

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The writer's experience with the existing texts available on the subject of Umra and Hajj, which provided him with the incentive and the justification for writing this handbook, has already been mentioned in the introduction "A Personal Note". The format and the subject matter presented in this book are a direct outcome of that experience.

Even a quick and cursory glance through these pages will show that their structure, organization, and textual format are radically different from most books on the subject. In order to be able to use it in the most efficient way possible, it is recommended that the reader follow the sequence of study suggested below. It is the writer's opinion that any attempt to circumvent the suggested methodology is likely to cause confusion and, indeed, will be self-defeating in that it would force the reader eventually to revert to the suggested sequence anyway!

Since the thrust of this book is the simplification of the understanding of Umra and Hajj, the following sequence of study is strongly recommended:

1. Familiarize yourself thoroughly with the terms defined and described in Chapter 2 (**Glossary**). All technical and ritual details of Umra and Hajj that follow in subsequent sections use these terms extensively without elaborating upon them in the text. You will be lost without an adequate study of this chapter.
2. Skip Chapter 3 (**Before You Leave**) and Chapter 4 (**When You Get To Saudi Arabia**), except for Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 which contain useful information about the prerequisites of Hajj. The rest of these chapters advise you on how to prepare for Hajj, what to pack for the journey, etc. They can wait till later. Use the information you have learned in Chapter 2 to your advantage since it is still fresh in your mind, and proceed to Chapter 5 to learn the technical aspects of Umra and Hajj in its light.
3. Go to Chapter 5 (**Umra And Hajj**) and study it in the light of Chapter 2. You may need to return frequently to Chapter 2 to refresh your memory of definitions and procedures. You must be fully comfortable with your understanding of all that is involved in Umra and Hajj before you advance any further in your reading. At this stage, you may also want to decide on the type of Hajj you wish to perform and pay special attention to its specific details.
4. You may now read Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. You can also start planning your schedules, travel and residential arrangements, etc. in the light of this information. Talk to your travel agent if any questions come to your mind during this study that are not answered in these chapters.
5. Save Chapter 6 (**Prayers And Supplications**) for a "rainy day" when you have a reasonable amount of time to memorize any or all of the prayers if you so desire. The seven prayers for the Tawaf of Kabah are highly recommended. They possess an intensity of emotion and devotion that increases as the Tawaf progresses. It moves you even as it enlightens you, and it reaches its zenith in the seventh prayer where you find yourself asking Allah for His ultimate Grace and Mercy.

Take your time in memorizing the text as well as understanding the meaning of these prayers. They will keep you focussed before and during your journey on your mission of Hajj, as well as on your obligations towards Allah.

As a matter of convenience, this handbook is written as if addressed to male pilgrims only. Needless to say, all information presented is equally applicable to female pilgrims also. Such information as is meant for male pilgrims only is self-evident. *Information which is intended exclusively for female pilgrims has been italicized for easy recognition.*

