

## Detailed Hajj tipsheet – part 2: Makkah

Note: Visit <http://dreamlife.wordpress.com> for the Madinah and Days of Hajj tipsheets. Alternatively, if you'd like to download the entire e-book which these tips are extracted from, get it [here](#).

### Madinah to Makkah road trip:

- Recognise that ihram is more than just outward clothing and a set of strict physical rules. It's an immense psychological state – so take it very seriously, and strive to be on your best behaviour both internally (within your thoughts, actions, and reactions to circumstances) and externally (with the way you interact with others).
- The state of ihram is intensely sacred, and the mental purity it inspires should in fact be something we strive for in everyday life. Because we might only experience the state of ihram a few times in our lives, we should use it as a means of practicing the inner taqwa and purity that will serve us so well in all other realms of life.
- For men, you'll probably already have a money belt to keep important things, but aside from that, you *may also* wear a normal belt to help hold up your bottom piece of ihram. It certainly helps give you peace of mind – because the worry of that part coming off is a very real and scary fear.
- Again for men, in tying the top part, find a way that works for you – something you can do without anyone else's help. Be open to other people's advice, but if their ways don't work, don't be afraid to try your own thing. The most important factors are that you're comfortable with it and you can do it yourself.
- If you're fortunate enough to do the Madinah-Makkah road trip in the day time, take a few moments to savour the incredible mountain scenery on the way. Also let these visuals remind you of the temporary nature of life – that nothing in this world is permanent: these mountains appear to be so firm and strong, yet when this Earth expires, they'll be destroyed and floating around like cotton wool. So we should never become so attached to the dunya that we give it priority over our akhira.
- Plan spiritually-uplifting activities to keep you busy on the bus. This will not only take your mind off the discomfort, but it'll also keep you occupied in good – thereby reducing your chances of complaining about the difficulties. And when you do feel like complaining, remember that the Prophet s.a.w. made this same journey (Madinah to Makkah) for his Hajj by camel (i.e. in the open heat, without any air-conditioned bus) – so be grateful for what you have, rather than complaining about what you don't like.
- If you're prone to getting sick on long road trips, take a few plastic / paper bags in case you need to vomit. (It's a good idea to collect them from your plane flights then keep them in your hand luggage for times like this.) Even if you're NOT likely to get car sick, take some anyway. You never know what can happen, and even if you yourself don't get sick, someone else on your bus might – in which case you can assist with your sick bag.
- On this part of your journey, you're probably going to experience some rather undesirable toilet facilities. Try not to let the anxiety scare you beforehand, and remember that you're human – just like everyone else – so embrace the experience as a means of humbling yourself. Take it as a sign that Allah is putting you through a difficulty in order to build your character and teach you valuable lessons for your upcoming Hajj and life to follow.
- If it makes you feel better, put together some items that will make the toilet experience a little cleaner. Unscented soap is a must, but other items could include rubber gloves, elastic (to tie your clothing and hold it up while you're squatting), and separate slippers.
- Remember to exercise sabr – especially when you get close to Makkah and feel like you're almost at your hotel. You may experience a lot of waiting time on the bus while admin is carried out, and at the end of a long journey, the last thing you want to do is be sitting helplessly while paperwork is being done. But remember that the best tests of character come in times of difficulty, so dig deep and try to endure the wait without complaining (either in your words or in your body language). Rather, stretch your body (similar to exercises you'd do on a long flight) and do something beneficial to pass the time.

### First Umrah:

- The first time you ever sight the Kabah in person (i.e. not on TV or in pictures) is a special, once-in-a-lifetime moment in which duas are very readily accepted by Allah. Prepare well for this moment by planning the dua you'd like to make. Among the many personal requests you could make, you could also ask Allah to accept all your duas for the rest of your life to come, and ask Allah to grant you Jannah without taking you to account on Qiyamah. There is no set dua to make, so know that this is all yours – and treat it as a personal treasure. Do not simply parrot what a group leader recites at that moment, and don't just read a dua from a book if you don't understand that dua or you have other requests that you'd rather make at the time.

