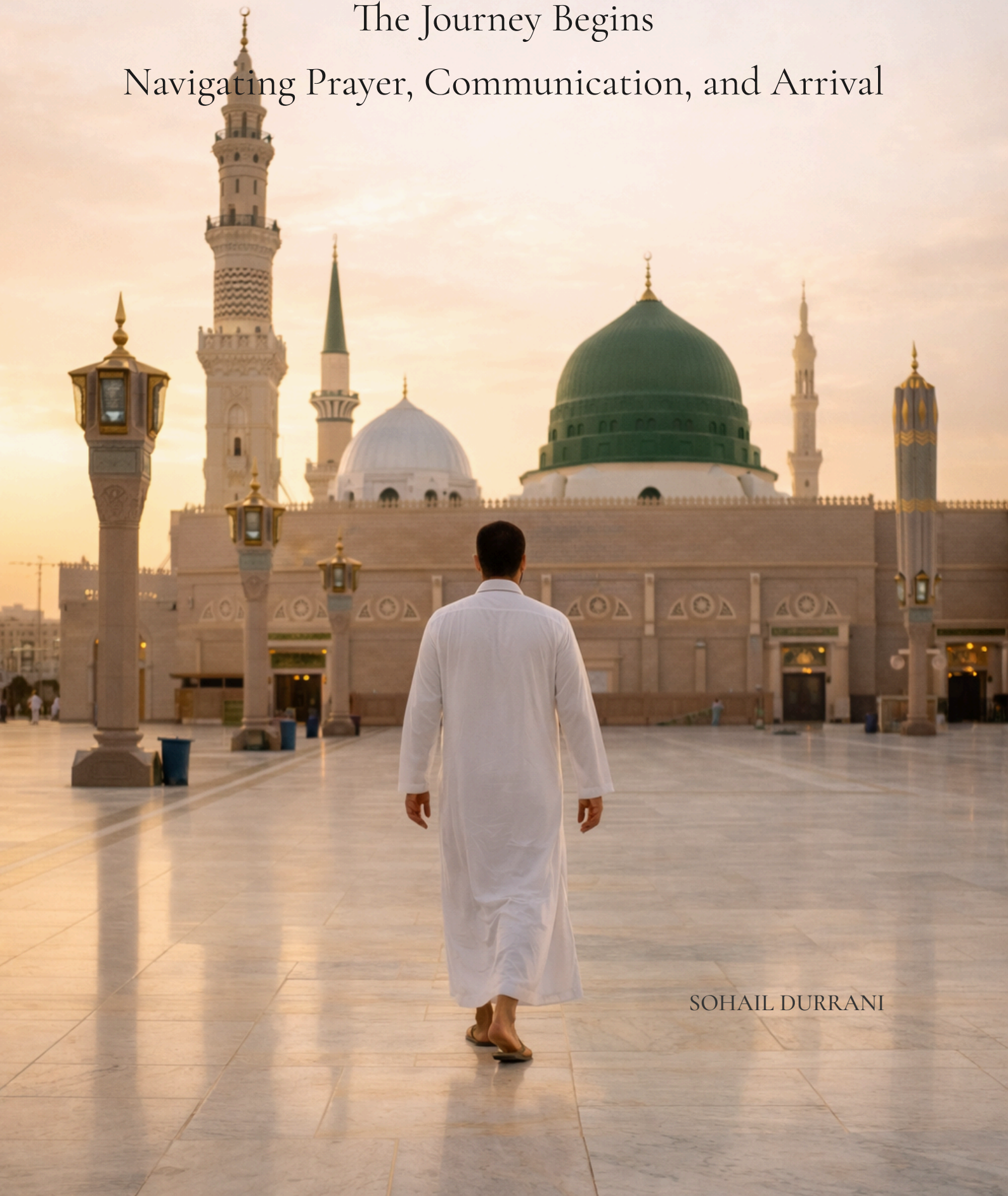


HAJJ JOURNEY

The Journey Begins

Navigating Prayer, Communication, and Arrival



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Author's Note

I am not a scholar. As I prepare for my Hajj journey in 2026, I am creating these notes so that others like me may also benefit from them.

For any matters related to religious rulings or guidance, I strongly encourage you to consult your local Aalim or qualified scholar. This is not a fiqh book, nor is it written by a scholar. There may be mistakes, and I welcome your corrections so that we can improve this together for the benefit of the Ummah.

