

# Islamic Travel Etiquette: Types, Rules & Essential Guide

Islamic travel etiquette lays out clear guidelines for travelers, categorizing journeys into reprehensible, praiseworthy, and permissible types, and detailing 18 key etiquettes to ensure safe, rewarding trips.

Travel is a recurring necessity for people—one they cannot do without—and it increases during vacation periods, such as the summer holiday. In Islamic law there are significant rulings and etiquettes regarding travel that every Muslim man and woman should be fully aware of, for therein lies great good and guidance for the believers who follow the Example of the most God-fearing Imām and the Master of the Children of Adam.

## Understanding Types of Travel in Islam

Islamic tradition divides travel into three categories: reprehensible (makrūh), praiseworthy (maḥmūd), and permissible (mubāḥ).

### Reprehensible Travel (Makrūh)

Travel undertaken in deliberate disobedience to God is condemned. Examples include:

- A child's traveling without the permission of parents in a way that disrespects them. A woman traveling without a maḥram (a male relative whom she may not marry). Traveling with the intention of committing immorality or forbidden acts. Fleeing from a land struck by plague.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “If you hear of plague in a land, do not enter it; and if it breaks out in a land where you are, do not leave it.”

— Agreed upon, from the ḥadīths of ‘Uthmān ibn Zayd and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf.

### Praiseworthy Travel

Travel may be meritorious or even obligatory:

**Obligatory:** such as the pilgrimage to Mecca (Ḥajj), and the journey to seek knowledge, which is fard ‘ayn (an individual duty) upon every Muslim. The early pious generations undertook numerous scholarly journeys—see, for example, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s *al-Riḥlah fī Ṭalab al-Ḥadīth*.

**Recommended** (*mustahabb*): such as traveling to visit the three holy mosques—the Ḥaram in Mecca, the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, and al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem—and visiting righteous scholars to emulate their character and manners, instilling in oneself the desire to follow them and to draw from their scholarly insights.

### **Praiseworthy Travel (Maḥmūd & Mustaḥabb)**

Travel for livelihood and earning one’s sustenance is allowed. If one’s intention in such travel is to earn lawful provision so as to avoid begging, to support one’s family, and to give charity from what remains, then by virtue of that sincere intention, this otherwise neutral travel becomes recommended, for “Actions are judged by intentions” (see *Maw‘iẓat al-Mu’minīn*, p. 238).

### **Permissible Travel (Mubāḥ)**

Also included under permissible travel is traveling for wholesome recreation and relaxation, so long as it remains within the bounds of what Allah has permitted of good things. If its effect is to return one refreshed and reinvigorated for righteous deeds, then one is rewarded for it.

As Ibn Taymiyyah (ḥafidhahullāh) explains: “... Looking at trees or horses or livestock purely for worldly admiration, status, or wealth is blameworthy, for Allah says, ‘And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [certain] categories of them—for [the provisions of] this world—whose adornment We have made to test them...’ (Ṭā Hā 20:131).

But if the looking does not diminish one’s religion but only refreshes the soul—such as gazing at flowers—then it is a permissible diversion that aids one in performing righteous deeds.” —

*Mukhtaṣar al-Fatāwā al-Miṣriyya*, p. 21

By contrast, “pure tourism” that serves no purpose but pleasure squanders time, distracts the heart, exhausts the body, and often entails wasteful spending.

Imam Aḥmad (rahimahullāh) said: “Touring for mere amusement is not from [Islam](#), nor was it practiced by the Prophets or the righteous. Travel disperses the heart, so one should not travel except to seek knowledge or to visit a sheikh worthy of emulation.” — *Al-Ādāb al-Shar‘iyya wa-al-Manaḥ al-Mar‘iyya*, vol. 1, p. 431

In a ḥadīth of Abū Umāmah (radhiyallāhu ‘anhu), a man asked, “O [Messenger of Allah](#), permit me to go touring (siyāhah).” He ﷺ replied, “The touring of my Ummah is jihad in the way of Allah.” — Abū Dāwūd 2486; al-Ḥākim 2/73 (ṣaḥīḥ)

## 18 Key Etiquettes of Travel in Islam

The Qur’an and the authentic [Sunnah](#) outline many etiquettes of travel. Key among them are:

### Performing Istikhārah

Jābir (radhiyallāhu ‘anhu) reported that the Prophet ﷺ taught us [istikhārah](#) in all matters as though it were a chapter of the Qur’an. When any one of you intends to undertake something, let him pray two non-obligatory rak‘ahs, then say:

“O Allah, I seek Your counsel by Your knowledge and seek Your help by Your power, and I ask You from Your immense favor. You can and I cannot; You know and I do not; You are the Knower of the unseen. O Allah, if You know that this matter (then one names one’s need) is good for me in my religion, my livelihood, and the outcome of my affairs—immediate or in the distant—then decree it for me, make it easy for me, and bless me in it; and if You know that this matter is bad for me in my religion, my livelihood, and the outcome of my affairs—immediate or in the distant—then turn it away from me, and turn me away from it, and decree for me what is good wherever it may be and make me pleased with it.”

Istikhārah literally means “seeking the best.” One entrusts the matter to Allah, Who will grant what is best.

