, but I am married now with 2 kids. I went for my first Hajj after graduating from university when I started my first full-time job. Hajj became wajib on me then, and I know that once Hajj becomes wajib on you, even if you can't go in the future because of financial, health, or other reasons, Hajj stays wajib on you even if you die. When I went for Hajj my dad told me 'Hajj is like a picnic.' I went for Hajj. Hajj is not like a picnic. Yes there is food, yes the weather is warm, yes there are some bugs, but other than that, Hajj is no picnic. I was born in Canada and had traveled as far as England before going for Hajj. I had never been for ziyarat or even Umrah. I had never seen an Eastern toilet before, or never understood why different cultures didn't understand how to stand in a line, and I would rather eat pizza than biryani. I know I would have gotten more out of my Hajj experience had I gone in with different expectations; had I been more prepared for this lifetime adventure. So I decided to write this guide to help others. Hajj is a once in a lifetime experience and I have found those who are the most prepared are not worrying about when to wear the Eham and when not to, but are concentrating on the spirituality and enlightenment because they know all the technicalities and rules regarding Hajj and have prepared for them.

This paper should be combined with other books on philosophy, other personal journeys, and definitely other books on the practices of Hajj. This is a simple guide to help with expectations of Hajj.

Things you need to provide to your group leader before Hajj

Before your journey to Hajj, there are several forms, and items you will need to provide to your group leader. Be prepared by having these things ready in advance, especially a valid passport.

- Application form – each year the HAS creates a one page document asking for personal details (date of birth, address, emergency contact person) that each traveler should complete and submit to your group leader. If you don't have the application form, ask your group leader to email it to you. There is also a liability section that needs to be signed.
- Valid passport for at least 6 months from the date of Hajj with 5 blank pages – You will need to photocopy the page with your picture and personal information. Please provide your actual passport and 2 photocopies of the page with your personal information and picture.
- 8 photographs of each traveler (ladies in hijab) – these do not need to be passport photos. You can visit photo booths in your local mall and pay about \$4 for 4 photos. You can also go to Wal-Mart or Superstore and get their photo package and just use the small wallet photos. Photos need to be in colour with a white background as per the visa regulations. These photographs will be used on your visa application and for your nametag which must be worn at all times.
- Vaccination book (certificate) with your meningitis vaccine. The actual vaccine needed is Meningitis (ACYW-135) 0.5mL. Don't forget to have a doctor stamp this book under the vaccination with their name and address. You will also need to write the following, "H1N1 0.5mL" in your immunization book. The H1N1 does not need to be signed by a doctor but should be on the same page as your Meningitis vaccine. Please bring 1 copy of the front page and 1 copy of the page with the Meningitis and H1N1 vaccination recorded. You do not need to submit the original document.

- Saudi Hajj Visa Application form completed and signed (original and 1 copy). This document changes yearly so you may have to wait until Saudi releases the new form for the year you are traveling. The new form is usually released after the month of Ramadhan.
- Syrian Visa Application form completed and signed (original and 1 copy). This document changes yearly so you may have to wait until Syria releases the new form for the year you are traveling.
- Marriage certificate - Ladies traveling with their husbands or other 'Mahram' need proper proof of relationship to the Mahram. You will need to submit 1 copy of your marriage certificate (original not needed this year). If a lady is traveling with her father or son, a full birth certificate (you will need to visit your local City Hall for this and pay a small fee) is required which shows the name of the parent and child on the same form. A copy of this certificate is needed, not the original. Speak to your group leader before you purchase this certificate.
- Full payment less any deposit payable to your group leader. This payment is required in US funds (as a draft or cheque). Further details will be provided.

Things to do before you leave for Hajj

- ◆ **Books to read** - Read everything you can get your hands on about Hajj. I suggest starting with Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi's brief book on Hajj called *Hajj - The Pilgrimage to Mecca*. This will help familiarize yourself with the different terms and required rituals of Hajj. You may also want to read Dr. Ali Shariati's book entitled *Hajj*. This book may be available on the internet by visiting the Al-Islam.org website or by going directly to the following link <http://www.al-islam.org/Hajj/shariati/> Another interesting book is entitled *The Hajj - A Personal Journey* by Br. Mujtaba Datoo. For those that do the taqlid of Ayatollah Sistani, I urge you to read a copy of his *Hajj Manasek* book with detailed rulings to all your Hajj related questions. There are also several online lectures about Hajj which you can find from a quick Google search.
- ◆ **Ask others for advice** - Talk to everyone you know who has been to Hajj about their experiences. A good question to ask them is, "If you were going to Hajj this year, what would you do differently?" Also, "What tips or suggestions do you have that helped you on your journey?" You'll find a lot of innovative individuals with interesting tips. In my Hajj group one of the sisters brought powdered Gatorade to share with everyone. She would break out the Gatorade on long bus rides and keep our energy levels up. She would use a piece of paper and make a funnel with it and pour the powder directly into our 1L bottles of water. This is a great way to earn thawab and help other Hajji's.
- ◆ **Will** - Make sure you have written a will or have updated your will recently. Ensure that there is someone who knows where your will is who will not be traveling with you. One of the sisters prepared a video tape for her two sons when she left for Hajj. This can help make the separation with your child a little easier.
- ◆ **Explain Hajj to your kids** - I remember when my father had gone for his first Hajj I was only 5 years old. When he came back from Hajj my mother, sister and I were anxiously waiting at the airport. My father came off the plane in a white kanzou (long white dress), a full beard, and a shaved head. I was horrified and refused to go near him. Things have changed since then; some of the children of the Hajji's had written farewell cards to their parents, some kids had watched videos on Hajj, other kids would ask their fathers on the phone, "Have you shaved your head yet daddy?" This kind of awareness for kids helps them during their separation from their parent(s).
- ◆ **Repay all debts** - Certain debts, i.e. car loans and mortgages are not usually considered debts. Check with your local Alim for advice. Think about any debts you may have (even as small as \$5) and check with friends and family to ensure debts you may not remember are paid off. If you owe someone money and can't find them before you leave, donate the money to a local charity but do inform them when you return. You can also donate a sum of money under the category 'Rudha Madalim' as a precautionary fund in case you may have overcharged someone, or owe someone money but forgot to repay them, etc. The Islamic Humanitarian Service accepts this fund visit www.al-haqq.com. Think of things you may have borrowed from friends or relatives like books or CDs, make sure you try to return all things borrowed before your journey. Debts can also take the form of promises and other commitments. Take time and reflect on promises made in the past.
- ◆ **Make peace with everyone** - Ask for forgiveness and end all grudges you may have held. You may want to take a trip to Kabrastan (graveyard) to forgive others who may have passed away, and pray for your own forgiveness by them.

