

Mon 13th August 2018 (2nd Dhul Hijjah)

- * Leaving kids at Coventry
- * Fathers and mothers pain

Lesson learnt - have total reliance on Allah SWT to protect kids.

Tip - do Hajj before having kids

Tues 14th August (3rd Dhul Hijjah)

- * M25 traffic, 5 hour flight delay - sabr
- * 15 min walk to gate - saved by buggy (Allahs blessing)

Lesson learnt - Test for Sabr starts straight away. Allah SWT could have easily delayed us enough to miss the flight

Tip - give plenty of time before travelling

Weds 15th August (4th Dhul Hijjah)

- * Used soap in Ihram - plane (AARGH)
- * DST- Out of Jeddah Airport in 45 mins (Allahs blessing). No SIM queues. No hotel issues, free lunch. Team leader said Tashreek instead of Talbiyah. □
- * DST 5pm Umrah - sabr, physical, mental, spiritual challenges. Follow gut instinct.
- * Next door were loud. More Sabr
- * Azan was amazing.

Lesson learnt - there will be hardship. Never give up. Seek Allah SWT. Make dua. Ask for help.

Tip - focus to avoid penalties. follow your instincts. Train your calf muscles.

Thurs 16th August (5th Dhul Hijjah)

- * battered & bruised body. Sabr
- * Ibadah - Asr to Esha. Had to sit on chair.
- * Next door were smoking which caused issue to my pregnant wife. More Sabr.

Lesson learnt - stare at Kabah gives so much peace. Carry fluid & snacks.

Tip - take medication to help with recovery. Get to Haram early to get good spot. Stay Asr to Esha if you can.

Fri 17th August (6th Dhul Hijjah)

- * Went for Jumuah at 9am. Body feels even worse. Sabr. Found space on Start of Safa at top floor.

- * Started diary.
- * Next door smoked again. Wife was very angry. More Sabr.

Lesson learnt - lots of time for Ibadah. Carry your own prayer mat.

Tip - goto Jumuah very early.

Sat 18th August (7th Dhul Hijjah)

- * Extreme leg and foot pain, had to buy deep heat and deep freeze
- * Walking Tour with Shaykh Hasib Noor - highlight of Hajj so far. So humbling and emotional. Saw Prophets home, place of worship and saw the graveyard where the girls use to get buried alive.
- * Imams recitation amazing.
- * Next door given final warning.

Lesson learnt - remember that every earth you walk on in Makkah has significance in the lifetime of Prophet SAS

Tip - learn the history of Prophet SAS

Sun 19th August (8th Dhul Hijjah)

- * Got into Hajj Ihram before Fajr
- * Checked out of hotel at 6am. Bus was late for 8am. Got to Mina in 30 mins.
- * Met fellow nice Hajjis in Mina camp who distributed Zikr list, Tasbih and Mangos from Pakistan.

Lesson learnt - learn from your Umrah Ihram violations.

Tip - expect everything to be late. Bond with fellow Hajjis - amazing.

Mon 20th August (9th Dhul Hijjah)

- * Long walk to Mina train station. Frustrated we were not told about carts. Already in pain (leg).
- * Arafat camp was other-side of Masjid Namirah. Something didn't feel right about the luxurious Arafat camp. Having ghusl caused so much anxiety due to fragrance issue. Wuquf was emotional and felt spiritual. The duas and reminders from the Scholars were deep, emotional and humbling (particular Shaykh Hasib Noor),
- * Travel to Muzdalifah was a nightmare. Went to the Disabled/sick queue and still took 1 hour more than normal queue due to 1 lift available. Legs were caving in. Muzdalifah was chaos. The camp was chaos. But the camp was a sight to behold. Collected pebbles outside smelly toilets and woke up in the middle of thinking I was on fire, realising I was asleep above some electric wires.

Lesson learnt - don't use the disabled queue in the train station.

