



2020  
1441AH  
PACKAGES

**OUR MISSION**

To reliably provide excellent and efficient services which will make our clients comfortable at all time

**OUR VISION**

To be the very best travels & Tours Agency in Nigeria and one of the best in the World

# Umrah & Hajj



Suite A10 Bensima House, 3 Red Sea Close,  
Off Aguiyi Ironsi Street, (Behind National Boundary  
Commission, Opp. Maitama District Hospital) Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria.  
Tel: +234 098 707 570, M: +234 805 667 0013,+234 803 314 2480

**Lagos Liaison Office**

Suite 210/212, All Seasons Place, 74, Isheri Road, Ojodu-Berger, Lagos, Nigeria.  
For further enquiries within Lagos call Jubril +234 706 531 7449



[www.comerel.com.ng](http://www.comerel.com.ng) [info@comerel.net](mailto:info@comerel.net)

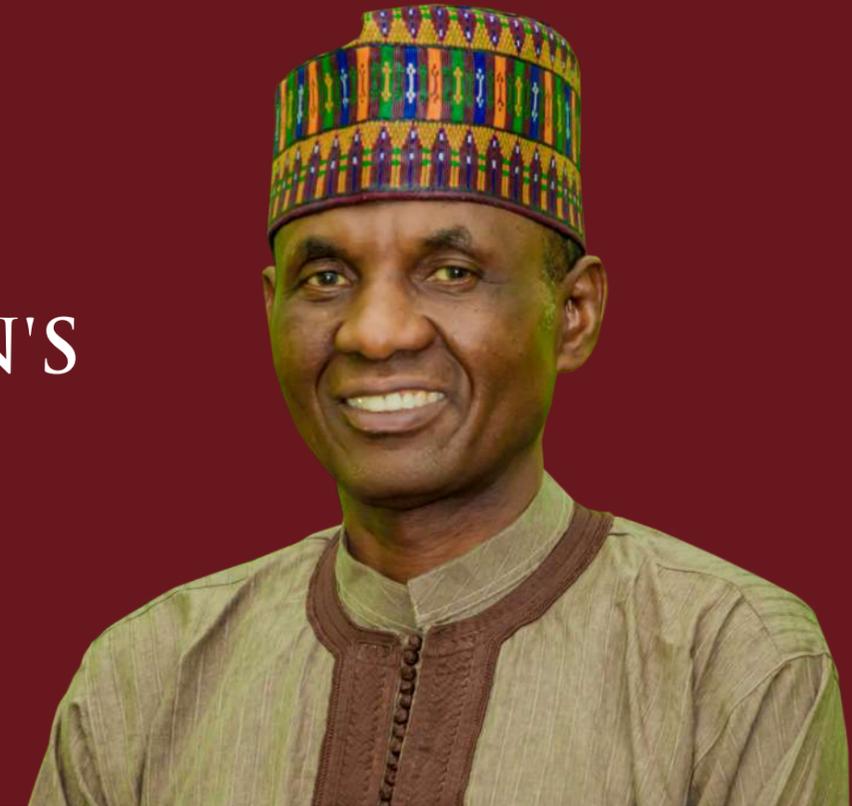
All passengers and payments must be in our office latest two (2) weeks before your departure date for Umrah Ramadan and four (4) weeks before your departure date for Hajj.

### ACCOUNT DETAILS

1	Access Bank	\$ ACCT	0016819199
2	Sterling Bank	₦ ACCT	0012404170
		\$ ACCT	0012404187
3	GTBank	₦ ACCT	0023246167
		\$ ACCT	0023246174
4	Zenith Bank	₦ ACCT	1011008104
5	First Bank	₦ ACCT	2007608856
6	Keystone Bank	₦ ACCT	1001261519
		\$ ACCT	1002954047

**ALL PAYMENTS SHOULD BE MADE IN FAVOUR OF COMEREL TRAVELS AND TOURS LTD. WE DO NOT ACCEPT CHEQUES OR CASH. DO NOT PAY INTO THESE ACCOUNTS UNTIL WE HAVE CLEARED YOU PLEASE.**

## CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS



**ARC. UMARU USMAN KARAYE**  
Chairman

Praise be to Allah the Almighty, Who made us be of service to His guests. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad, His Servant and Messenger, who encouraged Muslims to facilitate the Hajj to any believer who undertakes the journey so far as they are able to do so. Also, may Allah's salutations be upon the members of the Prophet's household, his companions and upon whomsoever follows their path in rendering service to pilgrims until the Day of Resurrection.

Our mission and focus continue to remain to provide our esteemed pilgrimage customers with those efficient and reliable services that will give them the comfort and freedom to concentrate on their spiritual rites for which they are in the Holy Land.

Consequent upon this even our competitors marvel at how we quickly innovate new ideas to respond to the changing needs of our customers and the requirements of our regulators. We were the first to introduce African Cuisine in the 5-star hotels of the Holy Land. We followed this with being the first African private Hajj operator in the A-Plus Tents of the Mu'assasah at both Minna and Arafat. We

surprised our pilgrims when we became the first African tour operator (aside from Egypt and Morocco) to airlift hajjis from Madinah to Jeddah at no extra cost. We were the first travel agent in the world to transport its pilgrims as a group from Madinah to Makkah by the newly inaugurated Haramain high-speed train!

These feats can only be achieved through the support of our customers especially those who have kept faith with us for over ten years. Our superlative services have encouraged these customers to gladly participate in our feedback programme with which we re-strategize and act promptly.

In this respect, we wish to express our appreciation to all our stakeholders for adding value to what we do in the service of Islam. May Allah (S.W.T) reward them handsomely for this Sadaqatun Jariyah.

We look forward to meeting you for the 2020 Hajj rites, Inshaa Allah for more pleasant surprises.

Assalam Alaikum.



# MD'S WORDS

**Abubakr Siddeeq Muhammad**  
MD/CEO

2020 Umrah and Hajj packages have new entrants into the options section. In Ramadan, for instance, there is the *First 10 Days of Ramadan*, aside from the normal *Last 10 Days of Ramadan package*. We wondered why people insist on going for Umrah in Ramadan only during the very expensive Last 10 Days when they could as well go at the beginning of the month at a much lesser price. One may say that the preference is due to *Lailatul Qadr* that may likely fall in the Last 10 Days, but that is just an opinion. *Lailatul Qadr* could be in any day of Ramadan including the First 10 Days. Moreover, this new package will afford those who want to celebrate the *Eidul Fitr* in Nigeria the chance to do so as well as have the reward of performing Umrah in Ramadan at a, comparatively, very low rate.

Another entrant, though not completely new, is a modified version of the *Deluxe Package* that made its debut in Hajj 2019 with *Elaf Grand Al-Majeedi* in Madeenah and *Le Meridien Towers* in Makkah for hotel accommodation. Due to pilgrims' feedback, and in line with our policy of not allowing a complaint to be repeated a second time, *Deluxe* will now have *Al-Haram Hotel, Madinah*. Although there was no significant complaint on *Al-Majeedi*, we feel, in terms of proximity to Oberoi where the *VIP Premium Package* is housed and easier coordination of all groups, *Al-Haram* will be a better option. In Makkah, the *Deluxe* pilgrims will now be *Zamzam Pullman Hotel*, within the *Zamzam Towers* which accounts for the slight increase in the rate as they will be accommodated within the Haram itself - goodbye to the wait for the shuttle bus at the facade of

*Le Meridien Towers*.

On the *VIP Premium* side, there is the option for *Daral Tauhid Intercontinental* in Makkah for those who do not want to stay at *Marwa Rayhaan (Rotana)*, but in Madeenah all shall be in the *Oberoi Medina*. The reasons that brought us to *Rayhaan* subsist, and as things stand, the *Fairmont Clock Tower* is still not an option as the feeding arrangement there has further deteriorated even in low seasons. That is why *Daral Tauhid* is introduced officially not what obtained in the past of sudden upgrades, or special bookings according to pilgrims' request and additional payments.

In the *Mashaa'ir (Minaa and Arafat)*, the *A-Plus* and *A* tents shall be maintained for *VIP Premium* and *Deluxe* packages respectively, but upgrades to the *A-Plus* to any pilgrim on *Deluxe* shall be on first come first served basis and subject to availability.

Mode of transportation between Madeenah and Makkah shall be the same, as is our custom, for all options, in so far as we are able to confirm pilgrims on air or the *Haramain* high-speed train.

As the primal Hajj logistics expert in Nigeria, *Comerel* keeps improving efficiently and reliably on the standards of its services for the comfort of the pilgrims at all stages in the performance of their *ibaadah*.

