

Top 10 Questions to Ask Hajj Groups

Deciding which Hajj/Umrah group to choose can be a daunting task. Navigating your way through the endless amounts of information provided by Hajj/Umrah groups can be overwhelming. To help you in your search, HajjBuddy.com has come up with 10 "Must Ask Questions". Pose these questions to Hajj & Umrah groups for Hajj 2008 and you will Insha'Allah begin to see things clearer.

Questions to ask:

1. Who is the Imam/Shaykh/Scholar accompanying the group? What is his bio?

Details: Probably the most important question one could ask. Many people overlook this question and many groups do not give it much importance. However, a Shaykh who is knowledgeable and an effective communicator can make a world's difference of what you get out of your Hajj.

2. As a Hajj/Umrah Group, what is your classification a) Saudi Authorized Agent b) sub-agent/reseller? If you are a sub-agent/reseller, whom do you get your Hajj Visas from?

Details: Every group that takes people to Hajj/Umrah is not a Saudi Authorized Agent. Saudi Authorized Agents are the only ones the Saudi group recognizes and allocates visas to. What this means is that those groups who are not Saudi Authorized Agents, must work through a Saudi Authorized Agent to get visas, hotels etc. These groups are sometimes referred to as sub-agents or resellers. Most of the time these sub-agents, sell the packages of the Saudi Authorized Agents for a commission. If you decide to go with a reseller, it is always wise to ask from whom they get their Hajj/Umrah visas, as it is sometimes better to deal with the Saudi Authorized Agent directly rather than a reseller.

3. How long have you been in business as a Hajj/Umrah Group under the current name (for UK also verify ATOL (Air Travel Organizer's License)?

Details: Many groups claim to have been in the Hajj/Umrah group for many years when in fact they may have only been doing the Hajj/Umrah group for a year or so. They fudge the dates by including their years as a travel agent

even when they were not taking Hajj/Umrah groups.

4. Have you ever operated a Hajj/Umrah group under a different name?

Details: Many groups will change their names often to hide a bad reputations. Group ABC might have a bad year this year in Hajj, to hide this fact next year, they will change their name to Group DEF. Watch out for this!

5. What is your refund policy?

Details: Unexpected events can happen. Be sure to know what the refund policy is for the group. Be certain to ask the amount of time it takes to get a refund, if a need arises.

6. Are the dates listed in the package firm? If not, what is the possible variance?

Details: Many times people have to schedule time off from work months in advance. Many groups promise a particular departure & arrival date. However, as the dates get closer, many group change these dates by as much as 5-7 days.

7. How far are your hotels from the Harams?

Details: If you plan to go back and forth from your hotel to the Harams, it is important you get a hotel close to Haram. Reaching a hotel adjacent to the Haram could take more than 30 minutes.

8. How far are your tents from Jamarat?

Details: Jamarat is the where the stoning of Shaitan occurs. It is located in Mina. Part of the Hajj rituals include stoning these structures once a day for 3 days. The Jamarat is a 45 minute walk (one-way) from where the North American/European tents are in Mina. If walking 45 minutes 1 ways poses you difficulty, you should look into a package which offers transportation or private tents near Jamarat.

9. Why are you not rated on HajjBuddy.com? (if the group is not rated)

Details: Encourage Hajj/Umrah groups you are considering to ask their previous participant to review the group on hajjbuddy.com. This will give the most accurate picture of the group.

10. Can you provide me everything we talked about in writing?

Details: It is important to document everything you are told in writing. Request groups to email/fax/mail you what you talked about and discussed.

Everything about Hajj is about expectations. If you see Hajj as your annual family vacation, then there might be a chance of disappointment if things don't go well. However if you see Hajj as an obligation and a means to seek Allah's pleasure, Insha'Allah you will get much more out of it. Remember to have realistic expectations from the Hajj package you choose. The best way to sync your expectations with your actual Hajj package is to ask the right questions.