- ◆ **Clothes** - Try out the clothes you plan to wear during your Hajj. Pray in them and make sure they are comfortable and easy to move in. For women, if you plan to get your Ehram made before your trip, make sure it is ready to go well before Hajj in case there are any problems.
- ◆ **Walk** - One of the best tips I can give you is to go for long walks. Try walking in the clothes and shoes (slippers) you are going to wear in Hajj. Throw on a filled backpack or a bag to see if you are comfortable and can handle the weight. There is a lot of walking in Hajj and you don't want to be holding others up. In addition, you will need to 'break-in' your slippers and make sure they don't leave blisters or are easily broken. I also found that some Hajji's (women in particular) packed more than they could carry (this was a mistake I made in my first Hajj). It's easy to walk in running shoes with no luggage. In Hajj, however, you will be walking in heat, wearing slippers, and carrying luggage (maybe even a sleeping bag in some cities). Pack light, especially in Arafat and Munna, because you will have to carry your own luggage. There is no door to door service in places like Munna so be prepared!
- ◆ **Laundry** - Wash all the clothes you are taking in unscented detergent (or at least your Ehram and underclothes for your Ehram). There are lots of environmentally friendly or natural detergents that are scent free these days. I found the detergent available in the laundry facility in Madina and Mecca all contained a heavy scent. Your Ehram should not be scented at all! You may want to pack your Ehram separately from your other clothes and other toiletries (i.e. in a plastic bag) so it does not pick up the scent from things like your soap. If this does happen, air out your Ehram on the clothesline in Mecca or Madina.
- ◆ **Make lists** - even if you are normally not a list person, make a list of things you are going to pack at the last minute i.e. things you use everyday. It is a long way till you can get to a store so don't forget essentials like your toothbrush. Keep a piece of paper beside your bed and in the car, as you remember something to bring write it down.
- ◆ **Learn the proper way to perform Ghusl, Wudhoo and Salaat.** A lot of us learned from Madressah and have never perfected our technique. Sit with a knowledgeable person and perform your Wudhoo and Salaat in front of them. Read material to refresh your memory on the meanings of Salaat etc. The correct technique is key to the acceptance of your Salaat and Hajj. I also noticed a lot of women performed Wudhoo and Salaat like men (i.e. women are supposed to place their forearms on the ground during sajdah but men are not) therefore, make sure you learn the proper positions for Salaat from people of the same gender and take note of the differences.
- ◆ **Control your temper and bug killing** - When in Ehram you are not allowed to kill any insects or swear. If this is something you are not used to, start practicing now.
- ◆ **Toilets** - You may have to use an Eastern toilet. English toilets are now available in Arafat, Munna, and in most airports, however, there is no guarantee that they will be clean. Also there may be long line ups. The best thing to do is PRACTICE to use an Eastern toilet. Try squatting by standing in an upright position and bend your knees as far down as possible. Stay in this position for approximately 5 minutes. Do this on a regular basis.
- ◆ **Talbiya** - Before you leave practice saying "Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik, Labbaik laa shareeka laka labbaik..."
- ◆ **Photocopy or compile books, duas, surahs etc**, which you read regularly. It is easier to pack, and to travel with a few pages rather than an entire book. A list of recommended duas and surah's are provided in the packing list. In addition, if your photocopies are confiscated when entering Saudi Arabia it's not as bad as losing the dua book your late grandmother gave you. Qur'ans in Arabic are widely available for use in almost all mosques. You will also receive a free Qur'an in the airport on your way home from Saudi. You can also download these items, along with majalises to an ipod or MP3 player.
- ◆ **Pray for me** - Before you go for Hajj, the most common phrase you will hear is, 'pray for me'. Make a list of people who have asked you to pray for them. If you know someone who is trying to have a baby, who has a sickness, or who is trying to get married don't forget them in your prayers. Hajj is one of the best times to pray for others for Allah SWT to accept their duas. It is best to have a list of people so you don't forget anyone. Don't forget to add my name to the list of people to pray for! You should also pray for all the people who are volunteering their time or donating money to help you perform your Hajj. There are people who donate all sorts of things from guidebooks to nametags. Consider offering to help future Hajjis by donating funds or more importantly, your time.

- ◆ **3 wishes** - I've heard the first time you see the Holy Kaaba you should make 3 wishes. Think about what you will wish for from home. My sister told me that your first wish should be for Allah SWT to forgive all of your sins. She also said your second wish should be that Allah accepts your Hajj. I guess this leaves you with only one wish left ! Of course you can make many *hajaat* on your journey throughout your Hajj as well.
- ◆ **Write a letter to yourself** - Discuss your feelings, your fears, your excitement etc. You will never have this opportunity again (your first Hajj). It is a very emotional and special time. Write about things you hope to accomplish in Hajj and the way you want to be when you return. When you hit the three *Jamaraat* (Shaitan) in Munna, each *Jamaraat* should represent something you want to overcome in your own life - your personal Shaitan. Think about what you need to change in your life, i.e. pride, priorities of money vs. family, greed, vanity, etc. Think of things you want Allah's help with like patience, concentration in *salaat*, improved *taqwa*. It is nice to look back at where you were in your life before Hajj, and reflect on how your journey changed your life. It is also good idea to actually start practicing these things before you go for Hajj. For example, we may know we gossip a lot, but still continue until the last day before our trip, and wait for Hajj to change us. Allah SWT will help you but you need to take the first step, Hajj can only help as much as you allow it to, meaning you may need to start making internal changes before you depart on this journey.
- ◆ **Journal** - Purchase a book to become your own 'Hajj Journal.' You may want to include your letter in your journal. Update your journal throughout your trip and after you return. Use it as an autograph book for fellow Hajji's to share friendly sayings and thoughts with you after your journey. You can also add phone numbers and email addresses of people you meet during your journey.
- ◆ **Sukri** - One of the interesting traditions has been the giving of money or presents before someone departs for Hajj. Friends and relatives may come by your house to bid you farewell and give you a gift (usually cash, although everyone brought me food!). Take this gift and as a sign of your appreciation, remember them in your *duas*, add them to your 'pray for me list,' and perhaps even purchase a gift for them from Hajj. There are opportunities for you to go shopping for gifts in both Madina and Mecca but beware, you did not perform Hajj to go shopping!
- ◆ **Haircuts**
Men – it is encouraged for men to let their hair grow so there is enough hair for *taqsir/halq* in Hajj which means no haircuts for about two month before your Hajj trip. I believe the book states you should try to get your haircut before Eid-ul-Fitr and then hold off until your *halq* but do check the Hajj *Manasek* book by Ayatollah Sestani to verify this.
- ◆ **Get immunized** - When I went to Hajj in 2001 and 2006 every Hujjaj needed Meningitis ONLY. Now you need to also take the H1N1 flu shot 0.5mL. Here is a list of possible immunizations you can take, and a description of how to take them;

Meningitis (0.5mL) – This is a mandatory requirement for you Hajj visa. It is a simple shot which you get in your arm leaving your arm sore for a day. “Travellers arriving in Saudi Arabia for the Umrah and the Hajj seasons are required to show proof of vaccination against meningococcal meningitis with the quadrivalent vaccine (serogroups A, C, Y and W135).” http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/info/meningitis_e.htm Your doctor needs to stamp your immunization book and sign it to prove you received this vaccine. Please ensure you get the right dosage (0.5mL).

H1N1 (0.5mL) – This vaccine is required to enter Saudi Arabia, however this does not need to be signed or stamped by a doctor. On the page where your Meningitis vaccine is, please write H1N1 0.5mL and the doctor should stamp the Meningitis shot on that same page. Do you actually have to have to flu shot to travel? You decide, but you must write H1N1 0.5mL in your vaccination book on the same page as Meningitis.

Cholera - I took an oral dosage (a two pack) but there is also an injection available. This is not required to obtain a visa, but may be a nice precautionary vaccine to take. There is an option to take this orally in two doses.

Typhoid - I took oral typhoid which is a pill taken the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th day. These capsules need to be refrigerated. I had to wait 8 hours between my Cholera and Typhoid. I recommend waiting at least a day before you begin the Typhoid vaccine. This is not required to obtain a visa, but may be a nice precautionary vaccine to take.

Hepatitis A and B - Although not required to obtain your visa, I decided to take the Hep A&B vaccine for precaution. I went to the doctor for a prescription, picked up the needle from the pharmacy, and took the needle to the doctor again to be injected. This vaccine is not 100% effective. Patients need to be injected once, than 1 month later (to be 99% immune) and then again 6 months later to be 100% immune for life. Therefore, if you feel like getting vaccinated against Hepatitis A & B start you vaccines a month and a half before your journey, take the second injection one month after your first injection, and you still have 1/2 a month before you depart for Hajj. The travel clinic can also administer this vaccine.

Tetanus – Ensure your tetanus shots are up to date – needed every 10 years in Canada. This shot is free from your doctor and can usually be administered on the spot.

Immunization book - you will need to obtain a yellow immunization book from your doctor or travel centre which will be sent with your visa application. Bring your immunization book to Hajj!