# UMRAH RAMADAN PREMIUM (FIRST TEN NIGHTS PACKAGE)



MADINAH HOTEL  
THE OBEROI MADINA

## FIRST TEN NIGHTS PACKAGE OPTIONS:

**Madinah Hotel**  
The Oberoi Madina

**Makkah Hotel**  
Al Marwa Rayhaan By Rotana, Makkah

### FIRST TEN NIGHTS PACKAGE COST IMPLICATION (ALL PRICES EXCLUDES TICKETS)

SINGLE OCCUPANCY:	\$8,000
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY:	\$4,900 PER PERSON
TRIPLE OCCUPANCY:	\$4,550 PER PERSON
QUAD OCCUPANCY:	\$4,400 PER PERSON

### TICKET DEPOSIT

First Class: ₦3,000,000, Business Class: ₦2,000,000 Economy: ₦500,000

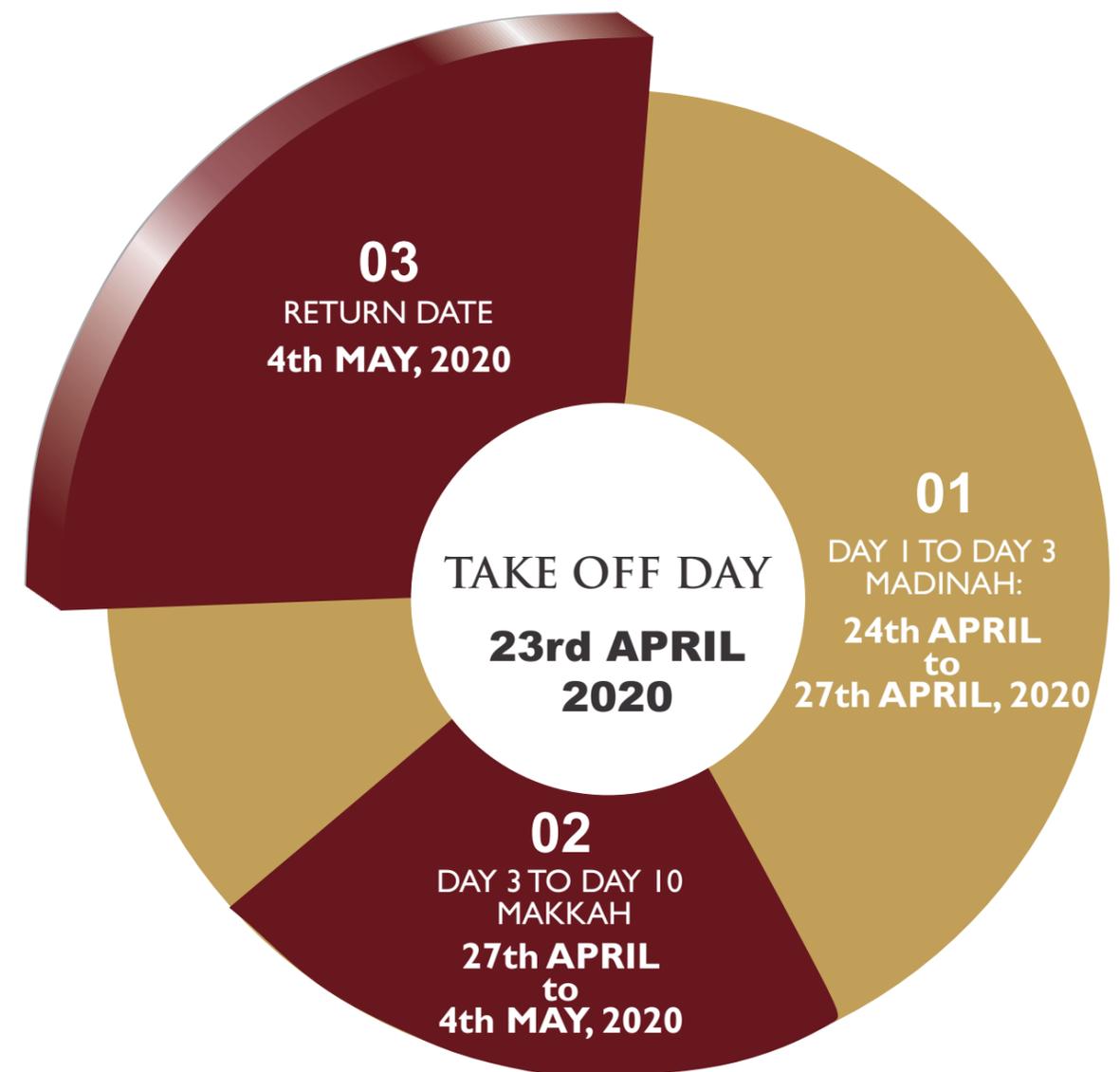
MAKKAH HOTEL  
AL MARWA RAYHAAN  
BY ROTANA



WHAT YOU GET

- THREE (3) NIGHTS IN THE OBEROI MADINA HOTEL (BED, IFTAR AND SAHUR)
- SEVEN (7) NIGHTS IN AL MARWA RAYHAAN HOTEL, MAKKAH (BED, IFTAR AND SAHUR)
- UMRAH VISA
- VIP TRANSPORT

# ITENERARY FOR THE FIRST TEN NIGHTS PREMIUM PACKAGE



# UMRAH RAMADAN PREMIUM

(LAST TEN DAYS PACKAGE)

MAKKAH HOTEL  
AL MARWA RAYHAAN  
BY ROTANA

MADINAH HOTEL  
THE OBEROI MADINA



LAST TEN DAYS PACKAGE OPTIONS:

**Madinah Hotel**  
The Oberoi Madina

**Makkah Hotel**  
Al Marwa Rayhaan By Rotana, Makkah

LAST TEN DAYS PACKAGE COST IMPLICATION  
(ALL PRICES EXCLUDES TICKETS)

SINGLE OCCUPANCY:	\$19,000
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY:	\$10,700 PER PERSON
TRIPLE OCCUPANCY:	\$ 9,600 PER PERSON
QUAD OCCUPANCY:	\$ 9,200 PER PERSON