## **Repentance, Restoring Rights, and Proper Provisions**

Before departing, one should:

- Repent sincerely from all sins.
- Redress any wrongs or owed debts.
- Provide for one’s dependents—ensure their needs are met.
- Return any deposits or trusts to their rightful owners.
- Take only lawful, wholesome provisions for oneself, in quantities sufficient to relieve one’s [companions](#), but not so much as to hoard.

Travel often breeds weariness, and best conduct in weariness is the highest form of good character. The traveler should be kind to the one who lends his mount, assist one’s companions and those stranded with conveyance or provisions, and do so with good-natured banter (avoiding coarse or sinful joking) to lighten the hardships of the journey.

## **Parental Permission**

Even for permissible or recommended travel, one must obtain the consent of one’s parents. A woman must seek her husband’s permission and must not travel except with a mahram (e.g., father, brother, husband, uncle). [The Prophet ﷺ](#) said, “A woman must not travel without a mahram.” — Agreed upon.

## **Choosing Righteous Companions**

One should select pious, well-intentioned companions who remind one of Allah when He is forgotten. Allah says: “And keep yourself patiently with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face...” (al-Kahf 18:28)

and:

“O you who believe, fear Allah and be with those who are truthful.” (al-Tawbah 9:119) The Prophet ﷺ said, “[Keep company none but a believer](#), and let no hypocrite eat your food.” — Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī (ḥasan)

### **Traveling in Groups of Three or More**

The Prophet ﷺ said, “A traveler is accompanied by Satan; two travelers are accompanied by two Satans; but three make a caravan.” — Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī (ṣaḥīḥ)

And: “If people knew what was in solitude, no rider would travel alone at night.” — al-Bukhārī.

### **Exchanging Prayers at Departure**

It is Sunnah for the traveler to say to those remaining behind, “I entrust you to Allah, in Whose trust nothing perishes.” And for those remaining to respond, “I entrust your religion, your safety, and the last of your deeds to Allah.” — Ibn Mājah, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī (ṣaḥīḥ)

### **Supplicating Upon Leaving Home**

On stepping out, one should say: “In the Name of Allah; in You I trust; there is no power and no strength except in Allah.”

This invocation protects one: “You are protected and preserved, and the Shayṭān moves away from you.” — Anas in al-Tirmidhī (ṣaḥīḥ)

### **Reciting the Travel Prayer (ḍu‘ā’ al-Safar)**

When the Prophet ﷺ mounted his beast to depart he would say three takbīrs, then recite: “Glory be to Him Who has subjected this to us, and we could never have accomplished it ourselves; and to our Lord we will surely return.” (al-Zukhruf 43:13–14)

“O Allah, we ask You in this journey of ours righteousness and piety, and deeds that please You. O Allah, ease for us this journey, and fold for us its distance. O Allah, You are the Companion on the journey and the Successor over the family. O Allah, I seek refuge in You from the hardships of travel, from having a change of hearts and being in a bad predicament, and from an ill fate in wealth and family.” Upon return he added, “We have returned, repenting and praising our Lord.” — Muslim

## **Glorifying Allah When Ascending and Descending**

The Prophet ﷺ said: “When we ascended we said takbīr; when we descended we said tasbīḥ.” — al-Bukhārī.

## **Preferring to Travel on Certain Days and Times**

- Travel on Thursday is recommended: Ka‘b ibn Mālik reported the Prophet ﷺ never set out on a journey except on Thursday. — al-Bukhārī.

- If not Thursday, then Monday, since the [Hijrah](#) began on a Monday. — An-Nawawī.

- Departing in the early part of the day is recommended: “May Allah bless my Ummah in its mornings.” — Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah.

Do not practice superstition by deeming certain days unlucky, for tairy (ill-omened) beliefs are forbidden.

## **Utilizing Night Travel When Possible**

Anas reported the Prophet ﷺ said, “The earth is folded up for the one who travels by night.” — Abū Dāwūd (ḥasan) However, avoid sending animals out at dusk, for Shayṭān and wild creatures roam until the darkness of the evening departs. — Muslim

If one stops for rest in a desolate place, avoid the roadside, as night-creatures and poisonous animals frequent it. — Muslim.

### **Appointing One Leader in the Group**

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī reported: “If three set out on a journey, let them appoint one of them [to lead].” — Abū Dāwūd (ḥasan)

### **Staying Together at Nightfall**

Abū Thawbah al-Khashnī reported that when people would camp in valleys and gullies, the Prophet ﷺ forbade them, saying, “Your dispersion in these valleys is from the Shayṭān.” Thereafter they camped together. — Abū Dāwūd (good)

### **Reciting the Home-Entry Supplication (ḍu‘ā’ al-Manzil)**

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever enters a dwelling and says, ‘I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allah from the evil of what He created,’ nothing will harm him until he departs from it.” — Muslim

### **Hastening Home When Needs Are Fulfilled**

Abū Hurayrah reported: “Travel is a portion of torment, depriving one of sleep, food, and drink. When one’s need is fulfilled, let him hasten home.” — al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

### **Announcing One’s Arrival to Family**

Anas reported: “The Prophet ﷺ did not enter his home unexpectedly by night; he would arrive at dawn or dusk.” — Agreed upon

### **Bringing Gifts for One’s Kin**

It is recommended to carry a token—food or other gifts—for one’s household and relatives in proportion to one’s means, for the eyes long to see the traveler’s spoils and the heart rejoices at his return. — *Maw‘īzat al-Mu‘minīn*, p. 240