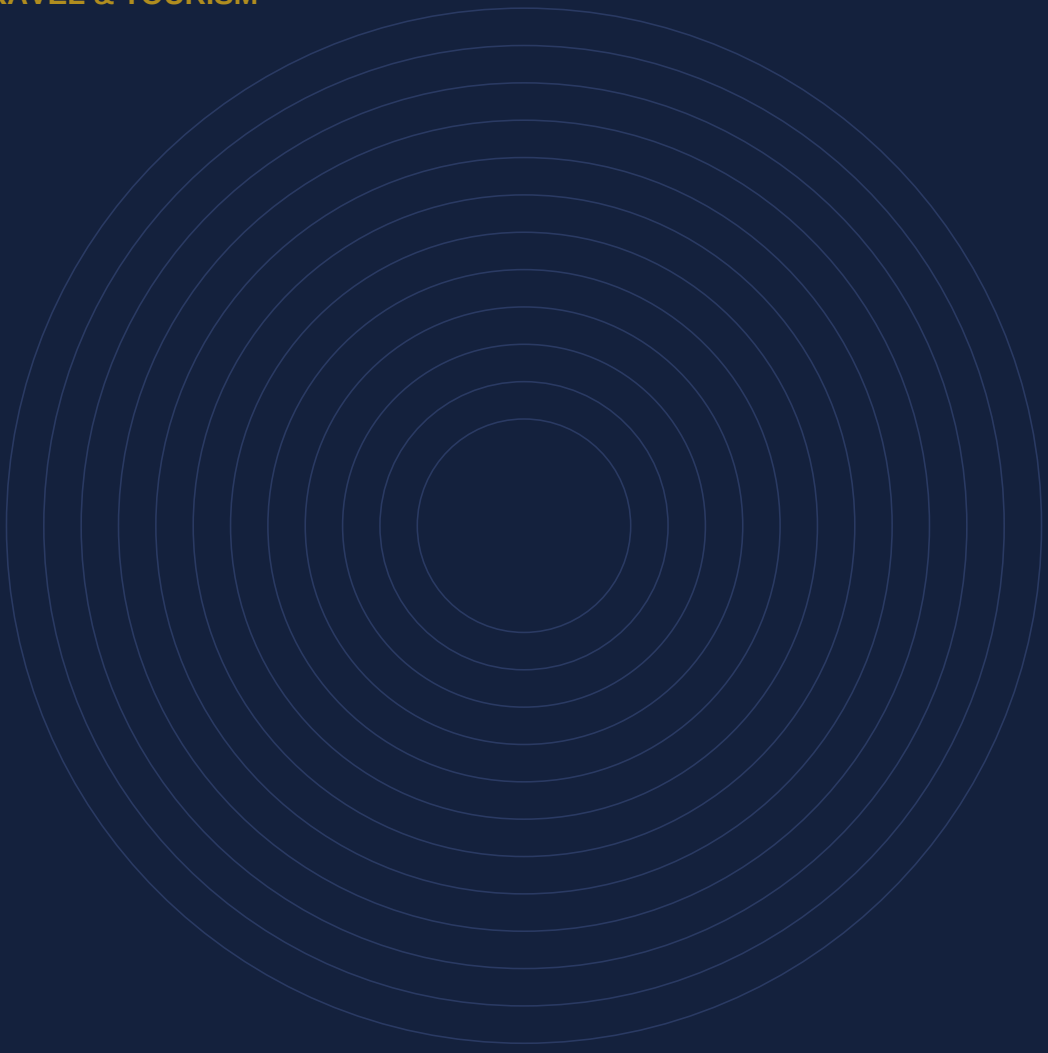
BGS TRAVEL & TOURISM



Your Umrah, Planned Right

A practical guide to booking and performing Umrah from the UAE

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WELCOME

Assalamu alaikum, and welcome

Umrah is one of the most meaningful journeys a Muslim can make. It is also a trip with many moving parts: visas, flights into Jeddah or Madinah, hotels near the two Holy Mosques, transport between cities, permits and timing. When any one of these is planned badly, the experience suffers: long walks in the heat, missed permits, or paying far more than you needed to.