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- When you get into Masjid-ul Haram, keep your eyes down so that you don't see the Kabah until an opportune moment. First find a good spot – out of the way where you can make your dua in peace – and only then look and have your special moment.
- When special experiences in life – such as these – don't go according to the way you'd imagined or hoped, don't judge things in a negative light. Allah is the best of planners, and whatever Allah wills for you is best for you. So remind yourself to be satisfied with His will and look for the wisdom in the way things played out.
- If you don't break into tears when first seeing the Kabah, don't worry – you're not weird. Its beauty is in its simplicity. The structure itself is not holy and it has no special powers. It's not an idol that we worship, but it's merely a symbol; a representation of unity, history, and the omnipresence of Allah –the only One worthy of our devotions.
- In the tawaaf, if you're a male with your wife, try to shield her from getting pushed and shoved in the crowd. Ask others for advice on how to do that, and find a way that works for you. Also, beware of people in wheelchairs – who can easily smack your heels and hurt you. If it happens, bear patience and try not to react angrily or violently.
- Study the rituals properly before you get there – because without knowledge, it's easy to just follow practices that might actually be incorrect.
- When it comes to acts of worship, if you favour being alone rather than with the group, bear patience during your first tawaaf. There aren't many prescribed duas and dhikrs for tawaaf, but you may be subjected to group recitations. If so, bear patience with this, ask Allah to grant you the best from the situation, and remember that insha-Allah you'll get your own private times to do tawaaf in future – so try not to view this experience in a negative light.
- Sujood is one of the best times to make dua, because – as per hadith – it's when you're closest to Allah. There are differences of opinion regarding dua in sujood, so find out from your ulama about the rulings related to sujood in dua (e.g. must it be in Arabic only? Is it in any salaah or any nafl / sunnahs?).
- When doing sa'ee, try to remember the history behind the act. Also try to remember the essential lesson: when you want or need something, Allah is the One that will provide for you – but you should make your own efforts too, and not just expect things to happen while you sit around waiting.
- For cutting of the hair when you complete umrah, men should aim for the sunnah of shaving the head (either completely bald or cutting it very short) – rather than just the minimum cutting of 3 hairs. You've just completed a great act of worship, and vanity about your hair should no longer be a concern. For women, if you want to cut your hair while still inside / outside the masjid (i.e. rather than waiting to get back to the hotel), please ensure that you do it in a setting where no men can see your hair. Seems like obvious advice, but in the moment, you may forget.

## General advice for Makkah:

- Learn to restrain yourself in times of anger and you can reap tremendous benefits – both in your relationship with Allah and in your relationships with other people.
- Like Madinah, ensure that you get to the Masjid early in Makkah – *especially* if you're female. If you go too late, you might not make it into one of the cooler / shaded areas – which understandably fill up much faster than the roof and outside areas which are exposed to the scorching heat.
- If you plan to touch the Kabah, please try not to treat it like an idol. It's simply a building – a symbol to be honoured and respected, not to be grabbed emotionally as if it has special powers.
- When it comes to touching the Black Stone or Yemeni corner, getting to the Kabah door / multazam, or getting close to Maqam Ibrahim, remember that despite the crowds, Allah can open up a way for you. Make dua for those opportunities.
- That said, unless if it's busy, it's quite possible that you won't get to touch the Black Stone. If you do want to try, though, remember that you will face great physical challenges. In this case, remember that there's no honour in fighting with others, pushing others, or otherwise getting aggressive – either as a proactive approach or as a reaction to others wronging you. Simply be firm by standing your ground – rather than pushing – and if you can't make it, let it go in the interests of your own safety. If you do make it, remember Umar r.a.'s statement about it, and – like the Kabah – do NOT treat it like an idol.
- Like the Prophet s.a.w.'s times, today, the common people don't get to go inside the Kabah. But as per hadith, the hateem area ('Hijr Ismail') is technically inside the Kabah – as least a section of it. So if you get the chance to pray in there, do so (again, as long as you're not harming others in the process).
- Just like the Rawda in Madinah, if you get the chance to pray very close to the Kabah, you may face a barrage of people pushing or trying to get into your space. If possible, make your duas in sujood – rather than making them while you're sitting after your salaah. People are much less likely to disturb you in sujood as compared to after salaah.

