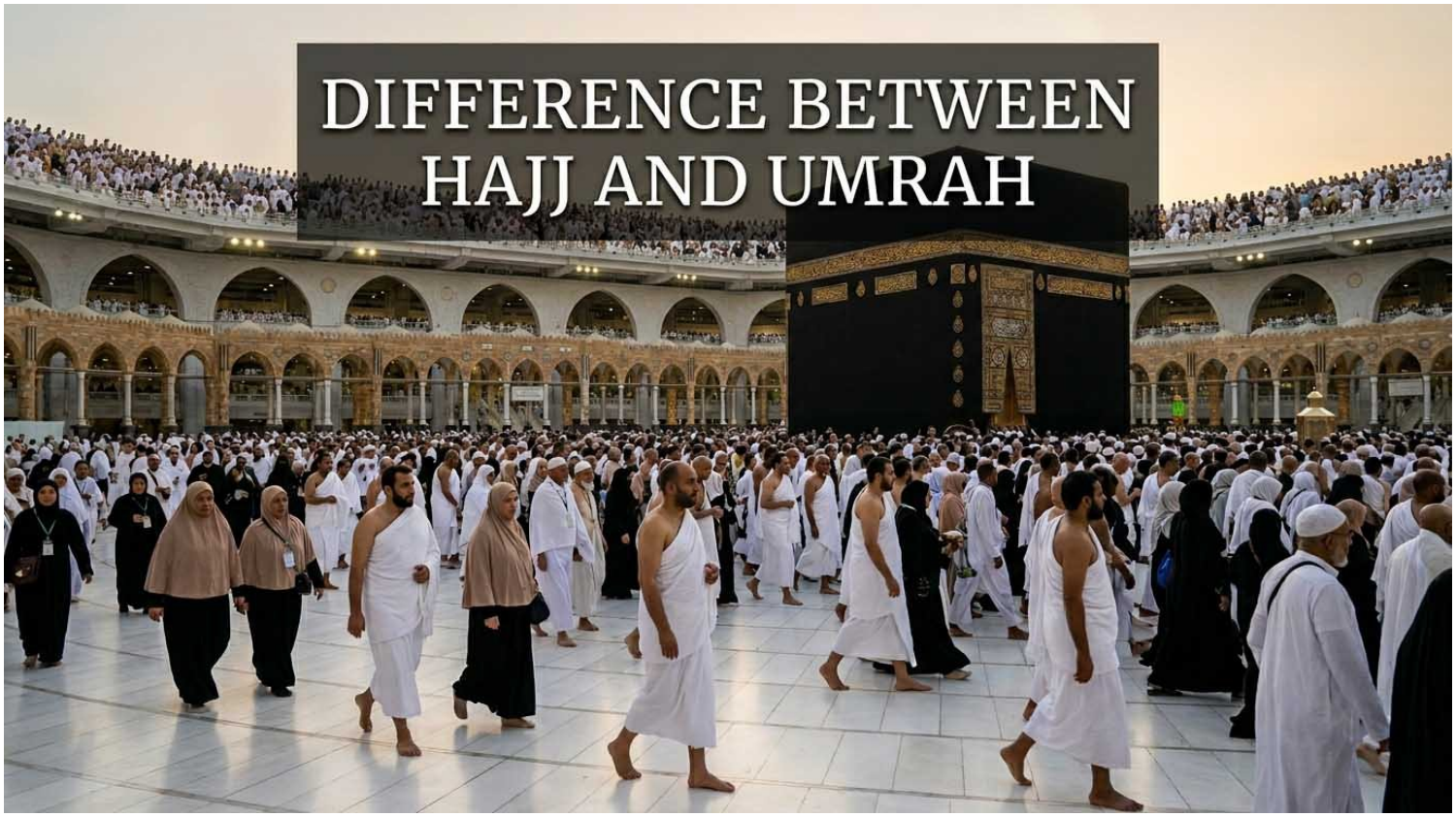
NOOR UMRAH TRAVELS

Difference Between Hajj and Umrah – Rituals, Cost, Duration & Key

Complete guide to the difference between Hajj and Umrah. Rituals, cost from the UK, duration, obligation, types of Hajj, and comparison table. 2026 guide.