I humbly request you to remember me in your precious duas. May Allah accept our Hajj, make it easy for us, and grant us a Hajj Maqbool.

Aameen.

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Introduction

The path to Hajj is paved with good intentions, but it's also where Shaitan plays his most clever games. You might be surprised to hear this, but Shaitan will actually encourage you to pray during your flight. He'll whisper in your ear: "You're going for Hajj! How can you not pray?" And you'll think to yourself, "Wait—Shaitan is telling me to pray?" Yes, my friend, because Shaitan doesn't just prevent good deeds; he sometimes encourages them at the wrong time or in the wrong way, knowing it will lead to greater problems.

This chapter addresses the practical challenges you'll face from the moment you board your flight until you settle into your hotel in Medina. These aren't just logistical details—they're opportunities to maintain your focus, dignity, and spiritual composure during what should be the journey of a lifetime.

Prayer in the Air: Understanding the Reality

The Flight Dilemma

Let me paint you a picture. You're on a flight with 400 other pilgrims, all heading to perform Hajj. The prayer time arrives. Shaitan whispers: "How can you pray sitting in your seat? Where's the qibla? I heard there's space on the plane—why don't you stand and pray properly?"

Here's what you need to understand: this concession to pray seated exists for emergencies, not as a regular practice. When concessions become commonplace, they lose their meaning, and Shaitan uses that very leniency to lead us astray. The airline crew members are there to serve you, and they tolerate a lot because you're a pilgrim. But causing them difficulty—blocking aisles, attempting to form prayer rows in the galley where 400 people would need to stand—this isn't how your Hajj journey should begin.



The space between seats where people walk with their shoes? That's not a valid prayer space. One of the conditions for prayer is that the place must be clean. You can't simply declare "Allahu Akbar" and consider it done. Remember, Allah isn't watching your physical exercise—He's watching the state of your heart. Allah's matter is a matter of the heart.

So pray seated in your place, just as travelers pray on journeys. Don't insist

on praying in the aisles. Many pilgrims argue with the crew about this, and while the crew tolerates it because you're a Hajj pilgrim, causing anyone difficulty is not the right way to begin this sacred journey.

The Traveler's Prayer Question That Never Ends

Here's something that will make you smile: if pilgrims invested just 10% of the effort they spend worrying about traveler's prayers into actually perfecting their Hajj, that would be great. I'm serious. But instead, Shaitan plays such a clever game that people fixate on this one question: "What about the musafir (traveler's) prayer?"

Think about it. The average age of pilgrims is around fifty years. Some go at thirty-five, others at fifty-five, but the average is forty-five to fifty. In forty-five years of life, haven't you ever traveled before? You went to weddings in other cities, didn't you? Back then, your focus was on the bride and groom, and you didn't worry about prayer times. You've traveled your whole life, but suddenly this becomes the consuming question.

The irony is striking: you're going on a journey specifically for prayer. Why are you going to Medina? To pray. Why Mecca? To pray. Why Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifah? To pray. Yet the pilgrim's only concern becomes: "Tell me about the traveler's prayer. Which prayers will I perform where?"

The Simple Truth About Traveler's Prayer

Let me make this crystal clear with a simple principle. If you leave your home and travel more than 92 kilometers (some schools of thought say 85 kilometers, but you're traveling thousands of kilometers, so let's not split hairs), and you intend to stay somewhere for less than fifteen days, you perform the shortened prayer (qasr). If you intend to stay fifteen days or more, you perform the full prayer.

What does shortened prayer mean? Simply this: Allah has given you permission to reduce four-unit prayers to two units. That's it. Nothing more complicated.

Now, during your entire Hajj journey, where will you stay less than fifteen days? Medina. But are you going to Medina to pray in your hotel room, or in the Prophet's Mosque? When you pray in congregation at the Prophet's Mosque, the traveler's prayer doesn't even apply. In congregational prayer, you complete the full prayer, whether it's four units or otherwise.

Throughout your time in Medina, you'll pray the full prayer. If this question should arise at all, it might come from women, and that would make sense. Women have the concession that while they're welcome to pray in the Prophet's Mosque if they wish, if a woman prays in her hotel room for any reason, she receives the full reward from Allah. Congregation isn't obligatory for them, nor is reaching the mosque.

But when a woman does go to the Prophet's Mosque with the intention of staying only eight days before leaving, there are separate arrangements—proper screens, designated areas, and specific entry points. She won't simply enter from anywhere or end up among the men.