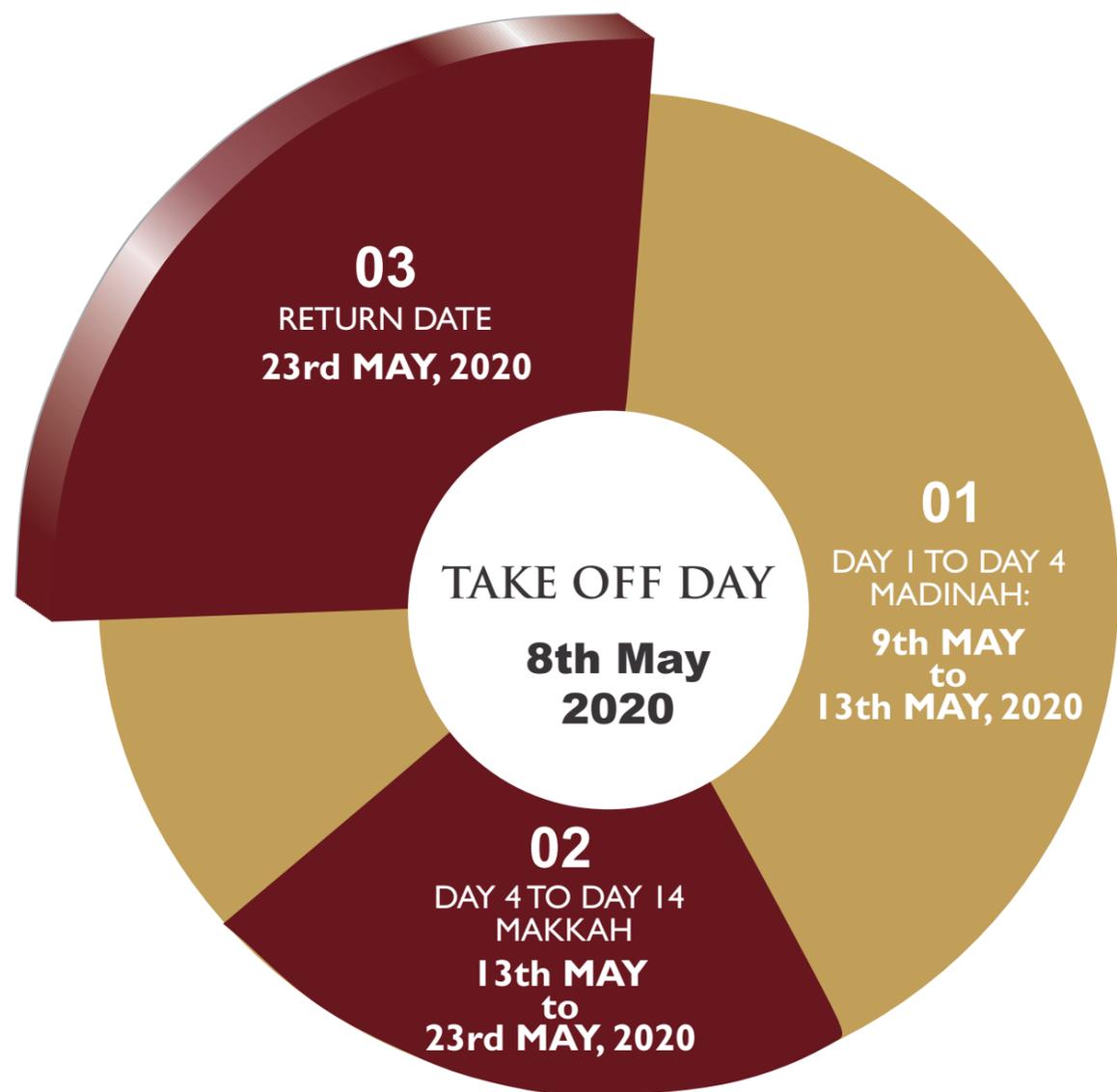
### TICKET DEPOSIT

First Class: ₦3,000,000, Business Class: ₦2,000,000 Economy: ₦500,000

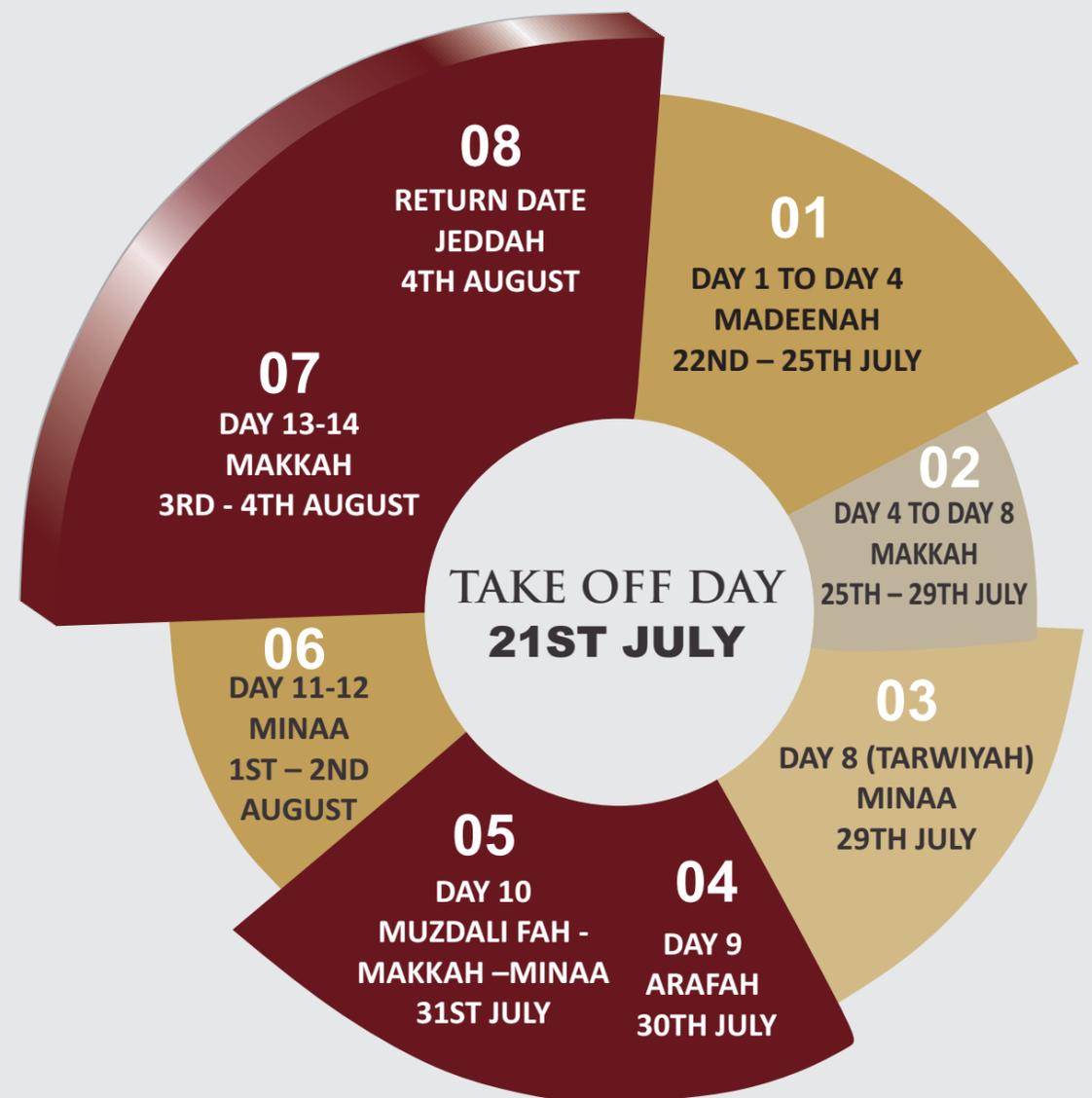
### WHAT YOU GET

- FOUR (4) NIGHTS IN THE OBEROI MADINA HOTEL (BED, IFTAR AND SAHUR)
- TEN (10) NIGHTS IN AL MARWA RAYHAAN HOTEL, MAKKAH (BED, IFTAR AND SAHUR)
- UMRAH VISA
- VIP TRANSPORT

# ITENERARY FOR THE LAST TEN DAYS PREMIUM PACKAGE



# BRIEF ITINERARY FOR **HAJJ 2020**



## ITINERARY FOR HAJJ 2020



### TAKE OFF DAY 21ST JULY

Unless there are no flights, we will depart for Madeenah on this day.

### DAY 1 TO DAY 4 MADEENAH 22ND - 25TH JULY

Our arrival day in Madeenah. You will be given oral polio vaccine and another antibiotic at the point of entry; please accept them. Typically, after immigration formalities, international passports are to be submitted to the appropriate officials. The patience Hajj demands starts here.

Usually, we distribute the hotel room keys in the bus en route the hotel. This means you merely label your luggage with your room number and give to the concierge at the hotel and it shall be brought to your room. You can then proceed to your room without the hassles of checking in.

The meal times and prayer times will be given to you in the welcome bulletin. The COMEREL prayer mat on your bed is a souvenir. Please rest well and get ready for Ziyaarah and visits to the other places of interest the following day or the next. Also, ensure that you get your ihram cloths if you have none.

When to check out and where to place your luggage will be discussed in the bulletins. The journey to Makkah will be by air via Jeddah. You should be prepared to wear your ihram from the hotel and to make your intention for Umrah immediately after take-off. At that point, you begin to chant the talbiyyah (see handbook given to you for details). All luggage will proceed to Makkah by road ahead of the group. After reaching Jeddah airport, you will be transferred to VIP buses which will convey you to Makkah by road. There are checkpoints on the road; they are compulsory stops, please bear with the situation patiently.

## ITINERARY FOR HAJJ 2020



### DAY 4 TO DAY 8 MAKKAH 25TH - 29TH JULY

The hotel keys to your Makkah rooms will be distributed on the way to Makkah from Jeddah unless something unforeseen happens. The talbiyyah continues until you sight the haram. There is usually a lot of chaos on this day and you should prepare your mind for it. The traffic situation may mean you will disembark from the bus some distance to the Haram and trek to the hotel. If things go as planned, however, we will deliver you to the hotel basement from where you label your luggage with your room number, ensure it is picked up and then you proceed to your room. The luggage will be brought to your room, supervised by our staff. You will get the times of prayer and information about meal times and feeding area from our bulletin. You can take a shower and then head to the mosque to perform Umrah. After Umrah, you will remove your ihram clothing and take a shower. Take advantage of being in the Haram to get to the mosque early,

say all your prayers in the mosque and amass as many good deeds as possible.

Treat people kindly, give to the poor and control your anger and tongue. Await our instructions via bulletins to pack in readiness for the movement to Minaa on the 8th day of the month of Hajj, the day of Tarwiyah. Typically, we distribute small bags which should carry only the essentials you need for the trip. A good rule of the thumb is to carry an extra ihram and medications (if any) as well as telephone chargers and any valuable you have in your bag in the hotel (money, jewellery and electronic gadgets).