Published 07 Apr 2026 · 3,346 words · 17 min read



For so many UK Muslims, the difference between Hajj and Umrah is a source of confusion, worry, and—let's be honest—a lot of questions. We hear it every week: "Is Umrah the same as Hajj? Can I do Umrah instead of Hajj? Why do the costs and rituals differ so much?" If that's you, you're definitely not alone.

We're Noor Umrah Travels, and we've helped thousands of British Muslims take their very first steps to the Holy Cities. So, let's break down the difference between Hajj and Umrah in the clearest, most practical way possible—using real UK prices, up-to-date 2026 rules, and the spiritual wisdom that makes both journeys so special.

If you'd like help planning your trip, our team is just a phone call away. Now, let's dive in.



difference between hajj and umrah comparison pilgrims at arafat and tawaf around kaaba 2026

What Is Hajj and What Is Umrah?

Let’s start simple. Hajj and Umrah are two sacred journeys Muslims make to the holy city of Makkah, but they aren’t the same. The **difference between Hajj and Umrah** touches every part of the experience—from when you go, to how long it takes, to the level of obligation, to the spiritual rewards.

What Is Hajj?

Hajj is the major pilgrimage to Makkah. It’s the fifth pillar of Islam and is **obligatory** for every Muslim who is physically and financially able. Hajj only happens during specific days: the 8th to 13th of Dhul Hijjah (the last month of the Islamic calendar). In 2026, Hajj is expected to fall in late April to early May. The rituals include visiting Makkah, Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifah. Hajj lasts 5 to 6 days for the main rituals, but most UK packages run 2 to 4 weeks. Allah commands in the Quran: *“Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all who can make their way to it.”* (Quran 3:97)

What Is Umrah?

Umrah is the “minor pilgrimage.” It can be performed at any time of year—except during the days of Hajj. Most scholars say it’s **Sunnah Mu’akkadah** (highly recommended but not obligatory), though

some schools consider it obligatory once. Umrah includes four main rituals: Ihram (entering a sacred state), Tawaf (circling the Kaaba), Sai (walking between Safa and Marwa), and Halq or Taqsir (shaving or trimming the hair). The whole process can be completed in just a few hours. The Prophet ﷺ said: *“From one Umrah to the next is an expiation for what comes between them.”* (Bukhari 1773)

If you want a full step-by-step guide, check out our Umrah guide for UK pilgrims.

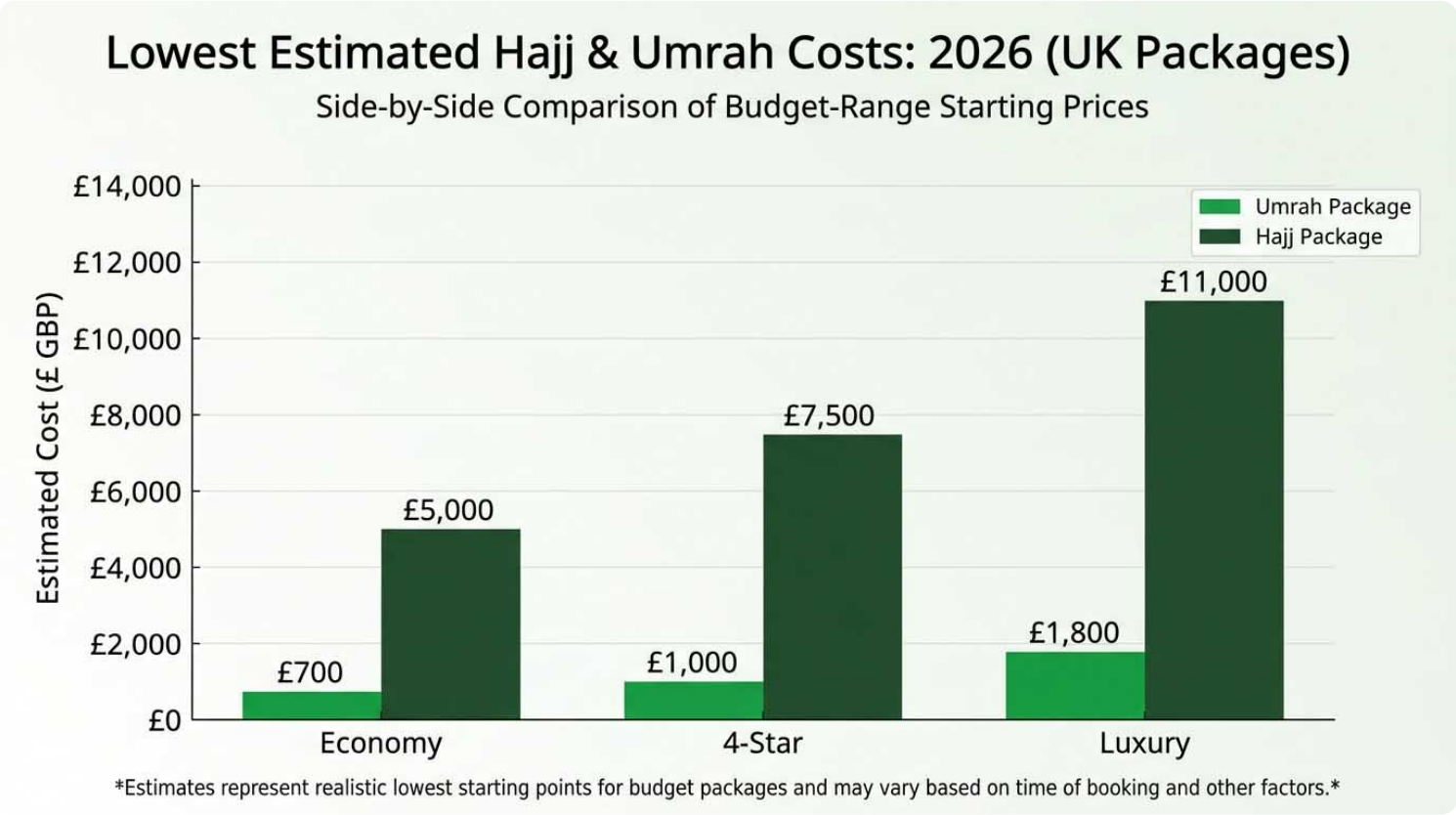
The Key Differences Between Hajj and Umrah — Complete Comparison

