

Intentions:

- Remember that actions are judged according to intentions. Frequently purify and renew your intentions, especially when things become challenging or you find yourself feeling lazy.
- Also take special care to stay on guard against all that which would pollute your intentions – both internal forces and external. Just because you're going for Hajj, doesn't mean the shayateen will stay away from you. Be cautious about thoughts, feelings, activities, discussions, and even people that could take you away from Allah's pleasure.

Personal preparation:

- **Dua:** Don't underestimate the importance of writing down duas and things that are important to you. Your dua list – which includes not only your own duas, but also those that others ask you to make for them, is extremely important. Your memory is limited, and when the times come to make those duas, you don't want to be so overwhelmed by emotion or tiredness that you forget all the duas you intended to make. As a traveler, your duas are much more likely to be accepted – even *before* the 5 days. It's a journey of dua, so don't rely on others to make dua *for* you. It's you and Allah. And dua is the essence of that link – so give it its due attention. ([This post](#) might help).
- Learn how to pray the Janazah salaah. You'll get lots of opportunities to do it, and you don't want to miss the rewards and benefits thereof.
- You'll need a lot of sabr. Things will go wrong, so be mentally prepared and make the decision to be patient, not panic, and enjoy it– taking positives from it. Stop and think before you complain, and try to see the wisdom in Allah's putting the problem in your path.
- Fear and anxiety are all in your mind. The reality usually isn't as bad as you imagined. Necessity conquers fear, so try to save yourself the trouble beforehand by remembering this.
- At all times, DO NOT do things that will displease Allah. Be very careful of mixed-gender social gatherings, and be careful of over-indulging in terms of food and other pleasures.

Logistical:

- Don't pack a lot of clothes. And be prepared to do a little bit of your own washing (via handwashing in the bath) every few days – unless you want to pay crazy laundry prices.
- Before you go, don't stress about foreign exchange. There are many money exchanges, and they all take your Rands (for South Africans). At the very least, just keep some Riyals with you for your first day or so.
- Make sure your luggage is uniquely identifiable. Even if you have to put bright children's stickers on – do it. Embarrassment is better than struggling to find your bags.

While travelling:

- Guard your salaah at all times – even on the plane. Learn about salaah of the traveller; including how to make wudu and salaah on a plane. Where possible, combine salaahs while you're on the ground (before or after the flight). For Fajr on the plane, it's about an hour before sunrise – wherever you are – so ask the flight crew to help with timing and qibla direction, and do your best. You can't skip salaah, or make it late, just because of travel. You *have* to try to make salaah on the plane.
- Look for positive opportunities to gain reward by helping others: share food with others, and if you're experienced and capable in handling paperwork an, luggage, and getting to the right places, try to help those who find it difficult. Also make special effort to help older people.
- Try NOT to watch the movies and TV shows on the plane (regardless of their content). Start to avoid these forms of distraction so that it'll be easier to shun them once you get to Madinah or Makkah (where TV is available in your hotel room).
- If your leader(s) seem to be making things worse, keep your cool and encourage others to do the same. Try to act with firmness, but in a constructive manner, to ensure that things get sorted out – without being insulting to those who are not fulfilling your expectations. Be patient, make dua for them, and focus on making the trial as smooth as possible.
- While waiting, use your time wisely. Avoid useless chatting and doing things that have no spiritual benefit. If you want to sleep, make an intention that you're doing it as a form of worship (i.e. to gain strength for the travel that's still to come). And if not, engage in other acts of worship, or even spiritually beneficial

conversations with your travel companions. You may never travel with people like this again, so use the opportunity to derive maximum benefit from the situation.

- When foreigners push and shove, consider the idea that it may just be normal behaviour for them back home – and that they're not trying to be rude. Be compassionate yet firm with them, and be patient.

Madinah:

- Before getting off the plane, use the toilet. The ones inside may not be very clean.
- Early on, imagine how it'll be when you have to leave Madinah. Use this feeling to help you appreciate it and make the most of it.
- Distractions – e.g. cellphones ringing – will often be present. You can't change or avoid this, so don't complain. Accept the reality and try to focus your heart on Allah instead – building a strong connection that won't let these minor things disturb you. Make dua to achieve that state, and try to achieve it via sabr.
- Hajj is a journey of dua and constant connection to Allah; so use your time to make all the duas you want (your list should help). Strengthen your bond with Allah via acts of worship pleasing to Him. After all, back home, you'll probably never get this kind of chance to focus 100% on such activities – so embrace and use the chances while you have them on this trip.
- Drink plenty of zam-zam, and make intentions each time, and duas with it. And believe with certainty that it has the benefits mentioned in the hadiths.
- Since you'll probably be spending a lot of time in the masjid between salaahs, plan your time beforehand and take the stuff you'll need (e.g. your Quran, books, pen and paper, and even your Netbook / iPad / compact computer).
- When visiting masjids and sacred sites, respect the people there and maintain the proper etiquettes of the place. If there are rules posted on a notice (e.g. no photography), follow the rules – and don't disturb people by raising your voice.
- If you buy dates to take home, make sure you seal them properly, or you may have trouble bringing them into the country. Your Hajj operator should be able to advise you on this.
- When learning about historical events and places, try to extract lessons that you can apply in today's times – and your own personal life.
- Very carefully manage and limit your shopping so that you can maximize your time in the masjid. You may never visit Madinah again, so remember that shopping is a side benefit – not the main reason you're there.
- When touring, you'll get people that make things difficult for others. If you have no control, don't complain or whine. Just appreciate that you got to be there and make the most of it. And make dua that you'll get another chance to FULLY experience it in future.
- Don't believe everything you hear about the historical sites in Islam. Many people narrate unauthentic stories and folklore that may have no real basis.
- Although the Saudi government discourages visits to historical sites other than the main, famous ones, try to understand the reasoning behind this. And if you want to visit those sites for legitimate reasons (i.e. you're NOT going to do bi'dah there), visit. It helps you make more of your trip, and also gives you a taste of other areas that aren't so shiny and impressive.
- Try to visit the Madinah Multimedia museum if possible.
- For males, try to visit Janatul Baqi – but DO NOT carry out any acts of shirk or bidah. Never, ever pray **TO** the dead – only pray **FOR** them! Participate in a burial if you can – and make it a means of benefit by remembering that you will be in this position one day.
- For males, if it's too busy in or outside the masjid, try to go up to the roof. It's *amazing* up there – and much quieter.
- In the Rawda, don't push others and don't be rude – even though others may do it to you. Be patient, and when you get your chance, don't take too much time. Give others a chance. And remember that as soon as you're on the green / cream carpet, you're in the Rawda. So even if you can't make salaah yet, still make dua – because you're in a piece of Jannah!

More tips to follow in part 2, insha-Allah