- When you get time near the Kabah, don't waste it. As the days pass and the crowds grow, you may get fewer chances to even see it – even though you're in the masjid (since viewing space is limited and fills up fast).
- Shaytaan is strong in Makkah, so beware of increased irritation and aggression – in other people and yourself. Control your anger and beware of your speech at all times.
- Never impose your own ways – be it social etiquettes, language, or other – on other people, even if they look similar to you, or share common attributes such as religion. The Earth is a vast, extremely varied place, and it's rather self-centred to hold an attitude that your way is the "right" way – whether you consciously adopt that attitude, or it just comes in because you've always been surrounded by people like yourself.
- If you don't know Arabic, make an effort to learn some – aside from a long-term intention to learn the full language. Arabic is the common language between Muslims from all parts of the world, so in the worldly sense, it's very beneficial on this journey. (Of course, the spiritual benefits are even greater – since you'll understand the language of the Quran.)
- Hajj is by far the largest gathering of people from all different walks of life. At no other time, and in no other place, will you see and be among such a wide variety of people, so use the opportunity to broaden your horizons. Speak to people (of your own gender, of course!) from far-away lands and different age groups, and try to learn about their lives and draw from their wisdom, while also passing on your own positive messages to them. Despite our differences, we're all brothers and sisters in Islam, and this is by far the greatest opportunity to feel that unity and experience the variety within the ummah.
- As a general rule, change demands change: Every external change you face requires individual, internal change – to adapt to the situation. If you fail to do that, you can end up being frustrated and having a negative perception of what could otherwise be a wonderful experience.
- The above is especially true about the adjustment between Madinah and Makkah. If you want to feel spirituality and really enjoy Makkah, you'll need tremendous sabr (both in action and in holding your tongue) and the ability to mentally detach yourself from circumstances that would otherwise get you worked up. Focus on your own purpose there, and your own relationship with Allah; and take all the challenges as means of self-purification – seeking Allah's help and reward through the difficulties.
- It's fine to get your rest when you need to, but be careful not to become lazy to the point where you end up being late for salaahs in the masjid.
- Be aware of the time-wasting traps shaytaan lays out for you. Whether it's TV, the Internet (including email and social networking on your mobile phone), newspapers, or something else – if it's not benefitting you spiritually, be very careful of it and try to minimise your usage.
- Don't waste the small moments – for example, while you're walking or waiting in line. Use these moments in beneficial activities, such as good conversations, dhikr, dua, etc.
- Keep your eyes open for the many quirky things you'll see in the masjid, shops, and other areas. The incredible mix of different cultures, ages, and backgrounds is sure to provide warm memories of things you'd never see anywhere else.
- Educate yourself about the reasons behind the acts of worship you're doing. This will help you avoid mistakes that could otherwise creep in when you just do things ritualistically without understanding.
- In the haram – particularly on the roof levels – remember to take in your surroundings. Observe the people and what's going on, and look for beautiful sights that your heart will remember for a lifetime after you leave Makkah.
- If you ever need a reminder that this ummah is strong, and that there are still so many people in this world that take their deen and connection to Allah seriously, remember the packed tawaafs you witnessed in Makkah.
- And if the sects and divisions of the ummah get you down, again remember those tawaafs – which prove the unity that's still possible despite our differences.
- Every single human has a natural recognition of the truth of Allah – whether they choose to accept it or not, even if they've buried it under years of heedlessness and sin. Be aware of this fitrah, and remember that we can all return to it if we try, insha-Allah.
- When you see grown men crying and witness the desperate duas of fellow pilgrims, take it as a reminder of your own insignificance, your own complete helplessness, and your own complete need of Allah for every single thing in your life – whether big or small. Remember that even if you don't feel the same right now, a Day will come when you will feel that way. So use your life on Earth wisely so that, when you reach that Day, you'll be in the best possible position before your Lord.
- In acts of worship, when things aren't going your way and you're not feeling "into it" – remember that you're not doing it for the feelings. You're doing it for the sake of Allah. So persevere and make dua for an improvement in the situation, but remember that we don't worship feelings – we worship Allah.
- For any salaah –but especially Jumuah –if you can't stand the heat, go early and try to get a spot in the airconditioned basement. But, because there's not much to see, make sure you take your Quran, dua list, or other things to do.

- In Makkah and Madinah, it becomes necessary to be at the masjid early for each salaah. Take advantage of that waiting time, and make it a long-term reminder too: that back home, you should also try to be early to the masjid.
- These days, the comforts of shopping malls and luxury hotels can really distract you from your purpose on this journey – which isn't ideal preparation for Hajj. If you're able to, right before the 5 days, try to get some simple accommodation that'll be conducive to Hajj preparation.
- If you manage to get such lodging, look past the faults and focus on cleansing yourself of worldly attachments, and preparing your heart, mind, and body for the upcoming days.
- On a practical note, if your lodging has small toilets, be economical with the toilet paper, and flush frequently – rather than throwing used toilet paper in the bin. It may seem like a waste of water, but hygiene comes before convenience.
- When it comes to sleep, scientists and commentators may insist we need between 6 and 8 hours per night. But Allah is in control of everything – sleep included. So if you don't get that many hours, it won't matter – as long as you have barakah in that sleep. Make it a habit to ask Allah for barakah in your sleep – whether you get a full night's rest or not.