Here’s the thing: Hajj and Umrah are not just "big" and "small" versions of the same thing. The differences run deep—rituals, costs, timing, even the spiritual impact. Let’s lay them out side by side.

Hajj vs Umrah — Complete Comparison Table

Feature	Hajj	Umrah
Islamic Status	Fifth pillar of Islam (Fard)	Sunnah Mu’akkadah (highly recommended)
Obligation	Once in a lifetime if able	Not obligatory
Timing	8th to 13th Dhul Hijjah only	Any time except Hajj days
Duration of Rituals	5 to 6 days	3 to 6 hours
Total Trip Length (UK)	2 to 4 weeks	5 to 14 days
Key Rituals	Ihram, Tawaf, Sai, Wuquf Arafat, Muzdalifah, Mina, Stoning Jamarat, Qurbani, Halq/Taqsir, Tawaf al-Wida	Ihram, Tawaf, Sai, Halq/Taqsir
Unique to Hajj	Arafat, Muzdalifah, Mina, Stoning, Animal sacrifice	None — all Umrah rituals are shared with Hajj

Feature	Hajj	Umrah
Cost from UK (2026)	£7,000 to £15,000+ per person	£800 to £2,500 per person
Visa	Hajj-specific visa via authorised agents, quota system	E-visa or Umrah visa, more flexible
UK Quota	Approx. 25,000 UK pilgrims per year	No quota — travel anytime
Difficulty Level	High — physically demanding, multiple locations, large crowds	Moderate — can be completed in one session
Spiritual Reward	Forgiveness of all sins, Hajj Mabrur leads to Paradise	Expiation between Umrahs, reward of voluntary worship



hajj vs umrah infographic comparison table rituals cost duration obligation

Let’s break down the most important differences between Hajj and Umrah, one by one:

- **Obligation:** Hajj is fard (compulsory) once in a lifetime for those able. Umrah is highly recommended but not required for most UK Muslims.

- **Timing:** Hajj only happens on set days each year. Umrah is flexible—most UK pilgrims go during school holidays or Ramadan.
- **Cost and Duration:** Hajj packages from the UK start around £7,000 per person. Umrah starts from £800. Hajj takes weeks; Umrah can be done in days.
- **Rituals:** Hajj involves more steps, more locations, and is physically demanding. Umrah only has four main rituals, all within Makkah.
- **Visa & Quota:** Hajj visas are limited by UK quota and must be booked through licensed agents. Umrah visas are easier to get year-round.
- **Spiritual Reward:** Both are life-changing, but Hajj carries the promise of complete forgiveness and Paradise for those whose Hajj is accepted.