### DAY 8 (TARWIYAH) MINAA 29TH JULY

On this day, we head out early. This means you should take your bath and prepare for the ihram early. The intention for Hajj is said aloud



from your hotel room. Please proceed to the designated take-off point and board the buses when requested to. Breakfast is usually eaten at Minaa. Please eat well, rest well and do as much remembrance of Allah as you can. Avoid idle talk as much as possible and keep in mind what brought you. Also, keep the hope of Allah's reward fresh in your mind and make it the sole motivation for each good deed you contemplate or do.

**DAY 9  
ARAFAH  
30TH JULY**

Early in the morning, we will head out for 'Arafah. Breakfast will be served there, insha Allah. Please read up what is expected of you at 'Arafah from the booklet we have given you for the purpose. Please listen to the sermons and use your time wisely. Sleep if you have to but do not forget to concentrate your efforts on prayers and similar devotions after the combined prayers of zuhr and 'asr.

We will tell you which bus to board if you will be staying at Muzdalifah till dawn or proceeding by midnight. Just before sunset, we will board our buses and load food for the stay at Muzdalifah. At sunset, we will proceed to Muzdalifah.

**DAY 10  
MUZDALIFAH -MAKKAH -MINAA  
31ST JULY**

Muzdalifah is an open place. There are no demarcations and no clear-cut boundaries for people. This leaves a lot of room for chaos. We will strive to get a good spot for our pilgrims and spread our carpets. We will pray Maghrib and 'Ishaa combined and eat dinner. The main task here to rest and prepare for the next morning. Avoid separating from the group on the way to Makkah. If things go as planned, we might be lucky to reach Makkah before the Eid prayers. Pray and perform the tawaaf and sa'y (please see your booklet for details). Please return to your hotel and await the bus to convey you back



to Minaa. At this point, you do not need to be in ihram any further. Upon reaching Minaa, please endeavour to stone the Jamratul 'Aqabah and return to your tent with the group. Please avoid separating from the group.

**DAY 11-12  
MINAA  
1ST - 2ND AUGUST**

In Minaa, please keep remembering Allah, listening to sermons, reading the Quran and generally amassing good deeds. Avoid fights and altercations. Please be patient. On the day we leave for Makkah again, we will trek to the tunnels leading to the area known as 'Aziziyah where all buses must wait to pick their pilgrims.

**DAY 13-14  
MAKKAH  
3RD-4TH AUGUST**

The days in Makkah will be spent judiciously. Please remain patient and steadfast in performing your acts of worship. On the day of departure, please do your farewell tawaaf and

prepare to leave. If you have used the hotel's services or consumed any extra items from the mini fridge in your room, kindly settle the bill to reduce the delay we encounter trying to get pilgrims to settle their bills at the last minute. May Allah accept our worship.

**RETURN DATE  
JEDDAH  
4TH AUGUST**

The airport here is not too friendly and we may have to endure a long wait standing in a queue. Please be patient. Please remember the luggage allowance on your ticket. Try not to exceed it or prepare to pay for it in advance.

**DETAILS OF DAILY MOVEMENTS ARE OFTEN SUSCEPTIBLE TO CHANGES; THEREFORE, THEY WILL BE CONTAINED IN OUR DAILY BULLETINS.**

# HAJJ PREMIUM PACKAGE OPTION A (AL MARWA RAYHAAN)

AL MARWA RAYHAAN  
BY ROTANA, MAKKAH



MADINAH HOTEL  
THE OBEROI MADINA

## OPTION A PACKAGE:

**Madinah Hotel**  
The Oberoi Madina

**Makkah Hotel**  
Al Marwa Rayhaan By Rotana, Makkah

### OPTION A PACKAGE COST IMPLICATION (ALL PRICES INCLUDES ECONOMY CLASS TICKETS)

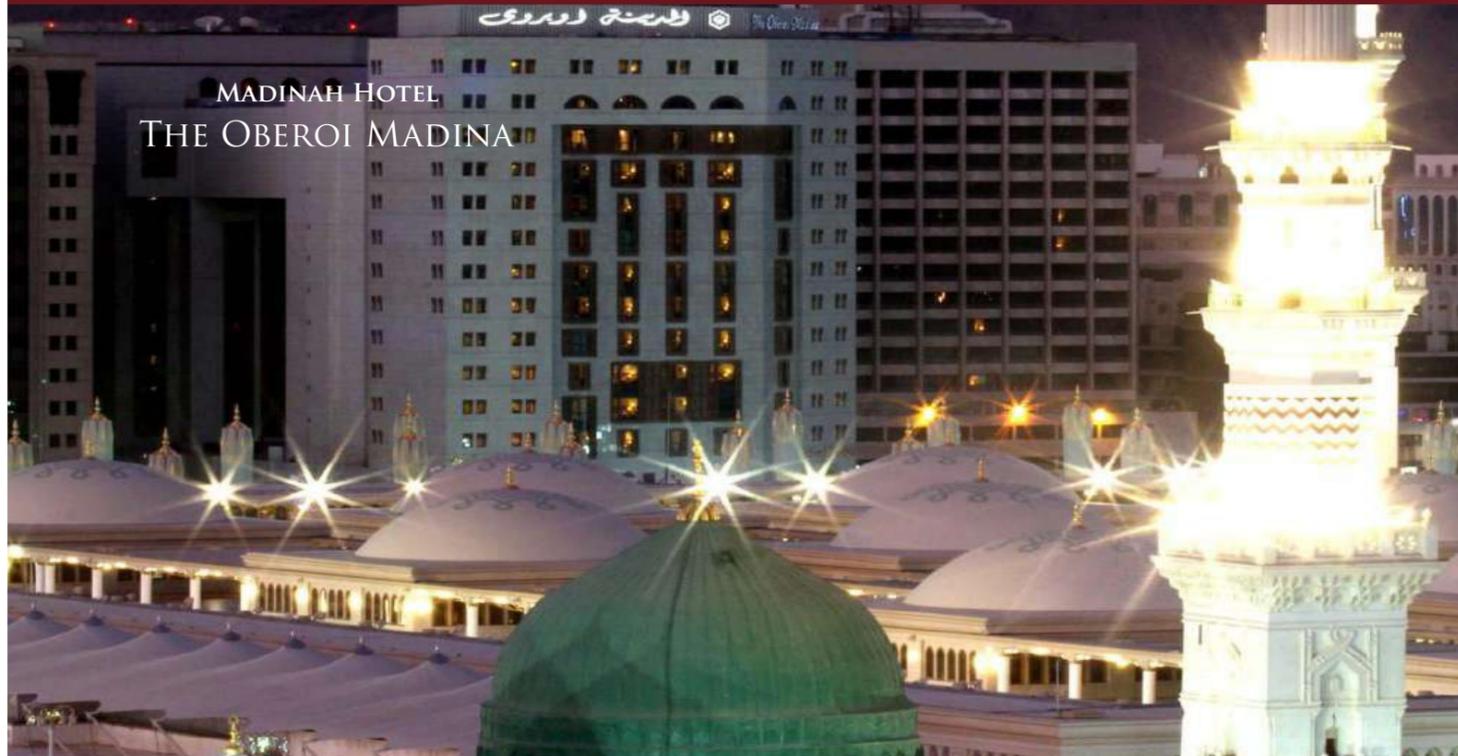
SINGLE OCCUPANCY:	\$32,300
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY:	\$22,500 PER PERSON
TRIPLE OCCUPANCY:	\$20,400 PER PERSON
QUAD OCCUPANCY:	\$19,100 PER PERSON

## WHAT YOU GET

- THREE (3) NIGHTS IN THE OBEROI MADINA HOTEL (FULL BOARD)
- TEN (10) NIGHTS IN AL MARWA RAYHAAN HOTEL, MAKKAH (HALF BOARD)
- A PLUS TENT IN MINAA AND 'ARAFAH
- HADAYA (SACRIFICIAL RAM)
- HAJJ VISA
- VIP TRANSPORT
- LOCAL FLIGHT/HARAMAIN HIGH-SPEED TRAIN TO MAKKAH FROM MADINAH
- FREE CUSTOMIZED HAJJ AND UMRAH RITES BOOK
- ECONOMY CLASS RETURN TICKET ON EMIRATES AIRLINE
- FREE 5-LITRE ZAM-ZAM UPON RETURN (MUST BE COLLECTED WITHIN A MONTH FROM THE DATE OF RETURN. OTHERWISE IT IS FORFEITED)