This guide is written by the BGS Travel & Tourism team in Dubai to help you plan well. It explains how to choose the right time, budget and hotel, what documents you need, how to perform Umrah step by step, and how to avoid the mistakes we see travellers make every season.

Before you rely on any rule in this guide

Saudi visa, health and permit rules change, sometimes at short notice. Always confirm the current requirements on the official Nusuk platform or with your travel consultant before you book and again before you fly.

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CHAPTER 1

Understanding Umrah

Umrah is often called the 'lesser pilgrimage'. Unlike Hajj, which takes place on fixed days in Dhul Hijjah, Umrah can be performed at almost any time of the year. It is a Sunnah act of worship that many Muslims perform several times in their life.

Umrah and Hajj: the key differences

	Umrah	Hajj
When	Almost any time of year	Fixed days in Dhul Hijjah
Length of rituals	A few hours	Five to six days
Main rituals	Ihram, Tawaf, Sa'i, shaving or trimming hair	Umrah rituals plus Arafat, Muzdalifah, Mina and more
Status	Sunnah (strongly recommended)	Obligatory once for those able
Crowds	Vary by season	Very large, quota-controlled

The four parts of Umrah

- **Ihram:** entering the sacred state with intention (niyyah) and the prescribed clothing, before crossing the Miqat.
- **Tawaf:** walking around the Kaaba seven times, starting and ending at the Black Stone line.
- **Sa'i:** walking seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah.
- **Halq or Taqsir:** men shave or shorten their hair; women cut a small fingertip-length of hair. Umrah is then complete.

Most travellers also spend several days in Madinah to pray at Masjid an-Nabawi and visit the Prophet's mosque, peace be upon him. Visiting Madinah is not part of Umrah itself, but it is part of almost every Umrah trip.

CHAPTER 2

When to go

Your dates decide your price, your crowd levels and your comfort more than anything else.

Season	What to expect	Price level
Ramadan, especially the last 10 nights	Highest reward and highest demand; very crowded; hotels near the Haram sell out months ahead	Highest
School holidays (summer, winter, spring)	Families travel; busy weekends; book 6-10 weeks ahead	High
Rabi al-Awwal, Rajab, Sha'ban	Popular months; moderate to busy	Medium to high
After Hajj until mid-autumn	Season reopens; hot in summer; quieter in early weeks	Low to medium
Normal weeks in winter	Comfortable weather (roughly 20-30°C in Makkah), steady crowds	Medium

Practical timing tips

- **Weekdays are cheaper.** Arriving on a Sunday or Monday and leaving before the weekend can lower hotel rates.
- **Summer heat is serious.** Daytime temperatures in Makkah can exceed 40°C. Plan Tawaf and Sa'i for night or early morning.
- **Ramadan needs early planning.** For the last ten nights, start booking three to four months ahead.
- **Allow enough days.** A comfortable trip for most people is 7-10 nights: about 4-5 in Makkah and 3-4 in Madinah.
- **Check the Umrah season calendar.** Umrah is paused for international visitors around the Hajj period each year.

BGS tip

If your dates are flexible, tell us your budget and we will compare two or three date options. Moving a trip by a week can change the package price significantly.

CHAPTER 3

Visas and documents

Most UAE residents can perform Umrah on one of a few visa routes. Which one fits you depends on your nationality and residency.

Route	Who it suits	Notes
Umrah visa (through an approved provider)	Most travellers, including many UAE residents	Issued with an accommodation and transport package; validity and stay limits are set by the Saudi authorities
Saudi tourist eVisa	Eligible nationalities and holders of eligible residencies or visas	Can be used for Umrah outside the Hajj season; apply online
GCC residents' visa routes	Residents of GCC countries meeting the criteria	Eligibility depends on profession and residency rules at the time
GCC citizens	Citizens of GCC states	Travel with national ID; no visa needed

Documents to prepare

- Passport valid for at least six months from your travel date, with blank pages.
- UAE residence visa / Emirates ID (if applying as a UAE resident) valid for the whole trip.
- Recent passport-style photo with a white background.
- Proof of vaccination where required (see Chapter 4).
- For children travelling with one parent or relatives: birth certificate and any consent documents requested.
- Hotel confirmations and return ticket, which are often checked at the airport.