Main concerns before going to Hajj

- ◆ **Temperature** –People are always concerned about the heat when they go for Hajj. Usually, people stay indoors during the hot afternoon sun and go to pray at the haram in the evenings and in the morning (sometimes through the night). The temperatures in Syria are much cooler, especially in the night and at fajr. Average temperatures in Celsius for the month of November from various internet searches:

	Maximum	Minimum	Mean
Damascus	20	4	12
Mecca	33 / 35	22	27
Madina	30	17	

- ◆ **Crowds** – Alhamdulillah your group leaders have been going for Hajj before some of you were even born. They know the peak times for performing the wajaabats and they will advise you on when to do your tawafs and when to hit the shaitain. Also, most pilgrims follow the sunni school of thought so their timings are often very strict for things like hitting the shaitan. Those who are doing the taqlid of Ayatollah Sistani are able to perform some wajaabats with more flexibility in timing. Your group leader will therefore advise you on these timings so you can take advantage of these non-peak times with a lot less rush.
- ◆ **Bathrooms** – You will likely have to use an Eastern toilet sometime during your Hajj. Most houses or hotels have both Eastern and Western toilets or just Western ones. In Arafat and Munna there may only be one Western toilet if at all. Also in areas outside of the hotel like in the haram, there may be a lot of water on the floor in the washroom area. Be prepared. Wearing a skirt under a chador instead of pants makes it easier to lift both items in these situations.
- ◆ **Accommodations** – Many people are concerned about the accommodations in Munna. Yes you will be staying in a tent, but it is not like the ones you pitch on a campsite. They are big white tents that accommodate a large number of people. The HAS usually upgrades their basic tents to have private tents with mattresses, blankets, pillows, air conditioning, etc. You won't have a private ensuite, but there are bathroom stalls close by.
- ◆ **Preparation** – You want to make the most out of your Hajj, afterall this can be a once in a lifetime opportunity. In some ways the preparations for Hajj could be compared to preparing for a wedding. There's a lot of things to buy, to learn, to read, etc. and it seems like the days of the actual wedding/Hajj just fly by. So much money and time spent for a few days. Before you know it you will be on the plane returning home. In addition to this guide, I urge you to read as much as you can about the history of Islam, the rules for Hajj, and about the life of the Prophet and Imams you will be visiting. For information on the ziyarats in Syria and other ziyarats please visit the website www.Hajj.org and visit 'resources' and then 'download' the HACNA booklet.

The following is a rough guide as to what the Hajj 2010 trip will include. All of the following information is subject to change and moon sighting. Shaded boxes are days you will be in Ehram.

Date	Islamic Date	Location	What will you be doing / wearing?
Nov 4	27 Zilqad	Toronto to London to Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be flying for many hours, wear comfortable clothes
Nov 5-6	28 Zilqad	Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ziyarat of Bibi Zainab and Bibi Sakina Other outside ziyarats
Nov 7	1 Zilhajj	Syria to Madina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveling from Damascus to Madina
Nov 8-10	2 Zilhajj - 4 Zilhajj	Madina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the Prophets Mosque, outside Ziyarat, Jannatul Baqi
Nov 11	5 Zilhajj	Madina/ Mecca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveling by bus (late afternoon) Stop at Masjid-e-Shajara to wear your Ehram (Meeqat) Perform 1st tawaf and saee – Umrah Tamattu Ehram is removed once tawaf and saee are complete
Nov 12-13	6-7 Zilhajj	Mecca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the haram, read, reflect, perform sunnat tawafs One day to perform outside ziyarats
Nov 14	8 Zilhajj	Mecca to Arafat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travelling late afternoon Ehram is worn to travel to Arafat and will not be removed until Qurbani is done (10th ZilHajj) The 9th night of ZilHajj is the most important night of your Hajj – spend the night performing amaal in Arafat
Nov 15	9 Zilhajj	Arafat to Muzdalifa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the most important day during your Hajj trip Perform Amaal of Arafat in Ehram during the day Leave Arafat after Maghrib and go to Muzdalifah The women will most likely travel to Muzdalifah with a few male volunteers by bus. They will stop briefly in Muzdalifah to pick up 70 stones to be used when hitting the Jamarat. After collecting their stones, the women will travel to Munna to hit the Jamarat. The women may be spending the night in Muzdalifah depending on the Saudi gov't ruling The men will be spending this night in Muzdalifah under the open skies with their sleeping bags.
Nov 16	10 Zilhajj	Muzdalifa/ Muna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men travel to Munna after sunrise Men stone one Jamaarat seven times (women do this night before) Qurbani, Halaq (shave head) Taqsir (cut piece of hair) Remove Ehram once Qurbani is done – normally done during the day – you will not be in Ehram for the remainder of your journey Eid Mubarak!
Nov 17	11 Zilhajj	Munna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hitting all three Jamaarat seven times each We recommend hitting the Jamaraat as soon as possible in the morning and then traveling to our house in Mecca to shower, change your clothes, rest, and do your second wajib tawaf and Sae after Zohr Namaaz. You can also try and do your third wajib tawaf as well. You must return to Munna before midnight!
Nov 18	12 Zilhajj	Munna to Mecca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hitting all three Jamaarat seven times each Depart for Mecca after Zohr For those who have not completed their second and third tawaf and Sae this is a good time to complete this wajibat.
Nov 19-23	13-17 Zilhajj	Mecca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second and Third Tawaf and Sae – last chance to complete these wajibats
Nov 24	18 Zilhajj	Mecca, Jeddah, Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveling to Sham
Nov 25-26	19-20 Zilhajj	Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ziyarats in Sham
Nov 27	21 Zilhajj	Syria to London to Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveling to Toronto

Below is an extensive packing list with suggestions on when to use certain items. This is just a guideline as packing these items is not mandatory! Each Hujjaj is different with various needs. **There is a summary of packing items on the last page of this guide.**

What to pack and wear - Plane ride from Toronto to London to Syria

What to wear:

- **One comfortable Islamic top** – for women try a long sleeve loose top or a chador/abaya
- **One pair of comfortable pants** - with elastic or drawstring or something comfortable (i.e. yoga pants)
- **One sweatshirt or sweater or jacket** – You may need this in Syria and Madina in the morning
- **Socks** - it will be cold in Canada, Syria and in Madina in the morning and overnight. You may also consider bringing travel socks/slippers which you can walk around the plane in
- **Comfortable shoes or slippers with straps** – there is a section on shoes below with further details
- **Rubber Slippers** - your feet will swell. It's best if you can take your shoes off during the flight. You will want to walk around during the flight to circulate your blood. You will also need to wear your slippers when you visit the washroom to do Wudhoo. You may also need these slippers in your hotel room to visit the washroom.

What to pack as hand luggage

- **Salaat items** - you have a long journey ahead of you and will be praying your daily salaat in airports, on planes, and other places. Often travel musallahs will be distributed by the organizers.
- **Medicine** - any medication you may be on
- **Food or snacks** - especially if you dislike plane food
- **Toiletries** - Toothbrush and toothpaste, face soap, cream, washroom water bottle, toilet paper etc. There are strict guidelines on taking liquids on the plane. Check the website of your airline for details.
- **Books** to read on the plane - a good book I suggest is *Hajj a Personal Journey* by Mujtaba Datoo. This is a book that recounts Br. Mujtaba's journey.
- **Gum** - For take off and landing and on the return trip home
- **Camera** – I suggest packing extra memory cards and batteries just in case
- **Extra clothes** – if you have room it is nice to pack some extra clothes just in case your luggage doesn't make it

Remember - You have to carry your hand luggage and it needs to be able to fit in the luggage compartments on the plane. You do not want to have to repack your luggage at the airport if your hand luggage does not meet plane regulations. Backpacks work well as hand luggage since you will need your hands free for your heavier luggage. You can also take small wheeled suitcases. Your hand luggage bag will likely be the bag used for your trip to Arafat/Munna. Do not take any cutlery knives, scissors, nail clippers, swiss army knives, etc, which could be deemed dangerous by airport authorities in your hand luggage.