# HAJJ PREMIUM PACKAGE OPTION B (DAR AL TAWHID INTERCONTINENTAL)

DAR AL TAWHID  
INTERCONTINENTAL, MAKKAH



## OPTION B PACKAGE:

**Madinah Hotel**  
The Oberoi Madina

**Makkah Hotel**  
Dar Al Tawhid Intercontinental, Makkah

OPTION B PACKAGE COST IMPLICATION  
(ALL PRICES INCLUDES ECONOMY CLASS TICKETS)

SINGLE OCCUPANCY:	\$39,600
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY:	\$25,800 PER PERSON

## WHAT YOU GET

- THREE (3) NIGHTS IN THE OBEROI MADINA HOTEL (FULL BOARD)
- TEN (10) NIGHTS IN DAR AL TAWHID INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL, MAKKAH (HALF BOARD)
- A PLUS TENT IN MINAA AND 'ARAFAH
- HADAYA (SACRIFICIAL RAM)
- HAJJ VISA
- VIP TRANSPORT
- LOCAL FLIGHT/HARAMAIN HIGH-SPEED TRAIN TO MAKKAH FROM MADINAH
- FREE CUSTOMIZED HAJJ AND UMRAH RITES BOOK
- ECONOMY CLASS RETURN TICKET ON EMIRATES AIRLINE
- FREE 5-LITRE ZAM-ZAM UPON RETURN (MUST BE COLLECTED WITHIN A MONTH FROM THE DATE OF RETURN. OTHERWISE IT IS FORFEITED)

# HAJJ DELUXE PACKAGE

## ZAMZAM PULLMAN HOTEL, MAKKAH

AL HARAM HOTEL  
MADINAH



### DELUXE OPTION:

**Madinah Hotel**  
Al Haram Hotel, Madina

**Makkah Hotel**  
Zamzam Pullman Hotel, Makkah

DELUXE PACKAGE COST IMPLICATION  
(PRICE INCLUDES ECONOMY CLASS TICKET)

DELUXE PACKAGE PRICE	\$12,500
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### WHAT YOU GET

- THREE (3) NIGHTS IN AL HARAM HOTEL, MADINA (BREAKFAST AND DINNER)
- TEN (10) NIGHTS IN ZAMZAM PULLMAN HOTEL, MAKKAH (BREAKFAST AND DINNER) (TWO BEDROOM SUITE WITH SEPARATE TOILET FOR EACH, 4 PERSONS PER ROOM)
- A TENT IN MINAA AND 'ARAFAH
- HADAYA (SACRIFICIAL RAM)
- HAJJ VISA
- VIP TRANSPORT
- LOCAL FLIGHT/HARAMAIN HIGH-SPEED TRAIN TO MAKKAH FROM MADINAH
- FREE CUSTOMIZED HAJJ AND UMRAH RITES BOOK
- ECONOMY CLASS RETURN TICKET ON EMIRATES AIRLINE
- FREE 5-LITRE ZAM-ZAM UPON RETURN (MUST BE COLLECTED WITHIN A MONTH FROM THE DATE OF RETURN. OTHERWISE IT IS FORFEITED)



**Barr. Abdullahi Mukhtar Muhammad**  
Ag. Chairman/CEO NAHCON

# NAHCON 2019 *Awards*

The MD/CEO Comerel Travels & Tours Limited, Ustaz Abubakr Siddeeq Muhammad, received the award of excellence, for the fourth time, on behalf of COMEREL as the NAHCON's Best Hajj Tour Operator in Nigeria for the 2018 Hajj exercise.

**Alhamdu Lillah!**





## MEMORIES FROM HAJJ 2019



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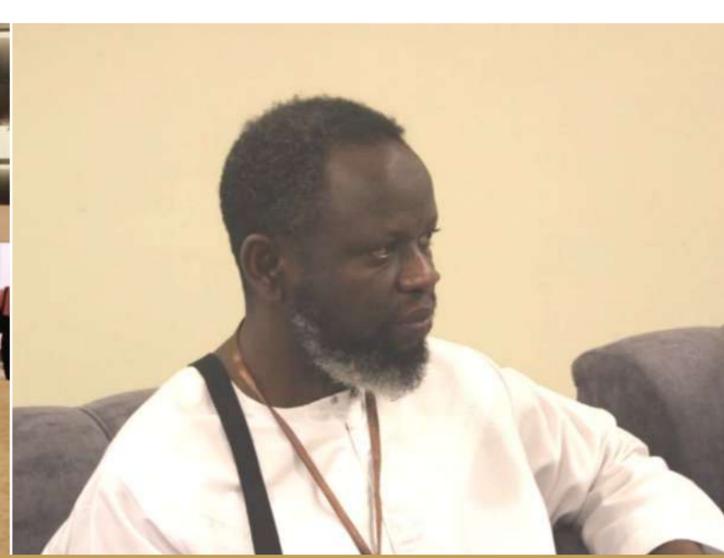


MEMORIES FROM HAJJ 2019



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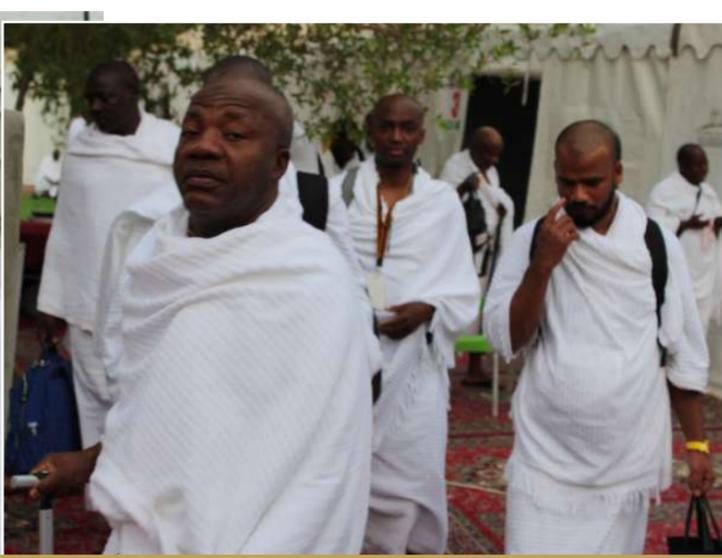


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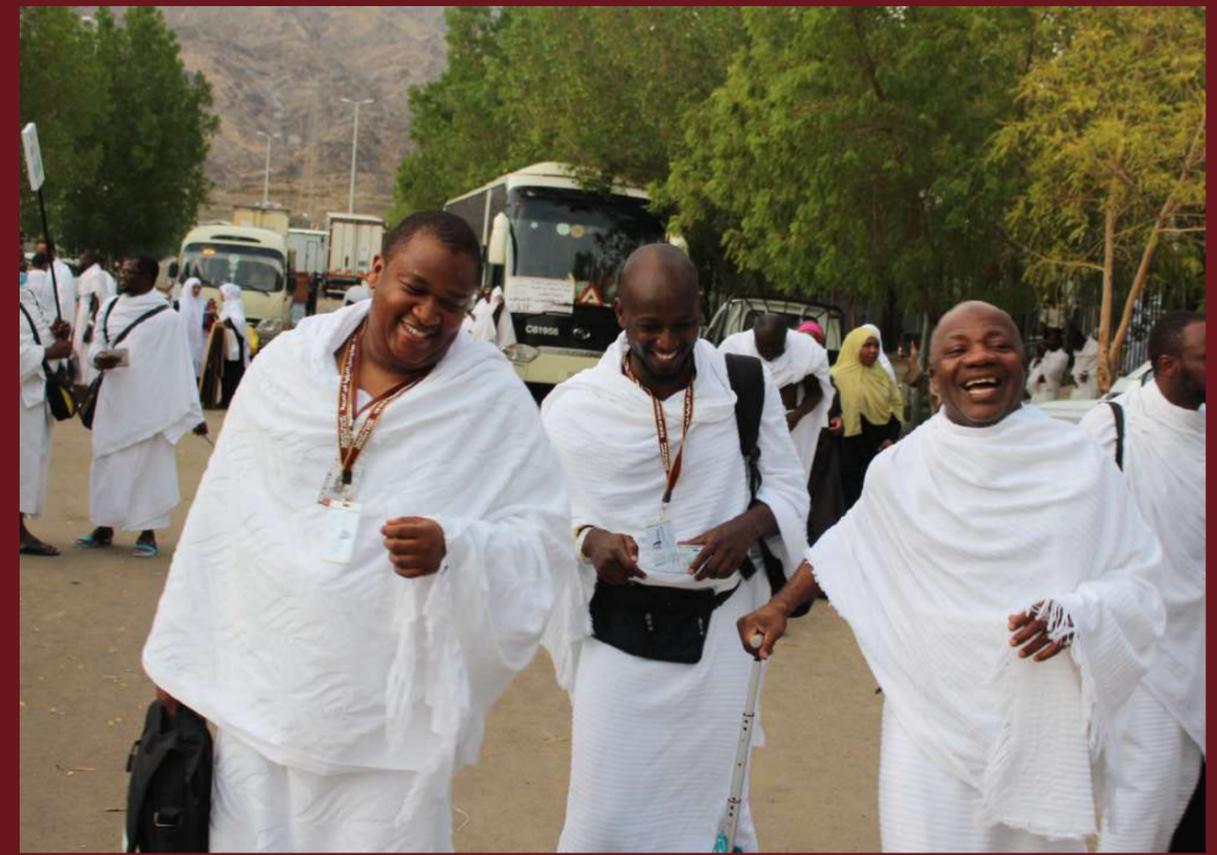