The traveler's prayer discussion applies only when you're praying alone, outside of congregation. For men who pray in congregation, this entire debate becomes irrelevant.

When Does Traveler's Prayer Actually Apply?

Let's be practical. You'll be in Mecca's Aziziya area before and after the Hajj days. Whether you arrive on the first flight or the last, even pilgrims on the shortest Hajj packages—those twenty-day trips—will likely stay more than fifteen days in Mecca. Once you've stayed fifteen days in Aziziya, and then you go to Mina, you're essentially going to a place as close as Munshipulia is from here in Lucknow. You could make five round trips in two hours. It's that nearby.

Would you perform a traveler's prayer going to Munshipulia? Of course not.

So when does traveler's prayer actually matter? When you leave your home for the Hajj House and there's a significant distance between them, and you need to pray alone along the way—that's a traveler's prayer. At the airport, where there are designated prayer areas (and every major airport, whether Lucknow, Delhi, or Mumbai, has these), if you pray alone, that's a traveler's prayer. On the flight, if you're praying a four-unit prayer alone, you can perform two units instead.

But here's a smarter approach: if you think you'll reach your hotel and catch the congregation for Isha prayer, then wait. Pray with the congregation. The traveler's prayer concession applies only when you're praying alone.

The one exception during Hajj might be when you're traveling from Medina to Mecca by bus. The 450-500 kilometer journey might require a stop for prayer. If your bus stops at a rest area and everyone on the bus is a traveler, one of you will lead the prayer. Since the imam is also a traveler, a four-unit prayer becomes two units.

The Sunnah Prayers Matter

Here's something crucial that often gets overlooked: while the Prophet ﷺ performed the shortened obligatory prayers during travel, he never abandoned the sunnah and nafl (voluntary) prayers. Never.

For us, there's a concession—if you're rushing to catch a flight or train, or there's some urgent matter, and you skip the sunnah prayers, there's no sin, no punishment. But if you do perform them, you receive full reward. And in Medina and Mecca, why would you skip sunnah prayers? You're in the city of the Sunnah itself. How could you plan to abandon sunnah and nafl prayers there?

So regarding traveler's prayer: if you're praying alone, pray two units instead of four. Three-unit prayers remain three. And as we explained, sunnah, nafl, and witr aren't exempted. With Isha prayer, you'll still need to pray witr.

Staying Connected: Mobile Phones and SIM Cards

Understanding Your Communication Needs

Everyone wonders: "How will my phone work there? What about WhatsApp?" You hear advice about getting good phones, but how does it actually work? Should you take your Indian SIM or get one there?

Let me explain this very clearly. The importance of keeping your Indian SIM active depends entirely on your situation. It's not necessary for everyone. For instance, if I were going, my Indian SIM would be essential because everyone who needs to contact me knows only that number. I'd need to keep it active at any cost. But my wife doesn't need her Indian SIM. We told her not to bother with international roaming—we'd get her a Saudi SIM there because she mainly needs to talk to me. If she wants to call home, she can do that through the Saudi SIM. A video call with our daughter works fine on the Saudi SIM.

The Indian SIM is essential for anyone who needs to receive important messages on that number—people running businesses that don't shut down during Hajj, those who need to transfer money online, receive SMS authentication codes, or take important calls. If those incoming SMS messages and calls are crucial for you, then activate international roaming on your Indian SIM.

Vodafone, Airtel, and Jio all provide service in Saudi Arabia. They have packages ranging from twenty to forty days. If someone needs just twenty days, get that package. If forty days, get that one.

Last year's pilgrims activated Vodafone's international roaming—it was wonderful. For ₹3,500, they got forty days of service. Their number stayed active for forty days, and Vodafone did something extra: they made incoming calls free. Anyone calling them from India, even if they talked for an hour, paid nothing. Neither the caller nor the recipient was charged. That's the roaming option—essential for those whose Indian SIM is critical for work or important contacts.

Getting Your Saudi SIM

Now, how do you get a Saudi SIM? When you arrive at the Saudi airport, two people will be calling out "SIM! SIM! SIM!" Be cautious about buying at the airport. Don't take one there. Even if you buy it in the rush, you won't have time to open your phone, remove the pin, take out the SIM tray, insert the new SIM, and activate it. If you don't activate it there and hand over 100 riyals (about ₹2,500), you won't know if it even works. You won't have time to check because you'll be taken to a hall, then loaded onto a bus.