What to wear in Syria

Temperatures in Syria are quite colder than in Mecca/Madina. In Syria it is best to dress in layers such as long pants and tops for men with a light jacket. Women generally wear chadors with a coloured hijab with layers inside (light weight pants, long sleeve tops, t-shirts, jogging pants, etc.) Both men and women wear sweatshirts, sweaters, coats, etc. as an extra layer over clothing. You may want to bring thin gloves and a warm hat (especially for men when they return to Syria after shaving their heads. Within the zari of Bibi Zainab it can get quite warm with a lot of people present during salaat times. Chadors and hijabs can be quite inexpensive in Syria with prices ranging from around \$20 for a chador and under \$5 for hijabs. There are shops right near the hotel so you can buy items soon after arriving. The carpets in the Jamaat Salaat hall of Bibi Zainab are dusty. It is better to take your own travel musallah to use to pray while in that hall.

What to wear in Hajj - Mecca/Madina/Arafat/Muzdalifa/Munna

Non-Ehram:

The temperature in Saudi is much hotter than in Syria. Most people spend their days inside and their evenings, nights and mornings going to the haram/mosque. You may find Madina to be a bit cooler than Mecca but ultimately both places are hot! Most women in our group continued to wear a black chador with a coloured hijab in Saudi. Some wore dresses, kaftans, kurta salwars, or even kanzous. Men can wear lightweight pants and tops or kanzous

Ehram:

Men – You are able to purchase an Ehram (two pieces of white towel like material) and a money belt in Madina. A money belt can only be used with the niyyat of safeguarding money, NOT holding up the lower piece of ehram. You will probably need more than one Ehram (1 ½ if possible) in case one of your pieces gets dirty or

najis. When traveling to Arafat, I suggest bringing an extra Eham piece. There are many varieties of Eham materials from thick towels to thin towels. Based on the experience of the men in our group, try out your Eham bottom piece first before purchasing to make sure it fits well and is secure. Sometimes the towel material can be very long and thick and this can be difficult to roll around your waist. Sometimes the tassles or strings on the Eham can get dragged or najis in the bathroom. You may want to avoid Eham with tassles or see if you can remove them ahead of time.

Women - Women's Eham can really be any Islamic outfit. It is highly recommended that the outfit be white. I recommend taking one Eham in your suitcase and packing one in your travel companion's bag just in case your luggage doesn't make it. I have seen Eham be long white cotton dresses, salwar kurta (long top with long sleeves and pants), shortened men's kanzu top with white pajama, or any other variation. Here are some suggestions for how many and what type of Eham to bring:

- **2 white thin cotton pajamas** - White cotton skirts can also be used under Eham for when it is hot. White pajamas can be purchased in Saudi for a few dollars each. Skirts make it easier to go to the bathroom as the whole skirt can be lifted up. There are occasions where the bathroom floor may be very wet, so skirts come in handy in this instance.
- **1 large white hijab with elastic** - this hijab is more like your traditional 'namaaz chador'. It is usually quite long and can go past your knees once worn. Therefore, even if your top is a little see through, you should be okay once your hijab is on. Practice wearing this hijab as the elastic may be too tight or too loose and cause headaches. I opted to wear an oversized white hijab instead of a large elastic hijab as I found the elastic uncomfortable. Oversized white hijabs in cotton that cover your chin can be purchased in Syria.
- **2 tops for Eham and other days** - This top should be long (either to your ankles or well below the knee) and have long sleeves. You can either put elastic in the sleeves so the sleeves don't ride up, or just make sure they are tight enough to not expose your arms. You can also buy white sleeves to wear inside your eham in case the arms ride up. You will want to be able to still do wudhoo in this outfit.
- **White sleeves** - you may need white sleeves to wear in case your wrists and arms show in your Eham.
- **White socks** - Women who do taqlid of Ayatollah Sistani, are required to wear socks as part of hijab and in Eham.

You can wash your Eham after wearing it in Mecca in unscented detergent and re-use the same Eham for Arafat. Remember to label all the pieces of your Eham since it can be confusing to figure out which white pajamas or white hijabs are yours. You do not have to wear 'white' underwear while in Eham but it is recommended.

Additional items to pack

Footware

- **Slippers** - flip flops / thong slippers / chumples - You will need an inexpensive pair of light rubber slippers. These are slippers you can wear in the shower, washroom, to get from the washroom to your room, etc. Do not expect to wear these on your long journeys, for that you need a better quality pair. Try Old Navy for a light pair. You will be able to purchase slippers from the Madina street vendors if you lose or break your slippers.
- **Slippers** (or shoes) - Good Pair - Find a good quality and comfortable pair of slippers ideally with straps that you can wear with socks and without. Make sure they are easy to take on and off since you will be taking them on and off throughout your trip especially during the outside ziyarat trips. These slippers or shoes should fit in your shoe bag, and should be light enough that you can carry them during tawaf. Practice walking in them for long distances before you take them for Hajj. Avoid bringing slippers which have real leather or nubuck on them. Try brands such as Nike, Adidas, Ryder, Merrell, Reebok, Cougar, Wind River etc. Having a pair that are closed in the back (they don't flip flop) is important for when hitting the Jamaraat in Munna so that someone doesn't step on the back of your shoes and break them. Women should find shoes they can wear socks with as well.
- **Slipper bag** - bring along a small strong bag to carry your slippers when doing tawaf. The best bags I have seen have a strap long enough that they can go over your body with your shoes at waist height. Ideally, your bag will have a zipper to prevent things from falling out or getting stolen, and enough room for dua books, your washroom supplies, and your slippers. Throw in a sturdy plastic bag to keep your shoes away from your other belongings in your bag. Practice carrying around your shoes in this bag and make sure it is comfortable as you will be using this bag every time you go into a mosque and you will be doing your tawaf carrying this bag. My bag was bright orange (it was on sale) but it actually worked well so I could easily find it in a rush and it did not get confused with anyone else's. Plus you could spot me from the rooftops in Mecca doing tawaf.

Clothes

- **Undergarments** which you can pack in small travel bags so it stays together and are not searched individually
- **Socks** Bring a combination of thin white socks for Saudi and thick coloured socks to wear with your dark clothes in Syria. Your white socks will get dirty but if you buy an inexpensive multipack you can always dispose of these socks when they start looking brown. Thick socks will be useful for those cold mornings in Madina and throughout Syria as the floors can be cold. Some women also wore nylon socks that were not see through. According to Ayatollah Sistani, women are required to wear socks as part of their hijab. Men cannot wear socks when in Eham
- **Nightclothes i.e. T-Shirts / Nightshirts** - for sleeping and to wear inside chadors for women
- **3 thin cotton pajama bottoms** to wear inside kanzous, dresses, chadors etc.
- **Pants** – This could be cotton pants or track pants – you'll need these warmer pants for Syria
- **Winter Gloves** – you may need thin winter gloves in Syria available at Wal-Mart for under a dollar

Men Only

- **Winter hat (for men)** – you may need a light winter hat in Syria. This can be purchased in Syria or taken from Canada. This is especially important if you are shaving your head during Hajj.
- **Other clothes for men** - Please be respectful with the clothes you bring and try to bring longer loose tops and loose pants. Nothing skin tight! Try to avoid tops with graphics or words that might be offensive – let's leave our French Connection UK shirts at home!

