

3. Who can help?

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has useful information and advice on its website at www.fco.gov.uk/hajj and can help with some emergencies while you are abroad.

Unhappy with your trip?

If you have a problem while you are abroad, bring it to the attention of the tour operator's representative immediately. They have a duty to make sure that all aspects of the trip are carried out properly, even if they are provided by another individual or company - for example coach transfers.

If the problem is not put right, it is useful to take photos and get statements from other pilgrims that highlight what is wrong. This can support your case when you get home.

When you return

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS) gives advice on many issues including package travel. You can contact the service on **08454 040506** or visit the website www.adviceguide.org.uk

Trading Standards Departments are responsible for enforcing a wide range of consumer protection legislation, including the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992, which apply to Hajj and Umrah packages. If you want to report a problem you can do so through the Citizens Advice Consumer Service, which works in partnership with Trading Standards and will pass on details of your complaint. Trading Standards may then contact you

directly but even if they do not, the information received from Citizens Advice is used to make sure that businesses behave fairly and do not break the law.

If you believe that you have been a victim of fraud, please report it to **Action Fraud** as well by calling **0300 123 2040** or visiting the website www.actionfraud.org.uk

Tower Hamlets Trading Standards can be contacted by telephone on **020 7364 5008**, by fax on **020 7364 6901** or by email to tradingstandards@towerhamlets.gov.uk



HAJJ and UMRAH Travel Advice

Important Information for Pilgrims

Hajj is one of the most significant and spiritual journeys a Muslim can undertake. About 25,000 UK pilgrims travel to Makkah each year to fulfil a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and for most the trip is both memorable and enlightening. However some tour operators fail to keep their promises and provide very poor standards of transport, accommodation, food and other services. In the worst cases operators have disappeared with all the money, leaving pilgrims unable to perform Hajj.

This leaflet outlines some questions you should ask when choosing a reputable tour operator. It also gives useful information on where to seek help if things go wrong.

Before you book



1. Is my Hajj trip ATOL protected?

Any tour operator arranging trips that include flights must hold a current Air Travel Organisers Licence (ATOL). This licence protects your payments and ensures that if the business stops trading before you travel you will get your money back, or if you are already abroad you will be able to get back to the UK without extra cost.

ATOL-protected tour operators should show their licence number on receipts and letters. From 1 October 2012, anyone who books an ATOL-protected journey must be given an ATOL certificate saying who is protected, as soon as any payment is made. Check whether your operator is licensed by looking online at www.caa.co.uk or by calling **020 7453 6424**.

2. Has the tour operator been accredited by the Saudi Embassy?

Only Ministry of Hajj-approved travel agents are able to obtain visas for pilgrims. Make sure your agent is on the approved list by checking the website www.hajjinformation.com. You will not be allowed to enter Saudi Arabia without a visa.

3. What am I paying for?

Agree the travel itinerary and accommodation in writing before paying any money. Examine brochures, leaflets and websites carefully. Ask for pictures of and detailed information on all the accommodation you will be using and ensure that there is sufficient availability for all of your party. Where appropriate, check what transport arrangements are included to take you to and from the different destinations. Keep all brochures and documents relating to the trip in a safe place. Any descriptions about the services and facilities should not be misleading, false or inaccurate.

4. Do I have any special requirements?

If you or any of your party have any special needs or requests, make sure the tour operator is able to meet them before you make the booking. For example, does anyone have particular dietary requirements? Do you want all of your party to be accommodated together? Do you mind sharing with other people? If you are satisfied that your needs can be met, get confirmation in writing from your tour operator and keep it safe.

Before travelling

1. What paperwork should the Tour Operator give me?

The tour operator must give you information about passport and visa requirements, health formalities required for the journey and security and repatriation arrangements made by the tour operator in the event of the business failing. This information should also show the ATOL number.

Before you leave on your trip you must receive written information that details the itinerary, including transport connections and times and places of stop-offs. You should also be given the name and address of a company representative or a telephone number of an appropriate contact for you to use while you are on your trip.

Read through all the information to make sure you understand what you are agreeing to. Keep all documents, invoices, letters and other information relating to the trip in a safe place.

If the tour operator wants to make any major change to your trip you must be told about it as soon as possible so that you can decide whether or not you are prepared to accept.

2. How should I pay?

Paying by credit card can give extra protection if things go wrong. You may be able to claim from the credit company as well as the tour operator if parts of your trip are misdescribed, substandard or not provided at all.