So taking a SIM and stuffing it in your bag—what's the point? Besides, the actual SIM card is free in Saudi Arabia. You pay only for the recharge. Each pilgrim can get two SIMs from any one company on a single visa. There are four major telecommunications companies in Saudi Arabia: STC, Mobily, Zain, and Salam.

You can take a SIM from any company—they're all good. Just like in India, where Vodafone and Airtel are famous, in Saudi Arabia, Mobily and STC are very popular. They all work. One company might have better signal in Mina, another in Aziziya, another in Medina—just like in India where you might say "Vodafone doesn't work in that area, but Jio does."

The best approach? Don't take a SIM card at the airport. Reach your hotel. Go to your room. Relax a bit. The next day, someone will set up a counter in your hotel. Buy your SIM there. Have them insert it. Get them to explain everything: how to check balance, how to check signals, how to know how much data you have.

Saudi SIMs provide talk minutes plus substantial internet data. Indian roaming SIMs give less internet—at most 2GB or 4GB of data. You'll definitely need a Saudi SIM because while you'll get WiFi at your hotel and some places, when you're in Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifah, the internet will be precious and necessary.

So understand this: you should definitely get a Saudi SIM. It's essential. Just choose the package according to your needs and budget. Saudi Arabia isn't like India where you can keep data on all

the time. There, you keep data turned off. When you need the internet, turn it on, check important messages, send what you need, then turn it off.

The best approach? When you're in your Medina or Mecca hotel building, connect to the hotel WiFi. WiFi is free, and the password is posted on the pillars in every hotel. Just go there, note the password, enter it on your phone, and your WiFi is working. Problem solved.

Free Calling Apps: The WhatsApp Ban



Here's something crucial to understand: in Saudi Arabia, WhatsApp calling is banned. You simply cannot make WhatsApp calls—neither audio nor video. You can try connecting all you want, but you'll just frustrate yourself. People in India will see your call coming through on WhatsApp. The system for internet calls is such that even a light touch triggers the ringtone. When you touch that

button for your Indian relatives, they'll hear it ringing in India. They'll say "Hello? Hello?" You'll say "Hello? Hello?" but no voice will come through. WhatsApp calling is banned.

The better solution? We've given you four alternatives: IMO, Botim, Google Meet, and Telegram. IMO is already very popular in India. Most people whose relatives live outside India have IMO (some call it "Eemo" or "IMO") installed on their phones. This works excellently. If you install IMO on your phone and practice using it, start now. Install it on your phone and on the phones of people you'll want to stay in touch with.

Often, pilgrims arrive there and say, "Brother, install IMO on this." We installed it. But then their wife's phone back home doesn't have IMO. How will they talk? You need to do both: install it on your phone and on the phones of everyone around you that you want to maintain contact with. Start talking through it now. Practice with it. When you're in Saudi Arabia, it'll be much easier to communicate because WiFi is available everywhere. Connect to WiFi, talk on IMO, and you'll save both your purchased internet data and your talk minutes.

When you're outside the hotel building, then turn on your data, make necessary calls, and finish. Clear?

Arrival in Medina: The Beginning of Your Sacred Journey

The Flight Schedule and Timing

In our group, most people traveling from Lucknow will have flights at the very beginning of the Hajj season. Those whose journeys are scheduled at the start typically go to Medina first, stay eight days, then are sent to Mecca.

Here's an interesting fact: you won't find a single pilgrim who completed all forty-one prayers. Eight days mean forty prayers total. As soon as you arrive and complete forty prayers, very few people manage that—many get only thirty-nine. But as soon as that time is complete, you'll be sent to Aziziya in Mecca.

Airport Arrival: Staying Calm



Seamless Airport Exit

**Carry only hand luggage;
your main suitcases are
transported directly to your
hotel.**

When you arrive at Medina airport from Lucknow, you'll have only your hand luggage. Nothing else. As you exit, completely erase from your mind the worry: "This is such a huge airport—what if I get lost?" You will absolutely not get lost.

If the call to prayer happens after you exit the airport, there's a mosque there—go pray. Don't worry at all. If you need to perform ablution (wudu), go to the facilities and do so. If you need to use the restroom, don't think twice. Let go of your anxiety—where have you arrived? Medina. After reaching Medina, the city among cities, there should be no anxiety. You need to maintain tranquility there.