Women Only

- **Female undergarments** - Bring lots of undergarments. Cotton or sports bras work well. You can wash these in the sink or send to a laundry facility in Madina and Mecca.
- **Hijabs** – you can wear cotton white hijabs or nice coloured hijabs, whatever works for you. They also have one and two piece cotton hijabs that are quick and easy to wear. Hijabs can be purchased in Syria or Saudi for way less than you buy them for in North America.
- **Black Chador / Abaya (2)** – Long black dress with long sleeves – This is a great non-see-through dress which can be thrown on as you rush for morning salaah. You're tired and don't have time to change so just throw on a chador over your night clothes and you're off. This can be purchased in Syria in shops right outside the hotel. The cost for these chadors is around \$20 and they can be altered on the spot. I found it best to get chadors that you put over your head (not the ones with full buttons), this way no one could see what colour I wore inside my chador. Also check to see how wide the arms are since you don't want them riding up all the time (you can buy sleeves to wear inside your chador if this happens).
- **Sleeves**– These are long nylon, polyester, or cotton sock like items to cover your arms up to your wrists. You can usually buy these in Syria but may want to bring one pair just in case. If you find sleeves make you feel extra hot, try using loose black hair elastics on your wrists over your chador. This works for some chadors to prevent them from riding back, and when you want to do wudhoo, the elastic helps to keep your sleeves at your elbows. Cotton sleeves may also be available in Syria.
- **Cotton skirt (slip)** – to wear inside chadors, kanzous or dresses as an alternate to pants. I found it much easier to use the washroom (especially the eastern ones) wearing a skirt instead of pants. This way the pants would not get najis from all the water on the floor of the bathroom.
- **Hijab ribbon or Canadian flag** - you will be receiving a red ribbon or flag with a safety pin attached to it for all women to wear during your journey. It is very important that you wear this ribbon on the crown of your head when instructed to by your group leader, so they can easily spot members of our Hajj group. Remember to move your ribbon every time you change your hijab.
- **Cotton tank tops** - to be worn inside a kanzou, dress or chador
- **Pills** – Start your pills early (months in advance) to try to regulate your cycle. Coincide your pill taking with your Hajj trip so you will not be menstruating during your three week trip. If need be you can take your pills straight through without a break while in Saudi. If your pills don't work as planned, your female volunteer will have alternatives.
- **Feminine hygiene products** - even though you will be taking birth control pills, please bring supplies (heavy, medium and light protection) just in case.

Linens

- **1 flat sheet** – Generally twin fitted sheets are provided with mattresses and blankets through your Hajj trip. This additional sheet comes in handy to cover yourself when you sleep or in case a sheet is not provided. You can also use this with your sleeping bag. I used a sheet in Munna with my sleeping bag for my first Hajj (I slept on top of sleeping bag and used my sheet as a cover). In some areas mattresses may not be provided such as in Munna and Arafat.

- **1 coloured bath towel** - the thin kind like a beach towel – The thinner the better so it takes up less room and can dry quickly as you travel from city to city. It is nice to have a unique towel (not just a plain towel so it does not get mixed up in the laundry area). Tip - sew an elastic loop in the middle of the large end of the towel. This piece of elastic shaped like a loop will be used to hang your towel from the hooks in the washroom or in your room. This prevents towels from falling to the ground.
- **1 pillowcase** - I used a pillowcase to cover the pillows that were given in Madina and Mecca. Empty pillow cases are a great thing to bring along to stuff with clothes and use as a pillow in Arafat/Munna (just in case pillows are not provided). They also can be used in your suitcase to separate your Eham from your scented toiletries, or your dirty and clean clothes.
- **1 small face cloth** - This came in handy when traveling to Arafat/Munna. Most people do not shower when in Eham but if you wash your face with unscented soap you can use this. This smaller towel was less weight, took up less space, and dried fast.
- **Sleeping Bags** - In Arafat and Munna mattresses may be provided, just in case they aren't you should bring your sleeping bag. This also comes in handy in Muzdalifa when the men (and in some years the women as well) sleep under the stars. Be prepared to carry your sleeping bag or come up with an innovative way to attach your sleeping bag to a backpack or your hand luggage (using belts or bungee cords). Your sleeping bag should be lightweight and easy to carry. You can also use your sleeping bag on top of your mattress in Madina and Mecca.
- **Travel Pillow** – this is a luxury item if you have room and are willing to carry it around. Get a small pillow (preferably inflatable) to be used on bus rides, plane rides, in Arafat/Munna etc. I purchased an inflatable travel pillow for around \$5 from Zellers and it came with a free eye cover and earplugs.

Toiletries

- **Disinfecting wipes, baby wipes or wet naps** - used to wipe surfaces or hands, make sure these are alcohol free
- **Unscented Deodorant** - Unscented products are needed while in Eham so you might as well just use the same unscented deodorant for your whole trip. You can find unscented deodorant at most stores usually each brand has one sensitive skin product that is unscented, for example Dove Unscented for Sensitive skin
- **Lip Protection** - Lip balm with sun protection is best, i.e. with an SPF of 15.
- **Unscented Liquid Soap/ Body Wash** for showers in Eham. There are only a few showers which you will be taking with unscented products therefore you do not need a lot of this item. Consider transferring a regular sized bottle of body wash into a smaller travel sized bottle and sharing the regular sized bottle with other family members or friends going for Hajj. You can use this body wash on your hair as well. I was recommended to use Oil of Olay's Sensitive Skin unscented body wash. For my second Hajj I found a knock off brand at a much lower price. I used an unscented body wash from Price Chopper and it worked just fine for less than ½ the cost! There are a lot of organic or natural skin care products as well that come in unscented varieties.
- **Soap** – For showers where you are allowed to use scent – you can bring your normal soap/body wash. I recommend cutting a bar of soap into 2 pieces and wrapping the pieces individually in saran wrap. This way if you forget your soap or if it falls into the toilet you always have a back up. Initial soap bars are available in most hotels in Mecca and Medina
- **Scented Shampoo** – Bring a small bottle of your regular shampoo to use on non-Eham days. I recommend getting a two-in-one (shampoo + conditioner) to reduce the number of bottles you need to pack and the conditioner will help when your hair is all tangled from being tied up and sweaty. Again you can transfer this item into a few small plastic travel bottles to lighten your load. Alternatively, you can just use travel sized toiletries for your trip and avoid transferring into bottles. Remember, these are scented which means that you cannot use them in the state of eham.
- **Small plastic travel bottles** – instead of carrying your full bottle of body wash and shampoo, I recommend bringing small travel bottles that can be purchased at Zellers or the Dollar store and filling these bottles (label them accordingly).
- **Vaseline** - Men may find this useful when in Eham to prevent the grazing of the inner thigh. Another Hajji recommended using Cortisone Cream for itchiness, rash, or other skin irritations and also for men in eham with the inner thigh grazing.
- **Hair ties** - Carry some in your money pouch and hand luggage for emergencies
- **Face Cream** - your skin will get dry with the hot climate and pollution. I recommend an unscented face cream with an SPF built in. Try Neutrogena's Intensified Day Moisture with an SPF 15 - can be purchased at Wal-Mart in the cosmetics section, pump bottle. If you choose an unscented product, you can use it while in Eham as well.
- **Hand Soap** in a small squeeze bottle - you can also purchase a hand sanitizer which does not require water but make sure it does not contain alcohol (most do)