Avoid this common problem

Names must match exactly across passport, visa and flight ticket. A missing middle name or a swapped first and last name can lead to denied boarding. Send clear passport copies to your agent and check every booking.

CHAPTER 4

Health and vaccinations

Umrah is physically demanding. A little preparation makes a big difference.

Vaccinations

- The **meningococcal (ACYW) vaccine** has long been required for Umrah visitors. Get it at least 10 days before travel and keep the certificate.
- Seasonal influenza vaccination is strongly recommended, particularly for older pilgrims and people with chronic illness.
- Check the current Saudi Ministry of Health requirements before you travel, as rules can be updated each season.

Staying well during Umrah

- **Walk before you go.** Expect 10-20 km of walking on some days. Start walking daily a few weeks before departure.
- **Hydrate.** Drink Zamzam and water regularly; carry a small bottle and oral rehydration sachets.
- **Protect your feet.** Break in comfortable sandals and carry plasters for blisters.
- **Bring your medicines** in original packaging with prescriptions, plus extra for delays.
- **Rest between rituals.** Many pilgrims fall ill from exhaustion; a hotel close to the Haram lets you rest between prayers.
- **Use a mask in crowds** if you are vulnerable to respiratory infections.
- **Travel insurance** with medical cover is strongly recommended.

For elderly or less mobile pilgrims

Wheelchairs and electric carts are available at the Haram for Tawaf and Sa'i. Ask us to arrange a hotel within short walking distance and a private car rather than a shared bus.

CHAPTER 5

Budgeting your Umrah

An Umrah package is made of a few big costs. Knowing them helps you compare offers properly.

Cost item	What drives the price
Flights	Season, airline, direct vs connecting, flying into Jeddah or Madinah, booking time
Hotel in Makkah	Distance to the Haram, star rating, room type (double/triple/quad), view, meals
Hotel in Madinah	Distance to Masjid an-Nabawi (Markazia central area is closest), star rating
Visa	Visa type and provider fees
Transport	Private car, GMC or van vs shared bus; Haramain train between cities
Extras	Ziyarat tours, insurance, meals, laundry, gifts and dates

How to save without hurting your trip

- **Share a room.** Triple and quad rooms bring the per-person price down sharply for families and groups.
- **Spend on location in Makkah, save in Madinah**, or the other way round, depending on where you will spend more time.
- **Fly into Jeddah, home from Madinah** (or the reverse) to avoid a long road trip back.
- **Book early** for school holidays and Ramadan; last-minute prices near the Haram can double.
- **Compare the total, not the headline.** A cheap package with a hotel 2 km away often costs more in taxis and tiredness.

Ask for an itemised quote

A good agent shows flights, each hotel, visa and transport separately. That way you can see exactly what you are paying for and change one part without rebuilding the whole package.

CHAPTER 6

Flights from the UAE

Flights from the UAE to Saudi Arabia are short, frequent and often good value.

Option	Good for
Dubai (DXB) to Jeddah (JED)	Most common route; many daily flights; then about 1-1.5 hours by road to Makkah
Dubai or Sharjah to Madinah (MED)	Starting your trip in Madinah first; arriving close to Masjid an-Nabawi
Open-jaw: into Jeddah, home from Madinah	Avoids driving back to Jeddah; saves a day of travel
Sharjah (SHJ) or Abu Dhabi (AUH)	Sometimes cheaper fares with low-cost airlines; compare total cost including baggage

Flight tips

- **Check baggage rules.** Low-cost fares may not include checked baggage; Zamzam allowances vary by airline.
- **Wearing Ihram on the plane:** if you fly straight to Jeddah for Umrah, you will pass the Miqat in the air. Change into Ihram before boarding or on board before the announcement (see Chapter 10).
- **Avoid tight connections.** Direct flights are best for families and elderly pilgrims.
- **Fares change daily.** Prices in any quote are only guaranteed once tickets are issued.

CHAPTER 7

Choosing your hotels

Hotel location is the single biggest factor in how your Umrah feels.

