



# Hajj

**Help to create an inclusive environment by learning about Hajj and what this means for Trading Standards.**



## **What is Hajj?**

Hajj (or Haj) is an annual pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia at the Holy Cities of Makkah and Medina.



## **Why is Hajj important to Muslims?**

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and is incumbent on all Muslims who are physically and financially able to and should be performed at least once in their lifetime.



## **When does Hajj commence?**

The pilgrimage must take place during the month of Dhu al Hijja, the last month of the Islamic calendar. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar year; therefore, the date changes each year, in 2022 Hajj will commence from 7 July and end on the 12 July.



## **How many people perform Hajj?**

Every year about 2 to 3 million people from across the world gather in Saudi Arabia for the Hajj.



# Hajj and the problems for UK Trading Standards

Saudi Arabia recently announced that visas and travel packages for Hajj will now only be issued through its own portal and booking through other routes such as UK travel agents, even if previously “approved” by Saudi Arabia, will not be permitted. The 2022 Hajj pilgrimage takes place during 7 – 12 July.

The portal details are [www.motawif.com.sa](http://www.motawif.com.sa)

The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 provides legislation in this area. It is likely that people who have already booked with UK travel companies may not be able to travel. Hajj packages can cost from £6,000 to around £10,000 per person in the UK. Independent Hajj package organisers in the UK will no longer have access to the necessary visas and may not, therefore, be able to fulfil any bookings that they may be holding – they will become liable to refund their customers. Regulation 12(7).

Organisers are likely to have made advance payments to suppliers of flight seats and other package components which could take time to recover, if indeed they are recoverable. Regulation 14 requires a refund within 14 days.

In different parts of the UK, Trading Standards are visiting mosques in their area, providing advice and information about the changes.

The changes in the booking process may cause major problems for UK agents and operators who could risk facing huge losses. Many consumers save for years for this pilgrimage: it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and they may use specialist agents to assist with their bookings.

Fraud may also become an issue for Trading Standards, there is a risk of people falsely passing themselves off as approved agents of the Motawif organisation together with fake Motawif websites. As Motawif is wholly established outside of the UK, this could present further problems when trying to resolve any such issues.

UK consumers should call the UK International Consumer Centre (UKICC) in the first instance for free advice and support in dealing with disputes relating to goods and services bought outside of the UK. Consumers can make contact with the UKICC via the website – [www.ukecc.net](http://www.ukecc.net) – or by phone on 01268 886690 Monday-Friday between 10am and 4pm. The UK ICC is a free service funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).