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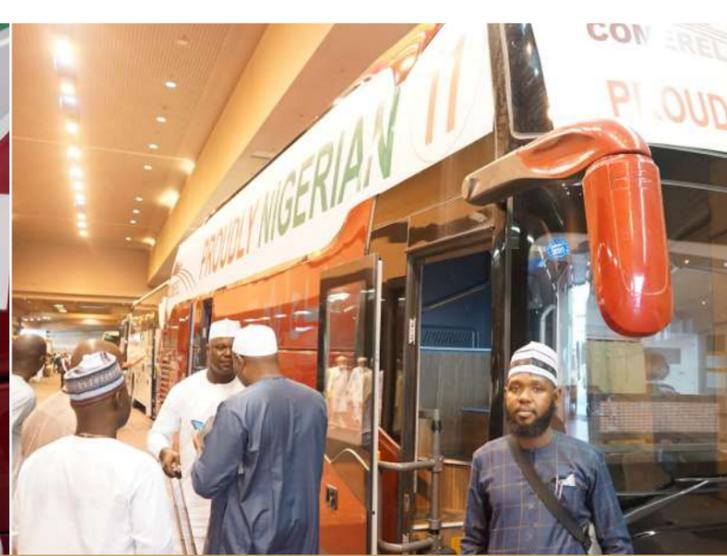


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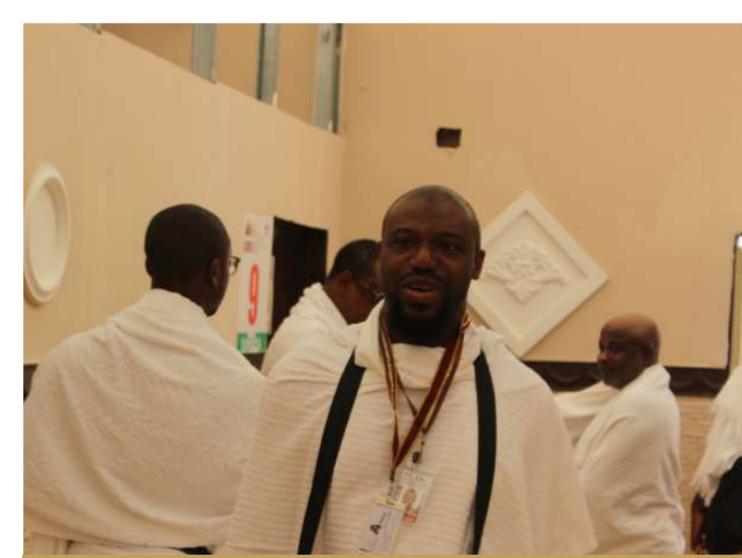


MEMORIES FROM HAJJ 2019



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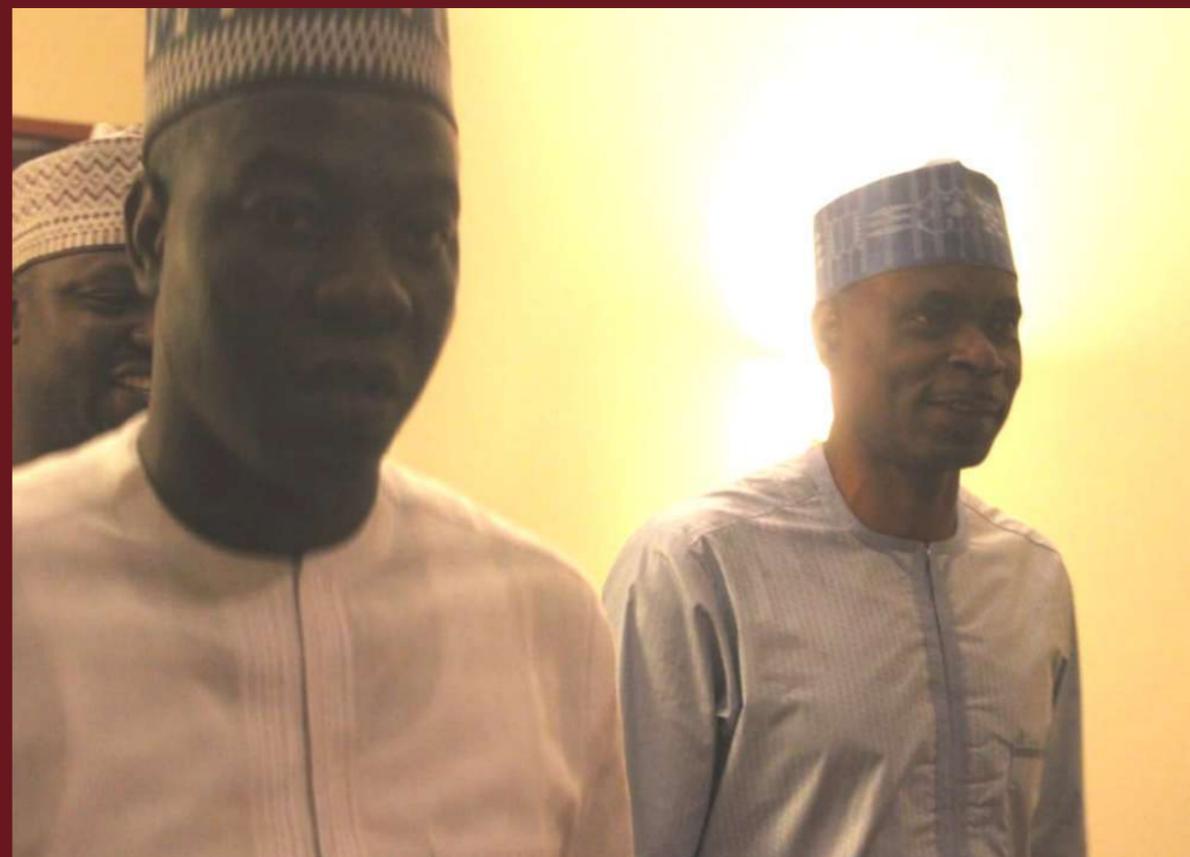


MEMORIES FROM HAJJ 2019





MEMORIES FROM HAJJ 2019



MEMORIES FROM HAJJ 2019





## MEMORIES FROM HAJJ 2019



## MEMORIES FROM HAJJ 2019



## FEEDBACK FROM HAJJ 2019 PILGRIMS

DALIL MOHAMMED WANKA



### HOTEL

My experience between the two hotels, I've stayed in *Rotana* or *Rayhaan* quite a few times; this is my first time staying at Intercontinental (Daral Tauhid).

Now as I expected

Intercontinental would be a better hotel than *Rotana*, anybody that has been to the two hotels would know that Intercontinental is better. However, anybody that knows anything about hotel brands will tell you that Intercontinental will be more luxurious than *Rayhaan*, though the hotel is much more decorated, it's a luxury brand; the facilities are better, the rooms are nicer, and the staff are better trained as well, they do their work very well.

However the *Rotana* does have its own advantages, I will still say the food in *Rotana* is comparable, if not better than the one in Intercontinental, plus, at *Rotana* or *Rayhaan* you get Nigerian dishes which you did not get here.

And another advantage is you get more of *ka'bah* view when you stay at *Rotana*; is true you do get a lot of *Haram* view from this hotel Intercontinental, however from *Rotana*, because is a taller building, you do get a lot of rooms that has *ka'bah* view, and there are more possibilities that you will get a room with *ka'bah* view there. So *Rayhaan* has its own advantages; I do prefer it here.