- **Nail clipper** / pair of small scissors- take a small nail clipper with you when going for your wajib tawaf's. You will need to cut one of your nails after you finish saee (walking between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa). You will also need to cut your nails during your Hajj trip.
- **Toothpaste and a travel toothbrush** - remember to pack these in your hand luggage on the plane
- **Empty plastic bags** - I found bringing empty plastic bags folded carefully so they take up minimal space was a great idea. You need these for garbage's in your room, to separate wet towels from the rest of your clothes, and to separate your Eham from your scented powders and soaps. It is also a good idea to bring some good quality plastic bags to separate your shoes from your other belongings in your shoe bag.
- **Washroom water bottle** - you should carry one bottle in your hand luggage or purse, and keep another just in case in your suitcase. Bottles get misplaced, forgotten, or fall into the deep dark hole. The bottle should be small enough that it fits in your pocket or small purse. Keep your bottle filled at all times just in case water is not available. There are water hoses in most toilets if you don't have a water bottle.
- **Waterproof bag** - when going for a shower it is a good idea to put your shampoo, soap, etc, in a waterproof bag with a string. The bag can hang from the back of the shower door since there may not be shelves in the shower area. You can also use a waterproof bag to hold your toilet paper, washroom water bottle and disinfecting wipes and carry it when visiting the washroom. You can purchase a bag from Wal-Mart, or the Dollar store. Sometimes these bags also contain empty plastic refillable bottles.
- **Toilet Paper** - Initially hotel rooms provide toilet paper, but if you run out, you can purchase some at local stores in Saudi Arabia. You will definitely need your toilet paper in public washrooms (i.e. in the airport) and in Arafat and Munna. I also brought a roll of paper towels to use just in case. Start saving half finished toilet rolls from now so you will not have such a bulky roll to carry when traveling. You can buy this as well at the stores in Saudi so please do not bring a lot.
- **Comb** - Just bring the basics. Hajj is not a fashion show!
- **Packs of travel tissues** - you can buy these from Mecca as well. It is always nice to carry a pack with you at all times in case of sickness, the emotions you may experience when visiting sites, and tissue can be used as a mohr or turba to do sajdah on. You can find these at the Dollar store.
- **Extra pair of glasses** - bring an old pair of glasses in case you break your current pair. You can also use these glasses when hitting the Jamarat in Munna and during tawaf
- **Disposable contacts** - if you prefer wearing contacts than bring disposable contacts and your contact solution. Remember - when in Eham you cannot look in a mirror so if you decide to use your contacts be prepared to put them on before you are in Eham or without using a mirror. During your stay you will be sleeping at odd times, in buses, in the middle of the day, sometimes at night, etc. It is important to remember to remove your contact lenses when you are sleeping. You may opt to wear glasses just to prevent the inconvenience of taking out your lenses all the time.
- **Spray bottle** - this was something many people had used in my second Hajj. Many people took a small spray bottle with them in their handbag/shoe bag and used this to perform wudhoo. There are rules with how you use a spray bottle correctly for wudhoo. The spray bottle is also very handy to use when walking in Munna to and from the Jamarat since it can be very hot. I saw a set of 3 bottles for \$1 at the Dollar store. One was a spray bottle, the other was a pump. Try Shoppers Drug Mart as well.
- **Safety pins** - 2 large pins to secure your money bag to your top inside your clothes. Bring extra small pins for hijabs and to pin up any hems which may come loose

Items for use in Arafat/Munna/Muzdalifa

- **Stone bag** - you will need a small bag to collect 70 stones while in Muzdalifa. It is helpful if this bag has a drawstring to close and can be carried around your wrist. It needs to be strong enough to carry 70 stones and not rip. When actually hitting the Jamarat, I would carry 10 stones in my hand and keep another 10 stones in my stone bag in my pocket. (The stone bag will most likely be provided)
- **Flashlight with batteries** - a tiny handheld flashlight used to pick up stones in Muzdalifa
- **Small bag for Arafat** - You will need a small bag which you can carry your belongings in for Arafat / Munna. In the bag you will need an extra Eham set, unscented soap, your flashlight, stone bag, mandatory medication, snacks, sleeping bag and other necessities (try using a backpack and strap your sleeping bag to your backpack). PACK LIGHT you may need to carry your belongings for a long distance if the busses cannot drop you right in front of your tent (valet parking doesn't exist in Hajj!).

Medicine

- **Cough Drops or lozenges**- you'll need these in your hand luggage when departing from Mecca for Syria. Almost everyone was coughing on the bus or plane ride home!
- **Cold / Cough medication** - again pack this in your hand luggage for your ride home
- **Gravol** - if you get nauseous on long bus rides or plane rides
- **Band Aids** - a few band aids and ointment for cuts

- **Dextrose Tablets** - Dextrosol can be purchased at Wal-Mart or your local pharmacy. They are an instant source of sugar and come in handy between tawaf and saee. They are small white cubes with a chalky taste to them and are sold in packs like Halls. You can also get flavoured tablets.
- **Vitamin C** - Vitamin C tablets – these come in a variety like the orange tablets that fizz in water, or the starburst like candies/chews etc. Check out Walmart and Costco to see the selection.
- **Imodium** - Bringing some sort of diarrhea medicine is always a good idea in Hajj. Don't rely on the medicine solely, check the food you eat to make sure it is cooked thoroughly and be wary of unclean eating establishments.
- **CYPROFLAX** - This medication can be provided as a prescription by your doctor. It is great for stomach problems, diarrhea, etc. There is a course that is for three days of a higher dosage. You may want to bring more than one course of this medicine just in case. Other alternatives include **ZITHROMAX**.
- **Antibiotics** - Talk to your doctor about getting a set of antibiotics especially if you have a drug plan.
- **Tylenol, Aspirin, Advil** - Bring whatever pain medication you would normally take in Canada.

Remember, there is a qualified doctor with most medication in Hajj. You can almost always find what you are looking for in case you run out of something. Plus pharmacies in Saudi carry a lot medication.

Books/Duas

- **Duas / Surahs** - Bring photocopies of surahs and duas that you wish to recite. Examples include Dua Kumail, Surah Yaseen, Dua Nudbah, Dua Tawassul, Joshne Kabir, Dua Saba, and Hadith-e-Kisa. These may be provided by the HAS before departure in English, Arabic and Transliteration. If you do bring any papers, even copies of Duas, be sure to keep them in a safe, hidden place in your bag. During bag checks Saudi government officials may discard any papers they feel could be propaganda. Nowadays they x-ray your bag and only some bags are searched. The little green mifatana jinna book is one the gov't has been known to toss in the garbage. I would also recommend bringing information on how to pray Namaaz-e-Shab (Salaat-ul-Lail). Qurans are readily available in the Madina mosque and you will receive one on your journey home (they have them in English as well if you request it).
- **Hajj books** - bring books you want to refer to or read on the plane. I recommend reading all books and info before leaving for Hajj and just using these books as a refresher.
- **The guide book compiled by the Hajj Assistance Committee** - You will need this spiral bound book (which may be bound in an organizer) on a constant basis when entering mosques, during Ziyarat tours, during tawaf, etc. It is a good idea to tab and label the pages so it is easy to find the page you are looking for when in a hurry.
- **Niyyat cards** - I have prepared a few cue cards with the niyyats needed throughout Hajj. This makes it a quick option to know what has to be recited. These will be distributed before you leave for Hajj inshAllah.
- **MP3 Player / ipod** -MP3 players can be used to listen to duas, surahs, lectures etc. and to record lectures. Many people used these instead of paper copies of duas.

Other items

- **Suitcase** - Your suitcase should not be too large that you are unable to carry it. I recommend getting a suitcase with wheels so you can strap your hand luggage on you and pull your suitcase behind you. Note, there are new size and weight limitations by the airlines I think each suitcase has to be less than 23kg.
- **Sunglasses** - buy cheap ones you are not afraid to lose or ruin. I have been told that sunglasses are not allowed in Ehram – you may want to check with your Alim before putting these on and having to pay a kafara!
- **Detergent samples** - I brought some powdered detergent in a ziplock bag (double bagged) to wash my undergarments. You can use the handsoap provided or send them to the dry cleaners, but I preferred hand washing them in unscented detergent.
- **Eye cover and earplugs** - There is no such thing as 'uninterrupted' sleep in Hajj. Either people will be talking while you are trying to sleep, the door will keep opening allowing the light to come in, people will be turning the light on trying to find things, a name will be called over the loudspeaker, etc. Having an eye cover and earplugs can help you get a somewhat sound sleep if you are a light sleeper.
- **Face mask** - If you are not used to the heavy exhaust fumes from the vehicles in Saudi, it is a good idea to bring along a face mask (like surgeons use). Carry it with you and use it when exhaust fumes become unbearable (I used it when visiting public washrooms also and when people were smoking around me). Saudi does not have emission testing like we have in Canada causing severe pollution by all vehicles. When you leave Saudi and everyone is coughing on the plane just think of it as your bodies' way of removing the pollution you've inhaled from surrounding vehicles. This is not clinically proven to prevent inhaling pollution it is a particulate dust mask only. You can buy these in Saudi as well.
- **Travel alarm clock** - battery operated which can be placed by your bed
- **Coloured ribbons for suitcase/tags** - As we travel from city to city, bags will need to be shuttled to our destination as well. Make sure you know what your bag looks like and use coloured material strips tied to

your handles, so you can quickly pick out your bags from the lot. Make sure your bags are properly identified with tags of your name, address, and phone number both inside and outside your bag. Be original with the kind of ribbons used.

