

Ihram - Detailed

Ihram is a sacred state which a Muslim must enter in order to perform the Hajj or Umrah.

Ihram is not just about the clothes you put on, its about a state of being you put yourself in before entering the sacred territory intending to perform Hajj or Umrah.

In this section we are going to discuss:

- A summary of what being in Ihram means
- When you will be in Ihram during Hajj
- Steps to take before entering into Ihram
- How to Enter into a State of Ihram
- What you can do in a state of Ihram
- What you can not do in a state of Ihram
- A persons General Etiquette while in Ihram

A summary of what being in Ihram means

The rites of Umrah and Hajj begin by entering into the state of Ihraam.

For men it is very apparent as they have a specific garment to wear.

It is two clean preferably white unfitted pieces of cloth. The lower part of the Ihraam is referred to as Izar and the top part as Rida.

The shoes/sandals must not cover the ankles (it does not have to be plastic, as stitched leather or other material, sandals or shoes are acceptable).

Women are free to wear what they please. Needless to mention, it should conform to the Islamic code of dress. It can be of any colour. Some women insist on wearing white or green. There is no authentic basis in the sunnah for this action.

Wearing the Ihraam garments does not mean that you are in the state of Ihraam. A pilgrim is in the state of Ihraam ONLY once the niyah has been uttered.

When you will be in Ihram during Hajj

For most Hajjaj, there are two period during Hajj in which you are required to be in Ihram. In total these periods work out to be 4 to 5 days, so during the vast majority of time you are at Hajj, you will not be in Ihram.

The period will last for roughly a day and it occurs while you do your Umrah. The second period is the first 3 to 4 days of the 6 Hajj days (8th, 9th, 10th of Dhul Hijja).

Steps to take before entering into Ihram

Before entering into a state of Ihram you should first take a shower if possible, otherwise you should atleast perform ablution (Wudhu).

It is also recommended to:

- Trim your finger and toe nails if needed
- Shave under your arms if needed
- Shave your pubic hair if needed
- Trim the moustache (leave the beard as it is)
- Apply perfume to your head and beard (men only), and not to the garments. Women are strictly forbidden to wear perfume in Ihraam or while in the presence of men who are not their mahram.

How to Enter into a State of Ihram

Men wear the lower part by wrapping it around their waist.

The top part is thrown over, covering both shoulders. The right shoulder is only open during tawaaf.

If possible avoid buying the very thin cotton Ihraam. It sticks to you if you sweat. The toweling or the thicker cotton ones are much better. They can be used as towels, blankets, for shading, etc., later on. One may imagine that it will be hot using a towelling cloth; however, this is not normally the case.

The one piece is wrapped around your waist like you would normally do with a towel when coming out from the bath. (This is very easy for those people who are used to wearing a "lungi/sarong").

The other piece is thrown over your shoulders covering the upper part of your body. Your right shoulder is open only during tawaaf for Umrah and the welcome tawaaf (Tawaaf-al-Qudoom). It should be covered at all other times, especially while performing salah. Do not be concerned when you notice that so many of the male pilgrims are walking around with their right shoulder exposed.

It is acceptable to wear a money belt to assist in "keeping up" the lower part. A safety pin is also very useful to keep the top part from falling off or constantly opening up.

Although if the lower part is put on properly, you will not need anything to help "keeping it on".

There are no special clothing requirements for women in Ihram; other than, not covering the face and hands while in Ihram.

It is acceptable to adopt the Ihraam clothes prior to reaching the meqaat if it's more convenient.

Now all that is require is for the intention to be made.

The niyah should be uttered at the meqaat or close to it after your transport has started moving towards it.

The intention is to be made aloud. To enter the state of Ihraam one must make niyah for Umrah or Hajj by saying:

"Labbayk Allahumma Umrah."

"Oh Allah here I am performing Umrah."

"Labbayk Allahumma Hajjan."

"Oh Allah here I am performing Hajj."

Menstruating or post-natal bleeding women **MUST** also enter into the state of Ihraam. They should follow the steps as listed and proceed to Makkah, Mina or Arafat (as appropriate). They should complete all the rites of Hajj except for tawaaf while in the state of menstruation or post-natal bleeding.