### FROM FAIRMONT TO RAYHAAN

You know COMEREL used to put us up in Fairmont, then they changed to *Rayhaan*, and the main reason why they changed to *Rayhaan* is because they wanted to be preparing Nigerian dishes for the pilgrims, apparently having Nigerian dishes has been a big issue for pilgrims coming with COMEREL, so that's why they changed the hotel.

I did indicate that I would prefer Fairmont to *Rayhaan* as I think anybody would if it wasn't just thinking about the dishes; however there is also part of the issue of elevator; now anybody that has not been to *Makkah* or has not stayed in Fairmont would think this is a small issue, but it is not. At Fairmont, once the call to prayer has started, if you are not out of your room you stand a good chance of missing all or part of the prayer because the lifts are always overcrowded; you did not get that problem at *Rayhaan*. However, yes, my wishes have been respected since the hotel has been changed for me.

Obviously, anybody coming to Hajj, the first thing is for him to have Hajj *Mabrur*, however; in terms of tour operators, I would like a tour operator that would take care of logistics, place to stay, everything that has to make your Hajj convenient so that you can concentrate on your *Ibadah*. That is exactly what we want, and that's what COMEREL provides.

COMEREL provides the best places to stay, their logistics is second to none, at least not anyone I've seen and the staff are attentive to all of your complaints, so I'm quite happy with COMEREL concerning these arrangements to meet up with my *Ibadah*.

## FEEDBACK FROM HAJJ 2019 PILGRIMS

### INDUCTION COURSE

Yes the first time I attended the Induction Course, the person speaking at the time said, it is important that you attend every Induction Course even if you go every year so that you might learn new things, and at the same time each year COMEREL brings in a new scholar to talk us about Hajj. So every time I attended an Induction Course I learn something new. Obviously Induction Course speaks about logistics and arrangements for travel which is different every time, and at the same time, just like the man said, you would learn something new every time you attend an Induction Course, and I have learned something new every time I've attended so far.

### RECEPTION

The standard is quite clear when you come out of the baggage area you expect to see somebody waiting for you there with the clear sign that it is you that he's waiting for, whether is your name he holds up or the name of the company. Every time you come out of *Madinah*, there is somebody holding up a flag with COMEREL on it, and they are always there; you don't come out and not see them, or maybe they are in some corner, that you should start looking for them. No! They are always standing right in front of the door, right on time.

### RATING HOTELS

Yes for most people that stayed in *Madinah*. They usually stay at the Hilton or they talk about the Hilton. I've never gone to the Hilton. This the first time I visited somebody at the Hilton, and I will assure you that *Oberoi* is much, much better than the Hilton. It was much better than the Hilton before, I've seen *Oberoi* before, I'm seeing Hilton for the first time. However *Oberoi*

is now being renovated and I stayed in one of the newly renovated rooms, even the older rooms are better than the Hilton, let alone the newly renovated rooms. So please don't change that hotel. It's okay.

### DISHES

Now, local dishes are not really an issue for me, because I eat anything, to be honest with you. However, I do understand that it is an issue for a lot of other pilgrims that we come with. We Nigerians or Africans, in general, prefer our own food, and our own food is better, there is no doubt about it. However, I do like to choose things once in a while, so when I travel I may not really bother with Nigerian dishes, I am quite comfortable having the dishes of wherever I visit.

For me that is not an issue, however, it is clear, that is an issue for other pilgrims, so COMEREL needs to find a way to continue doing that.

### BULLETIN

The bulletin is extremely helpful because what happened is even when you attend meetings normally they do tell you what is going into the bulletin, whether you're having dinner or you meet in one of the lectures that COMEREL organises. However the bulletin is important because, you still find a lot of people asking questions or sometimes you forget what was said, and I always find myself referring back to the bulletin to find out what's going to happen next, what time the prayers are, and any other logistical information. So, the bulletin is extremely important and I think it should continue.

### METHOD OF SENDING BULLETIN

prefer receiving the bulletin on the phone

because your phone is always with you. Sometimes you go to the mosque, you spend such a long time reading the Qur'an or doing other things, *Ibadah*, and then you remember you have to do something or you start thinking about what was said in the bulletin; just open your phone and check it. So you don't need to be working around with a piece of paper all the time. It is on your phone and your phone is with you all the times. The electronic bulletin is much better.

**ZIYAARAH**

Group *ziyaarah* is better than going individually. When you go to *Uhud*, for example, where the battle of *Uhud* took place, after the scholar or imam speaks to you about what happened at *Uhud*, the lessons learned at *Uhud* and so on, they cannot do that for you individually; you would have to be within the group, and sometimes members of the groups do ask questions which the scholars answer, and you learn a lot with that. Definitely, *ziyaarah* should be in a group.

**LOCAL TRANSPORTATION**

Well, the train was excellent. Maybe it is not good to use the word *perfect*, but the train was *perfect!* With the train, first of all, you don't need to leave the hotel as early as you would if you're flying, that is number one. Number two: COMEREL still carries your main luggage. You can hold them to your hand luggage but COMEREL does carry your main luggage to *Makkah* on your behalf. Wearing the *Ihraam* and carrying very big luggage obviously it can be very difficult.

Like I said you can leave the hotel as late as possible and, maybe two hours before the time of departure of the train, get to the train station

- the train station itself is better looking than the airport. It was a very good experience, and passing through security wasn't that stressful. Checking in or scanning your ticket is much easier, and passing through security, not as stressful as airport security. You don't need to take off your shoes, or taking out the liquid from suitcase or anything, and the train departs on time to the minute. Inside the train itself; the train was spacious; it was very comfortable; it was very fast. We got to *Makkah* from *Madinah* in three hours, which you would never do if you are flying. From *Madinah* you fly to *Jeddah* in forty minutes; before you get out of the airport it would be another one hour; then before you drive to *Makkah*, will be at least another two hours with all the stops and traffic. However, it is three hours flat from *Madinah* to *Makkah* using the train. Like I said the train was spacious they had a cafeteria on board, you could go and buy snacks, and of course snacks, drinks and tea were distributed during the train ride. COMEREL cannot go back to flight again. You have to maintain the train. It is the best.

**MODE OF TRANSPORTATION - AIR OR TRAIN?**

Comparing travelling between *Madinah* to *Makkah*, and you either go by aeroplane or train this year. Now normally we do fly to *Jeddah* then take a bus to *Makkah*, we normally leave the hotel like six (6) hours, or five (5) hours before the flight. We spend a long time at the airport. Checking in is quite hectic. You pass through security, you deal with flight delays, then finally, when you get to *Jeddah*, you know coming out of the airport, when you fly to *Jeddah*.... 40-45 minutes..... you spend almost an hour before you get on to the bus, and then leave the airport, then it will take you probably another two(2) hours to get to *Makkah*.

Now with the train, I think we got to the train station less than one (1) hour before the time of departure. Our tickets were distributed to us. There were staff of the train station that were waiting to receive us and then to check us in or scan the barcode on our tickets.

The trains leave on time to the minute, this is the second time I've used the train, so I think they always leave on time. The train was at 6:15, it left at exactly 6:15pm.

Now, when we arrived at *Makkah* the *Mu'assasah* in charge of African non-Arab Pilgrims, as we call it, was there to welcome us. They had a huge delegation, like a small party to welcome us through rose petals and gave us souvenirs and everything, and apparently COMEREL would be the first organised tour operator to use the train between *Madinah* and *Makkah*. So, I spoke to my other friends that have used other tour operators. I asked them why didn't you use the train? And they asked their own tour operators. They told them nobody is using the train this time around, and of course, they told them COMEREL is using the train. So it seems like other Hajj operators were not even aware that you could use the train this time around. Obviously is all part of their trailblazing we've become accustomed to when it comes to COMEREL.

**HOTEL RATING**

This hotel (Intercontinental) has been around for a very long time. I don't know when it was built, but I remember years and years ago whenever I came to *Makkah*, it was even before the Clock Tower, but you could see, for example, Rotana. Rotana, part of it had to be renovated or all of it had to be renovated recently, but I'm not sure when this hotel has been renovated but as

you can see everything is as it should be. The hallways are clean, well decorated, you cannot ask for more. Honestly, I have no complaints about this hotel. Probably some of these things are a bit old but it gives a character; you know, you have different buttons for curtains, for shelves, for blinds; the machine looks old but it works perfectly. To me, it has the best facilities you can get in any five (5) star hotels around the world. So, I love every part of it.

