

Hajj 2017 Supplemental Information.

This is a compilation of some helpful information to be used if deemed necessary by each pilgrim. It is by no means comprehensive, but rather, a practical guide to address some of the frequently asked questions before and during the trip.

Supplication books and other spiritual aids.

HAC/HAS will provide 3 Hajj booklets which will contain all relevant supplications in Arabic as well as with English translations. The booklets contain Ziyarats of Madina, Ziyarats of Mecca, Information of Hajj rituals and Dua of Arafah.

Additionally, many of these supplications/duas can be downloaded on your smartphones, or tablets, and can be carried into the Holy sites. There are certain Apps that are available which are designed specifically for Hajj:

Journey to Paradise (Android Based Only)

Hajj

I-Supplicate (contains other duas which can be downloaded and used without wifi)

Shia Toolkit

Divine Pearls (very clear Arabic text for other duas and aamal)

Wi-Fi Accessibility

Both hotels have Wi-Fi services although it is only available in the lobby area and sometimes the signals are weak. If internet is needed, one is better off buying a data package from their phone company, or buy the service in Saudi Arabia. Unlocked phone is needed.

Telephone Services

There is NO telephone services in the hotels. Generally, most people will purchase a local Saudi sim and use this with an unlocked phone. Charges are only incurred for outgoing calls. Alternatively, one can purchase an international package from their local carrier. The first option is cheaper.

Last year, calls through Whatsapp, viber and similar companies were blocked during hajj.

Laundry Facilities

Laundromats are located close to both hotels in Makkah and Madina. They can usually return clothes within 24 hrs, but can take longer and expensive as we approach the days closer to the 8th Zilhajj. Cost is comparable to what we would pay in our home countries.

Clothing that can be discarded after wearing will not only save the laundry cost, but will also make room in the luggage for the return. Ladies can wear old clothing under their Abayas, and no one will notice. Smart packing can be very valuable.

Money Exchange

Money exchange facilities are accessible near our hotels. Usual exchange rate is about 3.72 Saudi Riyals for each US dollar. Canadian dollar and British pounds are widely accepted at the foreign exchange facilities.

Shopping

There are countless vendors and stores in Madina and Makkah located on both roads and within malls. Most stores generally accept Saudi riyals or US dollars. Credit cards are accepted in jewelry (gold) or watch stores. Please note vendors may add an extra two to three percent when using a credit card.

Medications

All prescribed medication must be carried in person by each pilgrim. In addition, a list of all medications and dosage must be available in the event any medicine is lost or damaged. A short medical history letter for those who are taking multiple prescription drugs will be very helpful to the group physicians when treatment is needed during the trip.

Medical Clinics

Throughout the trip we have a medical clinic that is run by doctors that are from our group. Clinics will be open two to three times a day and timings will be announced once we arrive. A humble request to please respect the timings. We generally have male doctors accompanying us, unless there is a female hujjaj doctor. If by any chance one of your roommates are ill and have not been seen by the doctor we ask you to please inform the volunteers. Generally a female patient should be accompanied by another female.

Electric Adapters

In this high tech electronic age, the need for recharging phones and tablets etc. has become a routine part of traveling concerns. Please purchase an international adaptor which can fit into electrical sockets in the hotels, and allow the usage of electronics in the 110-220v voltage. During our stay in Arafat and Muzdalifah, there are no sockets available to charge any phones or tablets. Within the tents in Mina sockets are available although are very limited in quantity. As such we would recommend the purchase of a power bank which would allow you to be able to charge your devices easily.

Meals

During our stay in Madina and Makkah, three complimentary meals a day are provided by the group and will be served and eaten in a common hall. These meals are freshly cooked daily and consist of an Indian and Pakistani menu. Fresh fruits, yogurt, drinks, tea/coffee, bottled water and hot water are available at all times. In addition to this, in both Madina and Makkah there are numerous fast food restaurants located nearby across the Haram within the shopping malls. During our stay in Arafat and Mina, as part of our package the Saudi government via the organizers provide us with three complimentary meals a day. In Mina, you may find a few road vendors selling fresh fries, eggs or paratha. No meals are provided in Muzdalifah due to the duration of time, rather tea and biscuits are sold.

Weather

As Hajj season falls during the summer months, the weather is extremely hot and humid throughout the trip. It is highly advised to make sure you are hydrated at all times. Please always carry a bottle of water and a spray bottle with you wherever you go. Depending on the individual, Gatorade powders and/or energy drinks may also help stay hydrated and energized.

Valuable Items

Valuable items such as money and electronics are safe to stay within the hotel. There are no safes available in either Madina or Makkah hotel rooms. Please lock your valuable in your suitcases and leave them in your room. Please do not take any valuable items with you to the haram or any outside Ziyarats. Specifically, when we are leaving for Arafat everyone will receive an envelope where they can place any valuables they may have. This will then be taken by the group organizers and placed in a hotel safe and will be returned to you once we come back from Mina.

Safety

When we arrive in Madina a pouch consisting of respective name badges, a map, a wrist band, hotel cards as well as names and numbers of the volunteers will be given to each individual. It is vital that this pouch be worn at all times in order to prevent anyone from getting lost. In addition to this we ask that you never leave the hotel or our tents (in Arafat and Mina) alone. It is extremely important that you at least go with one other person and stay with them. When we leave for Makkah as well as for Arafat everyone will be in the state of eham, wearing white and looking the same. At this time especially with the large crowds of people it is very important that everyone wears their badge. During this time, ladies will be given a neck scarf as an identification scarf to be worn on top of their eham. Along with personal identification, the group will have a flag which will be carried. We request that you all be very vigilant of all the necessary assets for everyone's safety.

Attendance at Lectures

During our stay in Makkah and Madinah there will be two lectures conducted daily. The first lecture will be after Zohr salaah which will specifically cover the spiritual aspects of Hajj and the fiqh masails of Hajj. These lectures are very important to attend as they further include Q and A sessions and more importantly essential logistics. The second lecture will be after Maghrib salaah. Evening lectures will be in the form of majalis covering the Holy personalities in both Madina and Makkah. In addition, all logistics information will be announced after the lectures.

Weather in KSA

We anticipate the heat to be a major factor in the next few hajj seasons. Temperatures and relative humidity can make it feel like 120 degrees Fahrenheit, and pilgrims will have to take necessary precautions to remain healthy in order to perform all the hajj obligations satisfactorily.

Drink plenty of fluids. Generally, people avoid drinking water to avoid using the substandard toilet facilities in Arafat and Mina. The consequences of dehydration are worse than what anyone has to tolerate using these facilities. It can have an impact on the ability to complete the hajj, as well as create a huge logistical challenge.

It is advisable to bring with you Gatorade powder, or any similar products for rehydration. There will be a briefing on this matter before we depart to these places.

Walking, Walking and Walking

During this spiritual trip there is a lot of walking involved. While the hotels in both Madina and Makkah are fairly close to the harams, you will be walking a lot back and forth to go to the haram a few times a day for salaah, ibadats etc and in Makkah when performing your Tawaf and Saee, (Saee itself is 3.5 kms.)

Also as discussed in the seminar, there will be lots of walking between Muzdalifa, Mina (to and from Jamarat) and going back to Makkah after performing the last Hajj rituals.

Please refer to the PowerPoint slides sent earlier. Accordingly, please practice walking **from now**.

The intention of Hajj opens the gates of God's mercy. Imam Baqir (AS) was quoted as saying, "When a man intends to go on Hajj, for every step he takes in preparing for his journey Allah will write ten good deeds for him and will write off ten of his wrongdoings and will elevate his scales until he completes his preparatory affairs."