Level	Makkah (to the Haram)	Madinah (to Masjid an-Nabawi)	Best for
Economy	About 800 m - 1.5 km, or shuttle	About 500 m - 1 km	Budget travellers, young and fit pilgrims
Standard	About 300 - 700 m	About 150 - 400 m	Families, most travellers
Premium	On the Haram front (Abraj Al Bait / Ibrahim Khalil area), some with Kaaba view	Markazia central area, steps from the gates	Elderly pilgrims, Ramadan, comfort

What to check before you book

- **Real walking distance**, not straight-line distance. Hills, tunnels and crowd barriers add time.
- **Gate access.** In Makkah, which gate of the Haram is closest? In Madinah, is the hotel near the women's gates if needed?
- **Meals.** Breakfast only, half board or full board? Many premium hotels sell out of meal plans in Ramadan.
- **Lifts at prayer time.** Large hotels can have long lift queues; higher floors take longer to leave.
- **Room configuration.** Confirm bed setup for triples and quads, and extra beds for children.
- **Check-in and check-out times**, especially if you arrive at night or leave early.

BGS tip

For a family with children or elderly parents, a standard hotel 300-500 m from the Haram usually gives the best balance of comfort and price. You can rest between prayers instead of staying in the mosque all day.

CHAPTER 8

Transport inside Saudi Arabia

You will usually need four transfers: airport to first city, city to city, local trips, and back to the airport.

Option	Pros	Cons
Private car / GMC / van	Door to door; flexible timing; ideal for families and elderly	Higher cost for small groups
Haramain high-speed train	Fast (about 2-2.5 hours Makkah to Madinah); comfortable	Need transfers to and from stations; book seats early in peak season
Shared bus with a group	Lowest cost	Fixed times; waiting for others; long stops
Taxis and ride-hailing apps	Useful for short local trips	Prices rise at peak times; roads near the Haram close at prayer times

Tips

- Book your airport pickup in advance, with the driver's number shared before you fly.
- Allow extra time near prayer times: roads around both Holy Mosques get closed or congested.
- If you are doing Ziyarat (visits to historical sites), a private car with a knowledgeable driver is worth it.

CHAPTER 9

The Nusuk app and permits

Nusuk is the official Saudi platform for Umrah and visits to the Holy Mosques.

- **Download Nusuk** before you travel and create an account with your passport or residency details.
- **Umrah permit:** Nusuk has been used to book Umrah time slots, particularly in busy seasons. Check whether a permit is needed for your dates.
- **Rawdah visit:** praying in Al-Rawdah Al-Sharifah in Masjid an-Nabawi requires a time slot booked in Nusuk. Slots fill quickly, so book as soon as your dates are confirmed.
- **Show your permit** on your phone at the entry point; keep your phone charged and carry a power bank.
- **Other services:** Nusuk also offers information, maps and some booking services. Use the official app only.

Rawdah tip

New Rawdah slots are released on a rolling basis. If you cannot find one, check again early each morning and late at night. Men and women have separate time slots.

Useful apps to have

- Nusuk (official Umrah and Rawdah permits)
- Your airline app (check-in, boarding pass, baggage)
- A map app with offline maps of Makkah and Madinah
- A ride-hailing app for short trips
- A prayer times and Qibla app

CHAPTER 10

Ihram and the Miqat

Ihram is the sacred state you enter before Umrah. It must be entered before crossing the Miqat boundary.

What is the Miqat?

The Miqat is a boundary around Makkah. Pilgrims coming for Umrah must be in Ihram before they pass it. If you fly from the UAE directly to Jeddah for Umrah, your aircraft crosses the Miqat before landing, so you should enter Ihram before or during the flight. If you go to Madinah first, the Miqat for your journey to Makkah is Dhul Hulayfah (Abyar Ali), near Madinah.

Preparing for Ihram

- Trim nails, remove unwanted hair and take a full bath (ghusl) before Ihram.
- **Men:** two white unstitched sheets (izar and rida) and sandals that leave the ankle and top of the foot uncovered.
- **Women:** normal modest clothing that covers the body; the face and hands remain uncovered.
- Make your intention (niyyah) for Umrah and begin reciting the Talbiyah: *Labbayk Allahumma labbayk...*

Things to avoid while in Ihram

- Perfume or scented soap and products
- Cutting hair or nails
- Men covering the head or wearing stitched clothing
- Women covering the face with a niqab or wearing gloves
- Marital relations
- Hunting, arguing and bad language

Practical

Put scent-free soap, unscented wipes and a waist belt for valuables in your hand luggage. Men flying to Jeddah can wear Ihram at the airport in the UAE to keep things simple.