Go freshen up. You'll see many volunteers wearing Indian-colored clothing or flag-emblazoned uniforms. They'll guide you with gestures toward the buses. Don't collect your suitcases at the airport. All your luggage will reach you where? At your hotel.

When you go down to the bus area, there will be a large space with chairs. You'll be seated there. Then you'll be loaded onto buses in batches. You'll board your bus calmly. Don't forget your hand luggage—keep it with you. Often people panic and forget their hand luggage. The wife thinks the husband picked it up; the husband thinks she picked it up. Nobody picked it up, and someone else walked away with it. That becomes a problem. Keep your hand luggage with you, and then board the bus.

The Wait Before Departure

Once you're on the bus, it'll take half an hour to an hour before you move. Don't worry—the bus won't leave immediately. You'll be counted properly. Your passport will be collected right there at the airport. The Mua'llim's (guide's) staff will have a complete list with all your details. Only when the complete, confirmed counting is done will they signal the bus to move. They'll give the bus a letter to show at any checkpoint along the route.

Don't even think that you'll be left behind. Nobody gets left behind. Until the bus has all the passengers on its complete list, it won't move. So there's no need to panic.

You'll be given light refreshments on the bus. The bus will then take you directly from the airport to where? Your Medina hotel.

Hotel Arrangements

Before you leave India, you'll be given a hotel number—Medina hotel number 20, or 120, or 220, or 52. When you receive that number (and God willing, we'll get it), while still in India we'll send you on WhatsApp all the details about your hotel building—the route, the building name, everything. We have complete data on all of this, which we'll share with you. You don't need to worry about this either.

Getting Your Room: Two Methods

When you reach your hotel, how will you get your room? There are two methods—one of these will apply:

Method One: When you arrive, there will be Hajj Mission staff present (the Hajj Committee's staff in Saudi Arabia is called the Hajj Mission). They'll have a list. They'll check names—"Mohammad Qasim"—and hand you the hotel key with the room number written on it. The list will be proper and organized, and they'll give you your key. You go to that room. Rooms don't change.

Method Two: When you leave India, you'll receive an Indian ID card. All pilgrims receive these cards, and you'll need to wear it around your neck at the Hajj House. This doesn't come off your neck. It stays with you the entire time.

We advise that you do your "twinning" right on the bus. What's twinning? If two people are traveling together, find another pair who seem suitable to you. Now's your chance. When you reach the Medina hotel, take one card—yours—and gather three others. Total how many cards? Four cards. Or make it five cards if someone traveling as three joins with a pair of two. These groups of four or five are formed, and whoever is the main person—the one who looks like they can handle crowds—takes all the cards. The rest can sit comfortably on the sofas in the lobby.

That person goes to the Mua'llim's representative, hands over the five cards. They'll see five cards and give you a five-bed room. Whatever room you're assigned, that's where you'll stay.

Understanding Your Room

Your room will have five beds arranged like the one in the picture. This is how your room will look. Your luggage will arrive—it might come two hours after you, or it might take six hours. You'll go to the room you were just shown. That room will have an attached bathroom and toilet.

The hotels in Medina are all similar to hotels in India. The only difference is that in India, when you go to any hotel, there's typically one king-size double bed. In Saudi Arabia, the custom is single beds. Four beds, five beds—sometimes even eight beds in a room.



The Hajj Committee of India has written in its guidelines that people start fighting there saying, "No, brother, how can we stay in this room? Eight

people?" But you already signed a declaration accepting this: "Yes, I agreed." Once you agreed, why fight later about the motorcycle not being available? You should have decided beforehand. You got caught in the matter.

Either don't sign, or accept what you signed. The signature is what's important. There's no video recording of you saying "I agree." In a marriage, when you sign the nikah certificate, that's what matters. If proof is needed, the nikah certificate is shown. Similarly, you gave this to the Hajj Committee: "Yes, I agreed. Even if you give me a ten-bed room, brother, no problem."

Often people start fighting about this.

Critical Advisory: Maintaining Composure in the Sacred City

Fighting in Medina is a serious matter. Let me tell you something, my friend: even if you receive the most precious walnut, you shouldn't crack it with your teeth making a loud "crack" sound—even that's against proper conduct. This is Medina. Fighting and quarreling will put you in serious trouble. In plain words, you'll be trapped.