If you are performing Hajj for someone else (e.g., your mother or father), the only place where you mention the name of that person is in the niyah. The rest of the Hajj rites are the same as if you were doing it for yourself.

Niyah for Hajj on behalf of someone else:

"Labbayk Allahumma Hajjan 'an; name of the person."

"Oh Allah here I am performing hajj for"

Now we should start saying the Talbiyah. Men should recite the Talbiyah loudly once they are in the state of Ihraam as often as possible. A woman raises her voice only to the extent of being heard by the person next to her.

"Labbayk Allahumma labbayk. Labbayka laa shareeka laka labbayk. Innal-hamda wan-ni'mata laka wal mulk. Laa shareeka lak."

"Here I am O Allah, Here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Surely all praise, grace and dominion are Yours, and You have no partner."

You are now in the state of Ihram! A person in the state of Ihraam is a Muhrim.

What you can do in a state of Ihram

- Wearing a wristwatch, eyeglasses, money belt, rings, sunglasses, hearing or speech aid, etc
- Cleansing oneself (including having a bath or shower) with unscented soap and to wash and gently scratch one's head and body, even if hair may fall out
- Changing one's Ihraam garments. Removing the Ihraam clothes does not nullify the state of Ihraam. One's niyah places one in the state of Ihraam and cutting of one's hair removes one from this state
- Having a shelter over one's head, whether in a car, under an umbrella, or in a tent or building
- Men may also cover their feet (but not their head) while sleeping, with their Ihraam or a blanket

What you can not do in a state of Ihram

Before uttering the niyah, one is not considered a muhrim (in the state of Ihraam) even if one wears the clothes of Ihraam. Only after uttering the niyah does one become a muhrim and thus the following prohibitions apply. Expiation (fidyah) is due if any of the prohibitions are violated intentionally:

- Men must not wear clothes that are tailored to fit parts of the human body, for example trousers, jackets, shirts, etc. Meaning fitted clothes. There is a common misconception that one may not wear stitched clothes or sandals. However, this has no basis in the sunnah, as it is an issue of fitted and not stitches. Hence, the Ihraam tops with studs should be avoided as it forms a fitted garment. Also, any sandal or shoe must not cover the ankle.
- Men **MUST NOT** wear any underwear or headgear. Men are not allowed to cover their heads. Note that the face is a part of the head and thus it must not be covered.
- Though women can wear normal clothes, they must **NOT** wear gloves or a face cover that has openings for their eyes (nikaab). Instead, they can fully cover their faces and hands in the presence of men who are not their mahram
- Must not apply perfume, wear perfumed clothes, nor use any perfumed substances (shampoo, soap, etc.). Caution, some tissues are perfumed.
- Must not trim his/her nails.
- Must not cut his/her hair.
- Must neither marry, give anyone else in marriage, nor propose marriage.
- Must not perform any act likely to arouse sexual passion or indulge in any intimate marital relations.
- Must not hunt or participate in hunting (fishing is allowed).
- Must not commit an act of disobedience to Allah, such as smoking.
- Must not get involved in idle talk or disputes, i.e. fights, arguments and quarrels.

A persons General Etiquette while in Ihram

- Avoid walking around with only the bottom part of your Ihraam.
- Keep your right shoulder covered (except during tawaaf).
- Avoid throwing the 'loose' end of your Ihraam over your shoulder, as you may 'hit' the person behind you in the face.
- Keep your Ihraam clean and do not use it as a cloth to wipe your hands.
- Take extra care as to how you sit, especially on stairs, to avoid exposing yourself. As it is unusual for you to be without underwear, you can easily expose your private parts. This is very common while sitting on the stairs inside the mosque. You will find so many pilgrims in Ihraam smoking it will make you wonder whether it is allowed to smoke a cigarette while you are in the state of Ihraam. I am sure that it is not easy for smokers to give it up for 3 days. However, during Ramadaan they seem to cope without a cigarette during the day. I suggest that if you are a smoker, do sincerely try to refrain from doing so while in the state of Ihraam and also make the intention to give it up permanently (for the sake of Allah). You are now a "Guest of Allah" and you should behave accordingly.