Tip - only use water to bathe. Avoid any products even if they are fragrance-free.

Tue 21st August (10th Dhul Hijjah)

* Left Muzdalifah after Fajr. Amazing site seeing so many groups recite Talbiyah together. Train queue was long, Temp was high and humidity was sticky. Most physically difficult part of Hajj so far especially with little sleep.

* 1st day of Rami on the 5th floor was not too bad. Was busy but manageable. Near side is cramped with overzealous Hajjis. The sound of people pelting I will remember forever.

* Back at the camp, the majority of Hajjis started their Halaq. Queues were very long and the fresh smell of fragrance was everywhere. I waited till after Zuhr once my Hady was confirmed to do the Halaq. Getting out of Ihram felt really good but the appreciation for the restrictions will be forever etched into my head.

* After Asr, we headed to Makkah for Tawaf Ziyarah. Luckily, DST had carts arranged to take some of us to the other side of the tunnel where the buses were waiting. My ankles and tendons have been so badly battered and were extremely sore. This was a welcome relief to save form the 20-30 mins walk.

* Fortunately, via the blessing of Allah SWT we got to Al Shahoda Hotel in 45 mins with the Magrib Azan being called. One of the main roads was closed but a Saudi official needed a lift and therefore as an exception, the DST buses were allowed to enter.

* We started Tawaf Ziyaarat after Esha in the ground floor. This was a unanimous decision amongst the family. None of us enjoyed the Tawaf for Umrah at the rooftop and we felt the spiritual feeling is worth the risk of the overcrowding. First 4 circumambulation were comfortable. Last 3 were very busy, particularly around Hajar Al Aswad. We also lost my father.

* The Sa'ee was also extremely busy, especially at Safa and Marwa. The severe pain on my tendons was so much now that my duas were now for me not to re-rupture my tendons.

* After completion of Sa'ee we met up with our father at Al-Shahoda Hotel. On our way back to Mina Camp I struggled to breathe in the tunnel. The section between the tunnel and our camp was a very humbling, emotional and sad experience. Watching all those fellow Hajjis on the streets, hungry and surrounded by difficult environmental conditions was another picture etched into my memory forever.

Lesson learnt - for every situation there is likely to be a fellow Muslim in a worse situation than you. Be grateful to Allah SWT all the time.

Tip - in the roads of Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah cover use a face mask.

Wed 22nd August (11th Dhul Hijjah)

* Throughout the day/night in the Mina Camp the NYPD Hajjis had many visitors. Some

brought Camel Kebab which I tried for the 1st time.

- * 2nd day of Rami went comfortably although busier than day 1. The crowds were excited.
- * The Shaykhs held some talks in the morning to remind us about accepted Hajj and how we should start thinking about making changes in our lives.
- * We were also told by DST about doing the Rami after Sunrise and before Zawwal to reduce the risk of overcrowding, Heat and logistical ease. We decided against that option as we wanted to follow the Sunnah and pelt after Zawwal.
- * After Maghrib, DST provided a surprise by inviting Shaykh Yasir Qadhi to provide a talk which was very enlightening.
- * One of the brothers came up with the idea of everyone donating some Riyals and the buying Al Bayyeh for the needy outside the tents. Great idea.

Lesson learnt - no matter what anyone says ensure you perform Hajj that makes your heart comfortable.

Tip - get lots of sleep as the 13th Dhul Hijjah is a busy day especially if your going Madinah.

Thu 23rd August (12th Dhul Hijjah)

- * Very emotional day as majority of the Hajjis from the Camps started leaving after Fajr.
- * Rami was surprisingly not busy in the afternoon on the 3rd floor. Pebbles and bottles everywhere - sad.
- * We said goodbye to the camp but the brotherhood developed will be forever remembered.
- * Tawaf Al Wida was also surprisingly comfortable just before Magrib as many pilgrims have remained in Mina. Left Makkah for final time after Esha. Extremely sad moment.
- * Got to Jeddah Hotel at 10pm. Spent a couple of hours to have dinner and freshen up before leaving for Airport.