Hajj and Umrah Rituals — A Side-by-Side Breakdown

Want to know what you'll actually *do* on each journey? Here's a simple side-by-side look at the main rituals. This is where the difference between Hajj and Umrah becomes really clear.

Rituals That Hajj and Umrah Share

Both journeys include these four rituals:

- **Ihram** (the sacred state entered at a Miqat point): Simple white clothes for men, modest dress for women. All pilgrims recite the *Talbiyah*. See our Ihram and step-by-step Umrah guide.
- **Tawaf** (circling the Kaaba seven times): Performed counterclockwise. For dua during Tawaf, see our Umrah guide.
- **Sai** (walking between Safa and Marwa): Seven laps, commemorating Hajar's search for water. For the Sai dua, see our Umrah guide.
- **Halq or Taqsir** (shaving or trimming hair): Men shave or trim, women cut a small lock.

These shared rituals connect every pilgrim to the heart of Islam.

Rituals That Are Unique to Hajj

Hajj has several unique rituals you won't find in Umrah:

- **Wuquf at Arafat** (9th Dhul Hijjah): Standing on the plain of Arafat from noon until sunset. *The Prophet ﷺ said: "Hajj is Arafat."* (Tirmidhi 889) Miss this and the Hajj is invalid.

- **Muzdalifah**: After sunset at Arafat, pilgrims move to Muzdalifah to pray, sleep under the sky, and collect pebbles.
- **Stoning the Jamarat at Mina**: Throwing pebbles at pillars symbolising Shaytan on the 10th, 11th, and 12th of Dhul Hijjah.
- **Qurbani (Animal Sacrifice)**: Required for Tamattu and Qiran types of Hajj. Remembering Ibrahim's (AS) sacrifice.
- **Tawaf al-Ifadah**: A second Tawaf after stoning, central to completing Hajj.
- **Tawaf al-Wida**: Farewell Tawaf before leaving Makkah.



pilgrims standing at arafat during hajj the core ritual unique to hajj

Is Hajj Compulsory? Is Umrah Compulsory?

This is one of the most searched questions in the UK every year. So, here's the answer—plain and simple.

The Obligation of Hajj in Islam

Hajj is fard (obligatory) for every Muslim who is adult, sane, physically able, and can afford it (after debts and family needs). This is clear in the Quran (Quran 3:97). The Prophet ﷺ warned: *"Whoever has the means to perform Hajj and does not do so, let him die as a Jew or Christian if he wishes."* (Tirmidhi

812; some scholars graded this hasan, others weak—but it shows the gravity of neglecting Hajj.)