- **Food** - I recommend you bring a few (not a whole suitcase) of snacks to eat during our long bus and plane journeys. You may want to consider snacks that are easy to carry, lightweight, and things you can share. For example, granola bars, chevros, ghatia, cup-a-soup, Gatorade powder...etc. There will be food provided by the HAS throughout your journey. Mecca and Madina also have large supermarkets such as 'Bin Dawud' which sell western snacks. There are also many places to eat out in Madina and Mecca i.e. KFC, McDonald's, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Kudu (my favourite, think of me when you have pancakes and McCain orange juice). Bottled water will be provided throughout your trip - never leave home without water! Plenty of snacks such as cookies, cakes, dates, fruits, etc and hot tea are available in Arafat, Muzdalifah, and Mina. If you decide to carry your own snacks, just bear in mind that there will be a lot of walking which means you would have to carry it all the way with your other luggage (sleeping bags, extra ehram, dua books, etc.) It is always nice to try out new food such as baklava, date cookies etc. Such foods are very rich in providing energy. Although we would hope all food is halal according to our shariah in Syria and Saudi Arabia, the HAS cannot guarantee this, especially at Western chain restaurants.
- **Camera (digital or disposable)** - You are not allowed to take pictures in the haram in Madina or Mecca and your bag will likely be checked when entering the haram. You are allowed to use your camera on the Ziyarat tour or to take shots of you and your new Hajj friends through our journey. The memories will last forever and you can look through your album and it's like you're in Hajj again. Bring additional small memory cards for your digital camera in case you lose one.
- **7 Beads on a string** - It is a handy idea to have a string on a key chain with seven small beads. This can be used when performing tawaf and saee so you don't lose count of which tawaf you are on (generally provided by group leader)
- **Moneybag** - This can be purchased from Zellers and most travel/luggage stores. It is a small cotton bag with two zippers and a long adjustable strap. Mine cost around \$10. I used to carry this inside my chador or top and would safety pin the actual cloth from the money bag to my shirt. See tips for more details.
- **Pens** - carry a pen with you during your journey in your moneybag
- **Money** - I advise you to bring US or Canadian currency in hundred dollar bills. You will be able to convert Canadian, US, and British Pounds to Saudi Riyals in Madina and Mecca or to Syrian Pounds in our hotel in Syria. I do not recommend bringing traveler's cheques as the ID you will need to cash them (your passport) will be taken from you at the beginning of your journey. It is easier to convert US currency as opposed to Canadian currency during your trip. Please also bring US\$1 bills for luggage carts at the airport in Damascus and you can use them if you'd like to give to the poor (discretely).
- **Ticket** - do not lose this! Keep it in a safe place in your room
- **Passport** - another important item not to lose. You will have to turn your passport in to your group leader at the beginning of your journey. Do not be alarmed, they know what they are doing. Passports are an extremely important part of your identification. You must ensure your passport is valid for 6 months after the day you are traveling to Hajj. Ladies do not need to be in hijab in their passport photo. Keep a photocopy of your passport, birth certificate, marriage certificate, and credit cards in your suitcase and at home in Toronto just in case.
- **Immunization Card** - Make sure this goes to Hajj with you also. You may need to show this to government officials upon your arrival in Madina. Make sure it is up to date containing all the necessary shots for Hajj. Keep this in a safe place - perhaps with your ticket.
- **Watch** - Don't forget to take a watch, as you will be disoriented as to what time it is. Night becomes day and day becomes night in Hajj. You also need a watch to keep track of when you need to take your medication. You can always bring an inexpensive watch that is easy to remove for Wudhoo.
- **Leather ID Band** - you will be given a leather band by the Saudi government to be worn at all times during your Hajj trip. Do not take it in the shower as it is not the best quality and you may lose it or it may break if it is handled improperly (the numbers can also fade). Keep this in your money bag if the strap breaks. This is your new ID tag for the Saudi government. It is a tool they use to identify you if you get lost or in any trouble in Saudi.
- **ID name tag** - you will be given an ID Card on a string to wear AT ALL TIMES by your group leader. This card has your photo and passport info on it. Ladies must be in hijab in this photo. Behind the ID card are the emergency phone numbers for our houses in Mecca and Madina along with a map. If you are lost or need to explain to a cab driver how to get home, use this card. You may want to keep some emergency cab fare/phone fare behind this card.
- **Cell phones** - If you have an international cell phone, your group leader may be able to sell you a SIM card so you can still use your phone in Saudi. Men and women are on different floors for most of your stay in Saudi, therefore having a way to communicate with your spouse/child/parent makes it a bit easier. This way you can text your spouse, call your group leader in case you are lost, and call home. The group leader gets these cards at a discount since they buy them in bulk. Plus messages may be sent to your phone

about upcoming majalises or changes in plans. This is an excellent way to communicate in Hajj and a way to add an extra layer of safety to your trip.

Tips

Madina Airport – With my second Hajj the security system was amazing! The Madina airport has x-ray bag scanners. They will open 'random' bags for search by hand. Officials are looking for drugs, counterfeit money, and political material. Be polite and do as you are told. Do not pack any unusual powdered substances, carry only necessary literature, do not bring magazines or English books not about Hajj. Bring only \$100 bills which are not too old or too new. You will need your passport, drafts, immunization card, ticket and departure card (receive afterwards). You will have to pass this bundle of documents to about 5 different men. Each will either look at, stamp, or sticker your documents. Make sure you have the keys to your luggage readily available - Ladies, don't start looking for your husbands as they will be in their own area. Ladies will be frisked (body searched) by other ladies in a private room. It is an uncomfortable experience but just recite duas and think how it will be over in just a minute or so. The customs process can take anywhere from a few hours to many, many hours. Expect the worst!

Grave of the Prophet in Madina mosque - The area where the grave of the Prophet rests has been closed off so only men can go near the Zari. Women are able to go near the grave for a few hours each day. If you want to touch the Prophet's grave I recommend going with an experienced lady for Fajr salaah at the mosque. Sit up front and be ready to run towards the grave of the Prophet. There is a great deal of pushing and shoving by other women and you may be hit lightly by one of the female government officials.

Never travel alone anywhere! You want to concentrate on performing your Hajj rituals not worrying about getting robbed or lost. Take precautions, **don't carry a lot of money** when you go out (especially when going to the haram), keep your money bag close, hidden and safety pinned to your top. Always **carry your ID** and some Saudi Riyals wherever you go (tuck riyals behind your ID card). You should carry around 30 Riyals with you wherever you go for cab fare back to the house in case you get lost. There is a map and emergency phone number behind your ID card with picture. There are many people who lose their money during their trip when they take money to the haram. Men, I do not recommend putting your bills in the zipper pocket of your pajamas even when you have a full length kanzou on top. Somehow thieves know exactly how to lift your kanzou, open your zipper and take your cash without you even realizing. Yes this is a sad reality experienced by many men in my two trips. I carried my money in a money pouch around my neck very close to the top of my shirt. I would safety pin either side of the money pouch to my shirt (so if the cord was cut or broken the bag would still be attached to me). When I needed money, I would be able to flip out my money pouch from under my hijab and get my stash accordingly. It is a lot more noticeable for someone to try to steal from under your neck than from your pants pocket. You should also split up your money between spouses and keep stashes in different areas.

If you don't have a cell phone, you can **call home (Toronto)** from phone kiosks – These places are like small stores with a number of small telephone booths – the procedure requires you to go into a booth, call home, complete your phone call, and go to the front desk to pay for your call. You will be charged by the minute so keep conversations short! You can also use your cell phone depending on the type of plan/phone. For some individuals from Toronto, they had phone plans that enabled their family to call them. There is also the option of purchasing calling cards.