Lesson learnt - the brotherhood in the camp was truly and deeply amazing. Met some wonderful characters.

Tip - utilise every moment during your stay in Mina for Ibadah, building brotherhood and reflecting on your experience.

Fri 24th August (13th Dhul Hijjah)

- * the 30 mins domestic flight to Madinah was absolute chaos. The boarding passes were randomly given out and the seats of families were everywhere. Pilgrims decided to sit with their families rather than their seat numbers causing a number of issues.
- * We got to Madinah hotel by 730am. Had to wait till 1030am to get our rooms. Pilgrims were physically shattered and many went to sleep in the lounges.
- * I went to the Rawda at 930am and managed to get a space to pray. I couldn't stay till Juma as I need some sleep and rest. Gave Salam towards the graves on my way out. Madinah was

quiet.

* Went with Shaykh Ahmed Biloo to the Rawda in the evening and got some insight to the surroundings. The Mimbars, the yellow markings for the old mosque, the Rawda, the crooked Minaret and the designs of Minarets by different rulers.

Lesson learnt - give many salams as you can to the Prophet SAS.

Tip - when in Rawda pray 2 rakats and make dua during Jalsa. Otherwise guards will ask you to leave.

Sat 25th August (14th Dhul Hijjah)

* Went to visit the Bagee graveyard after Fajr. An emotional moment seeing the graves of the close family and companions. A bit disorganised for the woman's group by DST.

* Treated myself and family to Hardee's.

* Bought some good quality dates from National Date Factory which was recommended by Mowlana Thakib.

* Went to the lecture after Asr.

* Met Qari Bashir. Was difficult conversing with him.

* Had the walking tour in the evening with Shaykh Ahmed and Jameel. Saw the area where the companions met to decide the next Caliph after Prophet SAS. Also, saw the market which has been there since the Prophets SAS time.

Lesson learnt - the walking tours are so insightful.

Tip - more walking will be required in Madinah so rest well.

Sun 26th August (15th Dhul Hijjah)

* After Fajr went to the Mazarat. Visited Uhood, Masjid Quba and Masjid Qiblatain. Shaykh Haseeb gave a detail account of the battle of Uhood. Felt like being in the battle itself.

* Started shopping for family/friends in the afternoon/evening.

Lesson learnt - get sizes before leaving for Saudi.

Tip - keep wudho from hotel to Masjid Quba.

Mon 27th August (16th Dhul Hijjah)

* Farewell lecture after Asr. Emotional moment for all. Time to reflect. DST provided a cake.

* More shopping for family/friends in the afternoon/evening.

Lesson learnt - shopping is tiring and time-consuming.

Tip - don't spend too much time negotiating.

Tue 28th August (17th Dhul Hijjah)

- * Tried to make most of last day in Madinah in the haram.
- * Last minute shopping and then packing.
- * Met Abu Heider. I can't speak Arabic and he can't speak English but Alhamdulillah we manage to communicate.

Lesson learnt - Madinah gets very busy 2/3 days after Hajj finishes.

Tip - don't leave shopping till last day.

Wed 29th August (18th Dhul Hijjah)

- * No sleep and left Madinah very early in the morning.
- * Emotional goodbyes in Madinah to the city and people.
- * Journey back was difficult with waiting and lack of sleep.
- * Last goodbyes in Heathrow.

Lesson learnt - By then end of Hajj you will be on empty and most likely you will fall ill.

Tip - get rest during the day in Madinah.

Thu 30th August (19th Dhul Hijjah)

- * Finally saw the children. Amazing feeling!

Lesson learnt - Anything is possible

With the help of Allah SWT. Leaving children behind and performing Hajj with a pregnant wife can only be done with the help of the Almighty.

Tip - don't delay your Hajj!