The Obligation of Umrah in Islam

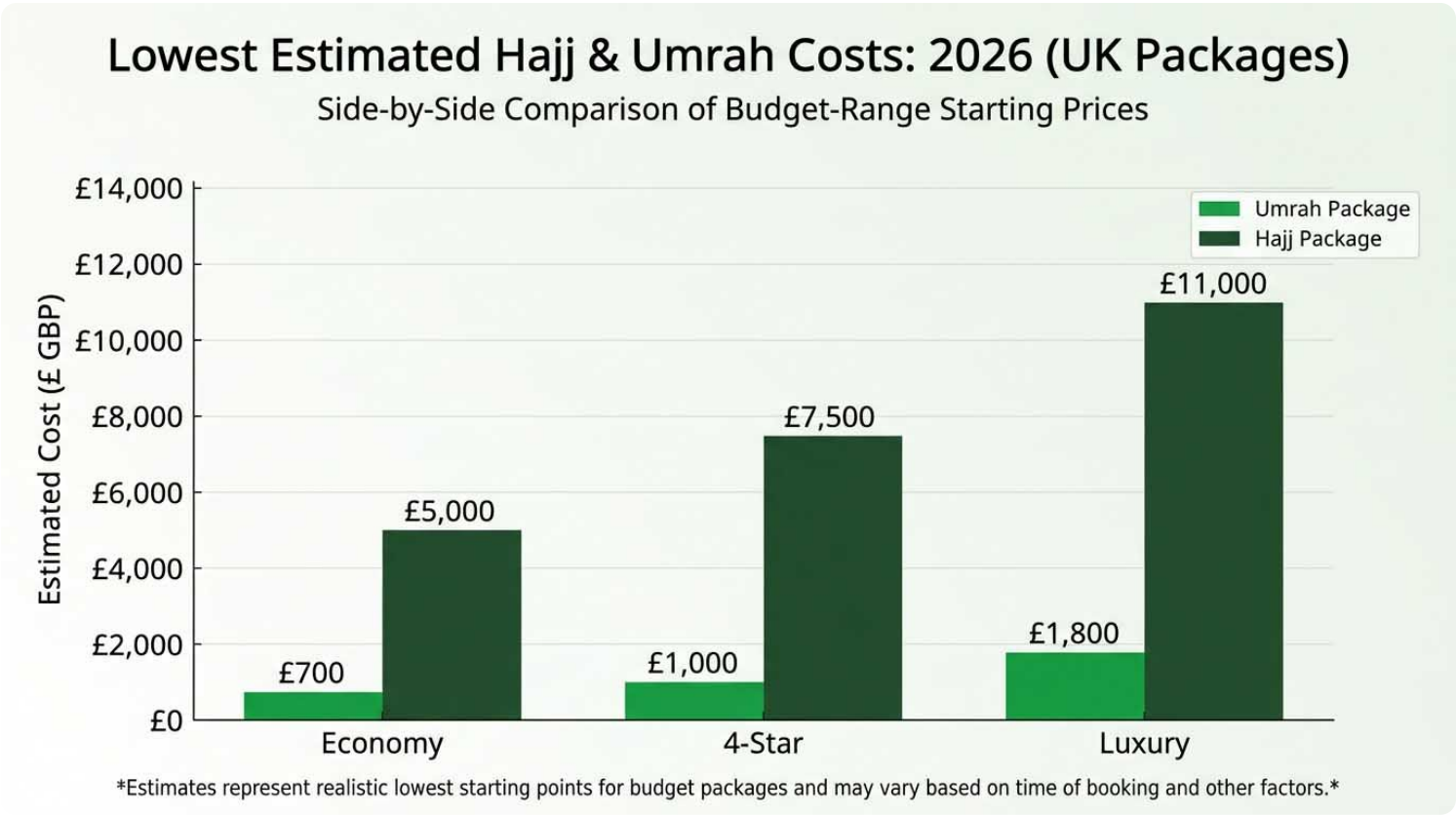
The majority of scholars (Hanafi, Maliki) say Umrah is **Sunnah Mu'akkadah**—highly recommended but not obligatory. The Shafi'i and Hanbali schools say it is wajib (obligatory) once in a lifetime. In practice, UK Muslims are strongly encouraged to perform Umrah, but it does not replace Hajj. The Prophet performed Umrah four times in his life.

How Much Does Hajj Cost from the UK Compared to Umrah?

Let's talk numbers. This is where the difference between Hajj and Umrah is probably felt the most by UK families. Here's a real-world comparison for 2026:

Hajj vs Umrah Cost from the UK (2026 Estimates)

Package Level	Hajj Cost per Person	Umrah Cost per Person
Economy / Budget	£7,000 – £9,000	£800 – £1,200
Standard (4-star)	£9,000 – £12,000	£1,200 – £1,800
Premium / Luxury	£12,000 – £15,000+	£1,800 – £2,500+
Ramadan Umrah	N/A	£1,500 – £3,000+



hajj cost vs umrah cost from uk 2026 comparison graphic

What affects the price? Distance from Haram (the closer, the pricier), star rating of hotels, flight class, group size, and season (Ramadan Umrah is more expensive). Noor Umrah Travels offers competitive UK packages for both journeys. Check out our latest Umrah packages and Hajj packages for more options.

The Three Types of Hajj Explained

Here’s something most UK Muslims don’t realise: Hajj actually comes in three types. Each has its own process—and cost.

Hajj Tamattu — The Most Common for UK Pilgrims

This is the one most UK groups do. You perform Umrah first, take a break (exit Ihram), then enter Ihram again for Hajj on the 8th Dhul Hijjah. An animal sacrifice is required. The Prophet recommended Tamattu for those who did not bring a sacrificial animal.