There are **laundry facilities** available similar to the dry cleaners we have in Canada in Madina and Mecca generally walking distance from the hotel. You drop off your clothes and pick them up at a certain time. This is a convenient service which can be costly, plus a lot of people lost clothes or received clothes that didn't belong to them. Clothes may also get ruined and there is no 'insurance' at these places. They also write a number in permanent marker on your shirt (or tag) so think twice before sending your 'best' clothes to them. Think twice before bringing your 'most expensive' anything in Hajj whether it is your ipod, cell phone, shoes, etc. Things can get stolen or misplaced easily.

Cab fare - You may need a cab to travel to restaurants and around the City. Agree on a price before getting into the cab and make sure the rate is understood by the driver (i.e. is the rate per person, or for the group of you in the cab). Drivers may not be able to drop you directly to the haram if you request this, as there are strict rules to prevent traffic jams in Saudi.

Mohr / Turba - You will not be allowed to bring a mohr or turba into Saudi Arabia. If you try and fail, your mohr will be thrown into the garbage in front of you. You can take the risk, but expect to have the mohr

disrespected. There are mohrs available in our house in Mecca. If you plan on buying these as gifts, wait till your return trip to Syria before you head home.

Luggage – Another good tip is to place your name inside all of your luggage pieces. You can use a large piece of paper with your name and address in Canada. You should do this as well for your hand luggage. This helps to identify your luggage if it is lost.

Qurbani – Hujjaj are encouraged to perform their own qurbani. This is a very exhausting procedure as you will have to travel far from our tents to perform this ritual on foot (only for men). Alternatively HAC/HAS volunteers will be appointed to all hujjaj to perform qurbani for them. Make sure you know who is doing your qurbani as it is being performed.

Washroom Etiquette – You will be sharing a washroom with other Hajjis during your trip. Please be considerate. This is not the time for your usual long showers. Also, if you choose to hand wash your clothes or undergarments in the washroom, please do so during 'non-peak' washroom times and do not leave a big mess for others to clean up.

Shopping information – If you would like to purchase gifts for your friends and family during Hajj, you can always wait until finishing your wajihaat and then buy things in Hajj or Syria after you finish your last tawaaf. This way you can focus on your Hajj, especially if this is your first Hajj. There are all sorts of small gifts you can pick up in Madina and Mecca (musallahs, hijabs, chadors, oudh, rings, pictures of the Kaaba etc.). In Syria you will find 'Shia' items such as mohrs, and khakhi shafa tasbihs. There are plenty of little shops near the haram in both countries. You can also visit malls in Saudi for more selection. Husbands should also set aside some funds for purchasing their wives a 'tawaf-e-nisa' present. This last tawaf means you are 'married' again. There are plenty of gold shops in both Mecca and Madina with a variety of styles for even the pickiest shoppers. There are also grocery stores and pharmacies which carry Western snacks/food, toiletries, medications, etc. Bin Dawood is a favourite of many Hajjis – it is not Wal-Mart but it comes close!

Final thoughts – In Canada we are seen as Muslim first and Canadian second, especially for women who wear hijab. If we do something like practice road rage, this may be seen by others as a way in which Muslims are violent by nature. All Muslims suffer. We have to be extra careful how we act not only because our actions will be judged on the day of judgment, but also since our actions reflect all Muslims. In Hajj, we may have stereotypes about certain individuals from various ethnic backgrounds. Try to rid yourself of these stereotypes and ignore comments made by others – this will be difficult. In Hajj we are reminded that Allah SWT does not care about the colour of our skin, or the country we are from, or the amount of money we have, we are judged by our deeds. Every culture is different as well. We may think it rude of someone to push or cut in front of us in line, but in their culture that may be acceptable. Also we are examples of what Canadian Muslims are like to others. I remember in our trip to Iran we met a female bank employee. She told me that she knows what Canada is like since she saw a movie about Canada once. Guess what movie... Anne of Green Gables. She envisioned all of Canada as rolling hills, oceans, and little white houses and of course we all wear dresses and have red hair! Many Iranians were surprised that Canadian born Muslims exist. They were in disbelief when I told them I wore hijab willingly and knew how to pray. In Hajj you are examples of what Shias are like as well. People from some countries are brainwashed to believe that all Shias are considered to be kafirs. In Hajj you have an opportunity to sit beside a total stranger in the haram and talk to them about what things are like in their country. You share a common bond of being Muslim and being a Hajji. Embrace the similarity and learn from their experiences. I remember talking to a group of women from Darfur. The images in my brain of Darfur from television and newspapers differed greatly from the generous and friendly women I met in Hajj.

In Hajj the shaitan will be beside you on your journey trying to mislead you. Remember to control your temper, shed your pride, practice patience even when things don't go as planned, and be one with your group members and with ALL Hajjis. Also remember that the volunteers in Hajj are not your personal servants. They are full paying Hujjaj just like you and have come to make your Hajj better. Please be kind to them and do not complain or yell at them. You would be surprised how quickly we demand first class service when it comes to busses being on time, meals being prepared, and sleeping accommodations being 'perfect'. The Hajj volunteers want everything to go smoothly for you but some things are out of their control. There are a lot of behind the scenes people working with the Government to ensure your Hajj goes as smoothly as possible.

The above list and guide are just suggestions and not mandatory. You can also share some items in Hajj with your spouse, relative or friend.

Summary of items needed (broken into three categories)

Important to have

1 pair of walking shoes (probably slippers with straps)
Men will need one pair of thong slippers for Eham
1 Eham (see descriptions in guide above)
A few comfortable Islamic tops (men)
A few pairs of comfortable pants (men)
1 Sweatshirt (sweatshirt, sweater or light jacket for both men and women)
Night clothes for a few days (both for warm and cold climates i.e. pajamas and t-shirts)
Undergarments for a few days
Hijabs for a few days
Socks (for both men and women in Syria and for women as part of their hijab)
1 black chador/abaya (for women)
Clothes to wear inside chador (for women)
1 coloured bath towel
Unscented Liquid Soap (for Eham and can be used throughout your Hajj trip)
Unscented Deodorant
Shampoo (for non-Eham showers)
Nail clipper/scissors for nails
Toothpaste and toothbrush
Washroom water bottle
Toilet Paper (small quantity)
Comb
Stone bag
Money
Ticket
Passport
Immunization Card
Watch
Leather ID Band (provided by Saudi gov't)
ID Nametag (provided by group leader)
Medication you normally take
Feminine hygiene products for women
Safety pins (for women and for money pouch)
Small bag for Arafat (i.e. backpack)
Suitcase
The Hajj guide book compiled by the Hajj Assistance Committee

Nice to have

Extra Eham
Extra black chador/abaya (for women)
Clothes to wear instead of chador (i.e. Kurta's, long sleeved dresses, cotton slips etc)
Extra clothes for day and night
Extra undergarments
Extra hijabs
Winter hat (for men)
A pair of flip flops (rubber slippers)

Salaat items - i.e. travel musallah
Slipper bag
Books – Dua books and also Hajj guides
1 flat sheet
Soap
Hair ties
Face Cream
Packs of travel tissues
Sunglasses
7 Beads on a string (usually provided by group leader)
1 moneybag
Cold / Cough medication and Cough Drops
Vaseline or cortisone cream (for men mostly)
Sleeping Bag
Flashlight with batteries

Luxury items

1 pillowcase
1 small face cloth
Travel Pillow
Disinfecting wipes, baby wipes or wet naps
Lip Protection
Hand Soap
Small plastic travel bottles
Empty plastic bags
Waterproof bag
Extra pair of glasses
Disposable contacts
Spray bottle
Eye cover and earplugs
Face mask/ dust mask
Sleeves (for women)
Gloves (mini winter gloves)
Gravol
Band Aids
Dextrose Tablets
Vitamin C
Imodium
CYPRO/Zithromax and other antibiotics
Tylenol, Aspirin, Advil
Niyyat cards
Detergent
Travel alarm clock
Coloured ribbons for suitcase/tags
Food/snacks/Gatorade
Pens
Cell phone
Gum
Camera
MP3 Player