CHAPTER 11

Performing Umrah step by step

This summary is a practical guide. Learn the full rulings and duas from a trusted scholar or course before you go.

1. Enter Ihram at or before the Miqat

Make the intention for Umrah and recite the Talbiyah frequently until you begin Tawaf.

2. Arrive at Masjid al-Haram

Enter with the right foot and the dua for entering the mosque. Men uncover the right shoulder (idtiba) for Tawaf.

3. Tawaf: seven circuits around the Kaaba

Begin at the Black Stone line, keeping the Kaaba on your left. Point towards the Black Stone and say Bismillah, Allahu Akbar at the start of each circuit. Men walk briskly (raml) in the first three circuits where possible. Make your own duas; between the Yemeni Corner and the Black Stone recite: *Rabbana atina fid-dunya hasanah...*

4. Pray two rak'ahs

Pray behind Maqam Ibrahim if possible, or anywhere in the mosque. Then drink Zamzam.

5. Sa'i between Safa and Marwah

Start at Safa, facing the Kaaba, and walk to Marwah: that is one lap. Complete seven laps, ending at Marwah. Men jog lightly between the green lights.

6. Halq or Taqsir

Men shave the head (preferred) or shorten the hair evenly. Women cut a fingertip-length from the end of their hair. Your Umrah is now complete and Ihram restrictions end.

Timing

The whole Umrah usually takes 3-5 hours depending on crowds. Late night and the hours after Fajr are often less crowded. Upper floors and the roof are less crowded but the circuits are longer.

CHAPTER 12

Your time in Madinah

Madinah is calmer and gentler, and many pilgrims say it is their favourite part of the journey.

- **Pray in Masjid an-Nabawi.** A prayer here is greatly rewarded. Arrive early for good spots, especially on Fridays.
- **Visit and send salam** to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions Abu Bakr and Umar, may Allah be pleased with them.
- **Rawdah:** book your slot on Nusuk (Chapter 9).
- **Masjid Quba:** praying two rak'ahs in Quba Mosque carries the reward of an Umrah, according to the hadith. Go in the morning.
- **Ziyarat:** commonly visited places include Mount Uhud and the martyrs' cemetery, Masjid al-Qiblatain and the Seven Mosques area.
- **Al-Baqi cemetery** is next to the mosque; visiting hours are limited, so check times locally.
- **Shopping:** dates from Madinah (such as Ajwa) make meaningful gifts; buy from established shops.

Suggested split

For a 7-night trip: 4 nights in Makkah and 3 in Madinah. For 10 nights: 5 and 5, or 6 and 4. Elderly pilgrims often prefer to start in Madinah to rest before Umrah.

CHAPTER 13

Women, children and elderly pilgrims

Umrah is for the whole family. A few extra steps make it easier for everyone.

Women

- Saudi rules have changed in recent years regarding women travelling for Umrah without a mahram. Check the current rule for your nationality and age before booking.
- Women have their own prayer areas and separate Rawdah time slots.
- Plan around menstruation: Tawaf requires purity, so build flexible days into your trip and learn the rulings in advance.

Children

- Children's Umrah is valid; a guardian makes the intention for a very young child.
- Write your phone number on a wristband for each child; agree on a meeting point at a named gate.
- Use a light, foldable stroller where permitted, and avoid peak crowds for Tawaf.

Elderly and less mobile pilgrims

- Choose a hotel very close to the Haram, ideally with direct access.
- Use wheelchair or electric cart services for Tawaf and Sa'i.
- Keep medicines, a medical summary and emergency contacts in the hand luggage.
- Plan rest days; do not try to attend every prayer in the mosque.

CHAPTER 14

Packing list

Pack light: you will walk a lot, and you will want space for Zamzam, dates and gifts.