Hajj Qiran — Combining Hajj and Umrah in One Ihram

You enter Ihram with the intention for both Hajj and Umrah together. You stay in Ihram from the Miqat until the end of Hajj. Animal sacrifice is also required. This is the most physically demanding type and

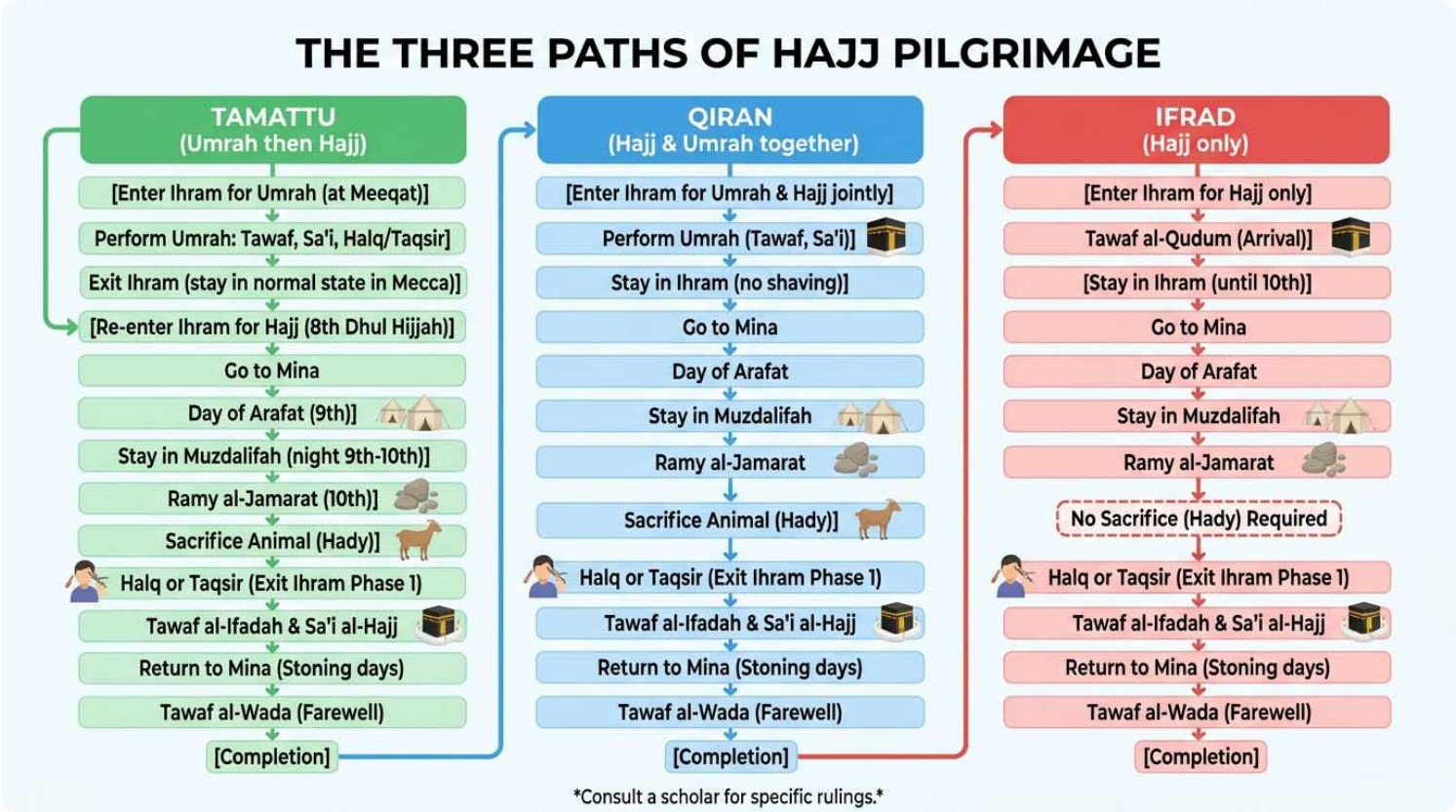
less common for UK pilgrims.

Hajj Ifrad — Hajj Only Without Umrah

You enter Ihram only for Hajj. No Umrah included. No animal sacrifice needed. This is mostly done by residents of Makkah—not UK visitors.

Three Types of Hajj at a Glance

Type	Umrah Included?	Sacrifice Required?	Who It Suits
Tamattu	Yes	Yes	Most UK/international pilgrims
Qiran	Yes (combined)	Yes	Physically strong, want both together
Ifrad	No	No	Makkah residents, rare for UK



three types of hajj tamattu qiran ifrad flowchart explained

Spiritual Rewards — Hajj Compared to Umrah

Here's what really matters in the end. Both journeys are about seeking Allah's mercy and forgiveness, but the rewards are different.