Because Allah's clear statement is this: whoever didn't accept Our Prophet, we cannot even meet. The means to reach Allah is only through the Prophet. So where even the "crack" of a walnut can catch you, you're saying you won't accept the bed arrangements?

Whether you get a five-bed or four-bed room, you go there to pray. Just keep this in mind and stay in this mindset. When our father is admitted to the ICU, we don't ask the hospital for a bed for ourselves. We just wait—for reports, for tests, for more tests—and spend the night sitting in a chair. That's exactly what happens. What's our purpose? Father should get well. That's the only purpose.

And there, we've gone to seek forgiveness for our father, for our children. Not even Medanta Hospital can provide that. Apollo can't provide that. We've gone to ask Allah, and we got tangled up in making a fuss about how many beds were provided?

You need to be cautious about this, my friend. The purpose of these training camps we conduct is simply this: understand what matters. Don't fight there. If you get caught in fights, that's trouble.

Conclusion: The Right Focus for Your Journey

As you begin this sacred journey, remember that every challenge you face—from prayer on the plane to hotel accommodations—is an opportunity to demonstrate patience, humility, and understanding. The Prophet ﷺ said that Hajj is Arafat, but Hajj is also every moment from when you leave your home until you return. Your character during this journey is as much a part of your Hajj as your rituals in Mecca.

Don't let Shaitan distract you with questions about traveler's prayers when you should be focusing on the quality of your prayers. Don't let frustration over hotel rooms ruin your peace in the city of the Prophet. Don't cause difficulty for airline staff or hotel workers in your eagerness to perform worship.

You're going to the house of Allah, to the city of His Beloved Prophet. Go with an open heart, a patient spirit, and trust in the arrangements that have been made. Focus on what truly matters: standing before your Lord with a sincere heart, seeking His forgiveness, and following in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ.

The practical details we've covered—prayers, phones, arrivals, and accommodations—are meant to give you peace of mind so you can focus on the spiritual purpose of your journey. Handle these matters with wisdom, and let your heart remain attached to what's most important.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



PRAYER DURING TRAVEL

On the flight; Pray seated in your place as a traveler would

- **In congregation:** Always perform full prayers, regardless of location
- **Alone and traveling:** Four-unit prayers become two units.
- **Sunnah and nafl prayers:** Continue them when possible, especially in **Medina and Mecca**
- **Witr prayer:** Always required with Isha



MOBILE PHONE STRATEGY

- **Keep Indian SIM** with international roaming if you need it for business, banking, or important contacts.
- **Vodafone, Airtel, and Jio** all work in Saudi Arabia (20-40 day packages available).
- Get Saudi SIM at your hotel, not at the airport
- Major Saudi carriers: STC, Mobily, Zain, Salam
- All Saudi SIMs provide talk minutes plus data; all are llage reliable



COMMUNICATION APPS

- **WhatsApp calling** is banned in Saudi Arabia.
- Use **instead:** IMO, Botim, Google Meet, or Telegram
- Install and practice these apps before departure
- Ensure family members in India also have these apps installed
- Use **hotel WiFi** whenever possible to conserve data



HOTEL CHECK-IN

- Either receive room key from **Hajj Mission** staff with list, OR
- **Form groups** of 4-5 people ("twinning") and submit ID cards together
- Room assignment is final; no room changes
- Luggage arrives 2-6 hours after you go
- All rooms have attached bathrooms



ARRIVAL PROCEDURES



- Only carry hand luggage from airport; main luggage goes directly to hotel
- Don't rush; volunteers will guide you to buses
- Passport collected at airport
- Bus won't leave until all passengers accounted for
- Light refreshments provided on bus
- Journey takes you directly to your Medina hotel



HOTEL CHECK-IN

- Either receive room key from **Hajj Mission** staff with list, OR
- **Form groups** of 4-5 people ("twinning") and submit ID cards together
- Room assignment is final; no room changes
- Luggage arrives 2-6 hours after you go
- All rooms have attached bathrooms
- WiFi password posted on hotel pillars


Remember: If pilgrims spent 10% of the energy they use worrying about logistics on perfecting their actual Hajj experience, that would be great. Keep your priorities straight, trust in Allah's arrangements, and focus on the sacred purpose of your journey.

Your Hajj is waiting. May it be the experience of a lifetime and the turning point in your path toward Allah.

This guide is based on experiences from Hajj 1444-1447 (2023-2026) and is continuously updated.

Ameen. May your journey be blessed.

References

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