Documents and money

- [ ] Passport, Emirates ID, visa printout
- [ ] Flight tickets and hotel confirmations
- [ ] Vaccination certificate
- [ ] Travel insurance details
- [ ] Bank card plus some Saudi riyals in cash
- [ ] Copies of documents (paper and on phone)

Ihram and clothing

- [ ] Men: two Ihram sets, Ihram belt, open sandals
- [ ] Women: comfortable modest clothing, abayas, scarves
- [ ] Light clothes for the heat or a jacket for winter evenings
- [ ] Comfortable walking shoes
- [ ] Small prayer mat

Health and comfort

- [ ] Personal medicines plus extra
- [ ] Unscented soap, shampoo, deodorant and wipes
- [ ] Plasters, blister pads, pain relief, oral rehydration salts
- [ ] Sunscreen (unscented for Ihram), umbrella or cap after Umrah
- [ ] Reusable water bottle
- [ ] Face masks

Useful extras

- [ ] Power bank and charging cables
- [ ] Small backpack or shoe bag for the mosque
- [ ] Pocket dua book or app
- [ ] Earplugs and an eye mask
- [ ] Name and phone wristbands for children

CHAPTER 15

Ten booking mistakes to avoid

We see these every season. Each one is easy to avoid with a little planning.

1. Choosing a hotel on price alone

A cheap hotel 2 km away can cost you hours of walking and taxi money every day.

2. Booking Ramadan too late

Hotels near the Haram for the last ten nights are often full months in advance.

3. Names not matching passports

Small spelling differences can stop you boarding.

4. Ignoring baggage rules

Low-cost fares may not include checked baggage or Zamzam.

5. Not booking the Rawdah slot early

Many pilgrims leave Madinah without a slot because they tried too late.

6. Forgetting the Miqat on the plane

If you fly straight to Jeddah, you must be in Ihram before landing.

7. Too few days

Rushing leaves no time to rest, recover or repeat acts of worship.

8. No travel insurance

Medical costs abroad can be high; cover is inexpensive by comparison.

9. Unclear quotes

Always ask what is included: meals, transfers, visa, Ziyarat.

10. Unlicensed agents

Book through an established, licensed travel company with clear contact details.

CHAPTER 16

Your planning checklist

Work through this list from about eight weeks before travel.

6-8 weeks before

- [ ] Choose dates and number of nights in Makkah and Madinah
- [ ] Agree your budget and hotel level
- [ ] Send passport and residency copies to your agent
- [ ] Book flights and hotels; ask for an itemised quote

3-4 weeks before

- [ ] Visa applied for and approved
- [ ] Vaccinations done; certificates saved
- [ ] Travel insurance bought
- [ ] Transport booked: airport pickup, city transfer, Ziyarat

1-2 weeks before

- [ ] Nusuk account created; Umrah permit and Rawdah slot booked if available
- [ ] Learn the steps and duas of Umrah
- [ ] Start daily walking
- [ ] Buy Ihram, unscented toiletries and comfortable sandals

Day of travel

- [ ] Ghusl and Ihram (if flying straight to Jeddah)
- [ ] Documents, medicines and power bank in hand luggage
- [ ] Driver's contact saved on your phone
- [ ] Make your intention and begin the Talbiyah

CHAPTER 17

How BGS Travel & Tourism helps

We plan Umrah for individuals, families and groups from the UAE, from simple packages to fully private trips.

What we arrange	How it helps you
Itemised package quotes	See flights, each hotel, visa and transport separately; change any part
Live flight comparison	We check current fares across airlines and routes, including open-jaw Jeddah/Madinah
Hotels by real walking distance	Economy, standard and premium options matched to your family's needs
Umrah visa support	We guide your documents and application
Private transport and Ziyarat	Car, GMC or van with door-to-door transfers and guided visits
Ramadan and school holiday planning	Early booking for peak dates
Group and family packages	Shared triple and quad rooms to lower the per-person price

Get your free Umrah quote

WhatsApp us on +1 208-464-0618 with:

1. Number of adults and children 2. Preferred dates 3. Nights in Makkah and Madinah 4. Hotel level (economy, standard or premium)

We will send you an itemised quote with live flight prices, usually the same day.

May Allah accept your Umrah and make your journey easy. *Umrah mabrurah.*

Disclaimer: This guide is general information prepared in 2026. Visa, health, permit and travel rules are set by the authorities and can change. Religious guidance here is a practical summary; please consult a qualified scholar for rulings. Prices are subject to availability.



Ready to plan your Umrah?

Free, itemised quote with live flight prices, usually the same day.

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