The Rewards of Hajj in Islam

- "Whoever performs Hajj and does not commit any obscenity or transgression shall return free from sin as on the day his mother bore him." (Bukhari 1521)
- "Hajj Mabrur (accepted Hajj) has no reward except Paradise." (Bukhari 1773)
- "Hajj is Jihad for the elderly, women, and the weak." (various narrations)
- Standing at Arafat is the day Allah frees the most from the Hellfire. (Muslim 1348)

The Rewards of Umrah in Islam

- "From one Umrah to the next is an expiation for what comes between them." (Bukhari 1773)
- "Umrah in Ramadan is equal to Hajj." (Bukhari 1863) — equal in reward, not in obligation.
- The Prophet ﷺ performed Umrah four times, showing its high value.

Which Should UK Muslims Do First — Hajj or Umrah?

This is the big decision for many families. Here's how we advise our clients, based on years of real UK bookings.

1. **If you can afford Hajj and are healthy:** Book Hajj first. It's obligatory and should not be delayed.
2. **If Hajj is out of budget but you can afford Umrah:** Do Umrah first. It's great spiritual preparation for Hajj and lets you get used to the journey.
3. **If it's your first time in Saudi Arabia:** Many UK Muslims do Umrah as a "practice run." It's less overwhelming, and you'll feel more confident when Hajj comes around.
4. **If you're elderly or have health issues:** Do whichever you can manage. Both journeys carry huge reward.
5. **From our experience at Noor Umrah Travels:** Most UK families do Umrah first, then book Hajj within 2-3 years once they're ready.

Still unsure? Prepare with our Umrah packing list and explore Umrah packages to get started.

Hajj and Umrah — What They Have in Common

Despite all the differences, these sacred journeys share so much. Both take you to the Kaaba in Makkah. Both require entering Ihram, circling the Kaaba (Tawaf), walking between Safa and Marwa (Sai), and shaving or trimming your hair (Halq/Taqsir). Both are acts of devotion with enormous blessings. And both connect you to the legacy of Prophet Ibrahim (AS).

Don’t forget: Zamzam water is part of both journeys—a drink with deep meaning for every pilgrim. Learn more about what’s included in your UK package.

Common Mistakes UK Muslims Make About Hajj and Umrah

We’ve seen a lot over the years. Here are 7 mistakes to avoid:

1. Thinking Umrah replaces Hajj—it doesn’t. Hajj remains a separate obligation.
2. Delaying Hajj when able—the Prophet strongly warned against this.
3. Not learning the difference between Hajj Tamattu, Qiran, and Ifrad before booking.
4. Assuming Umrah and Hajj cost the same—Hajj is five to ten times more expensive from the UK.
5. Booking Hajj through unlicensed agents—always use ATOL-protected UK operators.
6. Forgetting Hajj has a fixed UK quota—book early, places sell out fast.
7. Thinking the rituals are identical—Hajj includes Arafat, Muzdalifah, Mina, stoning, and sacrifice, which Umrah does not.



noor umrah travels hajj and umrah packages uk 2026 book now

FAQ — Frequently Asked Questions About the Difference Between Hajj and Umrah



Can you do Umrah instead of Hajj to fulfil the obligation?

No. Umrah cannot replace Hajj. They are two separate acts of worship. Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam and is obligatory once in a lifetime for those who are able. Umrah is highly recommended but performing it does not remove the obligation of Hajj. If you are financially and physically able to perform Hajj, you must do so regardless of how many Umrahs you have completed.

Can you perform Hajj and Umrah in the same trip?

Yes. This is called Hajj Tamattu and it is the most common type for UK pilgrims. You perform Umrah first during the Hajj months, exit Ihram, and then re-enter Ihram for Hajj on the 8th of Dhul Hijjah. An animal sacrifice is required for this type. Most UK Hajj packages are structured as Tamattu.

Is there an age limit for Hajj or Umrah?

There is no upper age limit for either pilgrimage. However, you must be physically able to perform the rituals. Children can perform Umrah or Hajj with their parents but it does not count as their obligatory Hajj — they must perform it again after reaching puberty. Saudi Arabia may set minimum age requirements for unaccompanied travellers.

Do you need a mahram to perform Hajj or Umrah from the UK?