## **Makkah ziyarahs:**

- In tour groups, there'll always be some people that delay the group. Expect this, and remember not to complain about them, but to have sabr and use the waiting time beneficially.
- In general – and especially when you're in nature – respect the environment and don't litter. Cleanliness is half of faith, so make a conscious effort to be clean – even if others around you are not.
- Whenever you're touring, always take a spray bottle and enough water for wudu. You may not always have a tap around (such as at the top of the mountain), and in any case, using a spray bottle is tremendously water-efficient.
- Don't ever miss your fardh salaah for a ziyarah place / tourist attraction. In worldly terms, you may feel regret at missing out – but in the Hereafter, your regret will be much greater. If you're in a jam, make dua and do your best – always remembering that salaah comes first.
- If tempers flare, don't get caught up in the emotion of one / a group's wrongdoing. If you must be involved, try to be a peace-maker. There's no benefit in fighting with others. (And learn the 'sabr' hand sign.)
- Don't expect your tour guides to teach you about or inspire you when visiting historical sites. Always do your own research and homework beforehand so that you can fully appreciate the places you visit.
- If you do have a choice of tour guides, and you know one is particularly inspiring, opt for that person. The benefit of having an outstanding tour guide is really, really tremendous.
- Take lessons from our heritage – both the historical events and great people of the past – and let them serve as an inspiration for you to make great contributions in your own capacity today.
- Take the time and effort to educate yourself about what is bi'dah and what is not – particularly when it comes to visiting ziyarah places. Do not rely on cultural practices or 'what people have always done' – because many spiritually-harmful (and even haraam) practices have become commonplace among the ummah. Don't go to the ziyarah places with such things – because you harm yourself and you also reinforce the suspicions that the authorities already have about why people are visiting these sites.
- In line with the above, know Islam's aqeedah (belief) very well, and be very well-versed about tawheed. This knowledge will serve you well in avoiding unlawful practices on your trip – particularly at historical sites.
- All talk and no action is an utter waste of time – so don't waste your time in heated debates about what the Saudi authorities are doing to the historical sites. Rather, use your energy to appreciate the fact that you can still visit them and take as much benefit from your time there. If you feel strongly about the issue, make dua for a balanced solution, then make efforts in that path – whether you do so through writing / speaking, or by taking action.
- For the Cave of Hira, there's no sunnah salaah for the cave. Make your fardh salaah if it's time, or make dua instead. Or maybe just make an extra salaah – but being very clear in your mind that you're NOT doing it under the impression that it's a sunnah.
- When you get in to the cave, do what you need to, and savour the moment. But don't take too long if there are others waiting. We'd all love to spend a long time in there, but it's inconsiderate to deprive or delay others unnecessarily – so give others a chance too. (The same concept applies in any place that's in high demand – such as the Rawda in Madinah.)
- When you're done at the Cave of Hira, don't be in a rush to get back down again. Spend as much time as you can above the cave / near the top – taking in the scenery and the experience. You can't get this anywhere else in the world, and you may never get this chance again, so enjoy it while you can.

## **Final days before Hajj:**

- Appreciate your comforts and surroundings while you have them, because life will move on sooner or later, and you will lose them.
- Despite the flaws in the society, it's refreshing to be in an environment that has Islam at its base. We don't experience that in Western countries, so appreciate it when you're over there, and make dua that one day, the beauty of Islam will come to be at the very core of the society you live in back home.
- Going back home after Hajj presents you with a challenge and an opportunity – both of which must be embraced. The challenge is to live your Hajj until you die, and the opportunity is to make a greater impact on the world.
- In your final moments before leaving for Mina, reach out to your loved ones. Take advantage of the strong emotions in your heart and convey to them the beauty of what you feel, inspiring them to make this trip, and asking them to make special duas for you in the coming days.
- One of the most important thoughts to bear in mind on the 5 days is to remain conscious of Allah at all times. Taqwa is your best provision, and all that you'll face is for Allah.