Recent Saudi regulations have relaxed the mahram requirement. Women aged 45 and above can now perform Hajj and Umrah without a mahram if they travel with an organised group. Women under 45 may still need a mahram depending on the travel agency and visa type. Check with your UK Hajj operator for the latest requirements.

How far in advance should you book Hajj vs Umrah from the UK?

For Hajj, book 6 to 12 months in advance. UK Hajj quotas are limited to approximately 25,000 pilgrims per year and packages sell out fast. For Umrah, you can book 2 to 6 months ahead, though Ramadan Umrah should be booked 4 to 6 months early due to high demand and premium pricing.

Can you perform Umrah more than once in a year?

Yes. There is no limit on how many times you can perform Umrah. Many UK Muslims perform Umrah multiple times, especially during Ramadan or school holidays. Each Umrah carries its own reward. The Prophet ﷺ said each Umrah is an expiation for sins committed between it and the previous one.

What vaccinations are required for Hajj and Umrah from the UK?

Saudi Arabia requires the meningococcal ACWY vaccination for all Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Additional requirements may include seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccinations depending on the year. Some travellers also need yellow fever or polio vaccinations depending on their travel history.

Check the Saudi Ministry of Health and UK government travel advice for the latest requirements before your trip.

Is there a UK quota for Hajj and how does it work?

Yes. Saudi Arabia allocates a fixed number of Hajj places per country each year. The UK quota is approximately 25,000 pilgrims. This quota is managed through licensed UK Hajj operators who are allocated a set number of places. There is no quota for Umrah — you can travel at any time throughout the year as long as you have a valid visa.

Conclusion

Now you know the real **difference between Hajj and Umrah**. Both are journeys of the heart, both lead you to the House of Allah, and both bring a lifetime of memories and blessings. If Hajj is within your reach, don't delay. If Umrah is your first step, take it with a sincere heart. Either way, the Kaaba is waiting for you.

Noor Umrah Travels is honoured to serve UK pilgrims with trusted, ATOL-protected packages for both Hajj and Umrah. See our Umrah deals or get a free Hajj quote today.

May Allah grant you the blessing of visiting His House for Hajj, Umrah, or both. Ameen.

Written by: Noor Umrah Travels Team

Last Updated: March 2026

Helpful next steps for UK pilgrims

If you want to turn this advice into a clear plan, the pages below will help you go one step further. They cover the wider rules, package choices, checklists, and practical travel points that usually come up after you finish a guide like this one.

- Non-Shifting Hajj Packages This page is useful when you want real options, package details, hotel information, and practical UK departure planning. It helps you compare what is available instead of staying at the research stage. It is especially helpful if you are looking for non shifting hajj packages uk.
- Umrah Visa Price UK 2026: Complete Cost Breakdown for British Passport Holders Before You Apply This supporting guide answers a closely related question and adds more detail, examples, or travel tips. It works well as your next read if you want a narrower answer after this main article. It is

especially helpful if you are looking for Discover the Umrah visa price UK for 2026. Learn visa fees, total travel costs, and how British passport holders can apply for an Umrah visa easily.

- Best Time to Perform Umrah 2026: Cheapest, Coolest & Least Crowded Months This supporting guide answers a closely related question and adds more detail, examples, or travel tips. It works well as your next read if you want a narrower answer after this main article. It is especially helpful if you are looking for Discover the best time to perform Umrah in 2026. Find cheapest, coolest, and least crowded months for a peaceful and affordable spiritual journey.
- 10 Days 3 Star Umrah Package This page is useful when you want real options, package details, hotel information, and practical UK departure planning. It helps you compare what is available instead of staying at the research stage.
- Umrah Visa UK 2026: Step-by-Step Guide to Apply Online, Latest Prices & Saudi Visa Waiver Cost This supporting guide answers a closely related question and adds more detail, examples, or travel tips. It works well as your next read if you want a narrower answer after this main article. It is especially helpful if you are looking for Discover the Umrah visa UK process for 2026. Learn visa prices, online application steps, and Saudi visa waiver cost for UK Muslims planning Umrah.
- Shifting Hajj Packages This page is useful when you want real options, package details, hotel information, and practical UK departure planning. It helps you compare what is available instead of staying at the research stage. It is especially helpful if you are looking for shifting hajj packages uk.

Reading a few of these pages together will give you a fuller view than relying on one article alone. That matters even more when you are comparing routes, costs, rituals, and timing from the UK.