**MOVING OUT TO MUNA**

I think like two (2) days before we set out to *Muna*, even the schedule of the bus was sent to us. The time that the bus will arrive at each of our hotels was sent to us via the WhatsApp group. So, it was quite organised. For us that are staying in this hotel (Daral Tauhid), we did wait at the reception and staff from COMEREL came to collect us, took us down to the 0 Level where the bus was waiting for us. Then we moved down to Rayhaan, the bus stopped. Then, we picked up the other pilgrims; it was quite organised. Yes, there was headcount to make sure everybody was on board. Those that left *Le Meridien*, left separately. It was quite organized; it went on without a hitch, everybody was conveyed; we got there on time. I don't really have much to add to that, it went well.

**MUNA**

There is much improvement compared to last year; I didn't have many complaints last year honestly, because we were only four in the room and the room was en suite, so I didn't have much complaint last year, because you don't expect the five star (5) hotel in *Muna*. However, this time around, I must say, the organisers of the Tents in *Muna* have done a very good job to make our stay more comfortable in *Muna*.

What have they done? New carpets were brought in, all the restrooms were completely changed, new tiles and everything such as you will get in a very good hotel. They put on new ACs. Normally, when you go to Muna your complaint is too hot; this time around, we complained is too cold. Yes there was a lot of rain this year and obviously they've probably did not plan for that because some places were leaking, that's beyond their power, they didn't know it was going to rain, because it's never rained here.

So, yes, there is much, much more improvement than last year. The tents are much better than last year, no doubt; they even distributed not scented toiletries to us, it's never happened before, they also distributed slippers for walking around, can you imagine that?

**FOOD IN MUNA**

Obviously the food in *Muna* is not as good as the food you will get in the hotel you are staying in *Makkah*, but the food in *Muna* is okay. We have come to expect that standard in *Muna*. I would say something about *Muna* though; as a concern to COMEREL. I thought every group had their own dedicated dining area; apparently, this is the first time I'm realising is not that way at all. Apparently only COMEREL has its own dedicated dining area. You don't need to line up with the rest of the whole A-Plus tent to get your meal.

Now, can there be some kind of improvement in the food? Yes! There is room for improvement, but like I said there is a level of comfort you expect in *Muna* and you don't really have high expectations when it comes to this type of food. It is after all the transit camp, so I'm okay with the food; if they are going to improve, that will be good as well.

**MUNA AND ARAFAH**

Actually *Muna* was better than *Arafat* this year because the tents in *Muna* were really stepped up so to speak, then, *Arafat* was okay. It is the same thing as it has always been. My opinion of *Arafat* still remains the same as last year; it was good, the rooms were not crowded. The reason why *Arafat* used to be very good before was the rooms used to be crowded in *Muna*. It is no longer so, but as I said, there are a lot of improvements in *Muna*. So, *Arafat* is okay, *Muna* is better now.

**SERVICES**

So, the services are definitely improving, or the standard has been held. There are areas where the services have improved. Now some of it is not due to COMEREL, but however, you must give COMEREL the credit for taking advantage of the facilities that are available here. As I said, *Oberoi* has improved. It was very good before, it is even better now. Obviously, COMEREL did not build the train station, but however, COMEREL did have the foresight and diligence to make sure that they secured tickets for all of us which is more than you can see for any other tour operator. And even the other tour operators, they intend to get the tickets next year, I assure you, you will still hear stories that not everybody got the ticket.

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

Like I've said, I've observed other tour operators. I have a lot of friends; they don't come with COMEREL. They come with other Hajj operators. I've seen their standard; they have seen our standard. They know it is not comparable. Obviously COMEREL is miles ahead of the rest.

Yes, I'm still happy with the value for money. It has made Hajj very easy for me. If it wasn't easy I wouldn't have been coming back trying to do Hajj all the time. And hopefully, I will be back next year, inshaa Allah.

**ASSESSMENT**

I think last year I said 90%. Obviously nothing can be 100%; a lot of things can be improved, but just like I said, giving what I have seen elsewhere, there is no doubt in my mind that COMEREL is the best Hajj operator, and is not only me saying it, even the Hajj Commission has said it several times and had given them award to that effect. So I'm quite happy coming back here and I would recommend COMEREL to everybody coming for Hajj.

**RATING**

No! I said the 90% meaning is between 90% and 99% I just want to say 100, so let's say 95%.



ALIDU SHUTTI

In the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, we have what we call Grading Template that takes care of all activities being carried out by licensed tour companies, right from the day they obtain an application form

to be licensed by the commission.

Apart from this we also examine the conduct of companies in the way they fill and submit the application form, their financial obligation to

the Commission, their screening method in the way their pilgrims are registered. Do they, for example, screen the pilgrims? There has to be a method of screening to ensure that only genuine pilgrims are registered with the company for that particular year's Hajj.

We also look at the arrangement of pilgrims enlightenment; is it audio or visual documents, and even face-to-face enlightenment for the tour operators. We look at how they plan for the movement of their pilgrims to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, right from Nigeria, from reception at the airport, to how they settle them in their hotels in *Makkah*, then the seminar and workshop that they organize for their pilgrims in *Makkah* and *Madinah*.

Then when they arrive *Mashaa'ir*, what are the things put in place to facilitate the stay of the pilgrims at *Masha'ir*? And how do they equip them spiritually, so that at the end of the day they will have *Hajj Mabroor*?

These are what we look at in considering and in grading these tour operators.

And let me give you this information; after we have designed this template, we distributed it to all companies, not that we are doing it under the table, we allow them to have this grading template so that ab initio, you know what you are in for, and you know your position.

So with that grading template before the tour companies can even assess themselves, to know whether or not they are doing well.

The people behind Comerel, especially the MD and his good team, are seasoned administrators and they are veterans; so this is not their first operation, and we believe there is still room for improvement. They will still improve. But we are sure whoever goes to the kingdom of *Saudi Arabia* with them is in a safe hand.

## FEEDBACK FROM HAJJ 2019 PILGRIMS

IBRAHIM BABANGIDA YUSUF



Actually I learnt about COMEREL a few years ago somewhere in 2017. It was recommended by a friend who had used COMEREL services before. I intended to use them then but unfortunately, my schedule of activities did not give me the opportunity to do that till 2018 when I first used COMEREL services for Umrah with my family and the experience was actually fulfilling. It was satisfactory. So I became a repeat customer and I used COMEREL services when I went for Umrah during Ramadan and actually, it opened my eyes to a lot of things and it clearly emerged for me that COMEREL was a leader in the industry, hence my decision to use them for Hajj with my wife and Alhamdulillah we are here. We have finished our Hajj rites and everything went peacefully, successfully, and we like to thank the management of COMEREL for the extra effort they put in to ensure that their clients were comfortable. Maa shaa Allah! This year was a success and I pray that we go back home safely too.

### COMING TO COMEREL

COMEREL has cut itself out to be a leader in the industry. What I discover with COMEREL is that COMEREL, they under-promise, and over-deliver; which is wonderful! Unlike those others who over-promise and under-deliver. With my experience with COMEREL, I think if at any time you know a client experiences any form of discomfort, I believe, it must definitely be out of

the realm of COMEREL itself. The authorities of Saudi might have mandated the management to do otherwise because I know COMEREL goes out of its way to ensure that their clients are comfortable.

### INDUCTION COURSE

Funny enough, I could not attend but wife did attend and she did brief me that it was very, very insightful and it actually helped her during the course of this Hajj. On a number of issues, when I make reference, when I inquire and I want to call on the management she just goes ahead and says no this is what they said during the induction. The induction is very important but I myself have not attended this year's, but look forward to attending subsequently in sha Allah with long life and good health in the future.

### RECEPTION IN THE HOTEL

Well, the reception was okay barring the little hitch we had in Madinah because of our arrival time. The hotel was good in Madinah. In Makkah, as is usual with Makkah, 1 2 3, you know, hitches but Maa shaa Allah! We were able to sort it out. On the local dishes actually, for me it is a big plus because I prefer my local dishes anywhere I am and I think that also attracts a lot of clients to COMEREL. What I will request from them going forward is to add varieties to the local dishes they prepare for their clients during the Ramadan and the Hajj period.

### THE TRAIN FROM MADINAH TO MAKKAH

Well, I happened to have used COMEREL when they were transporting their clients by Air from Madinah to Makkah. I would say the challenges at the Airport especially at the Jeddah Airport, I am sure necessitated COMEREL going the way of the railway this time around. Believe me, the railway system should be maintained and

## FEEDBACK FROM HAJJ 2019 PILGRIMS

improved upon. It is the best so far. It is calm, it is relaxing and you get to your destination fresh unlike the other way round.

### OBEROI AND AL MARWAN RAYHAAN

Definitely the Oberoi in Madinah is actually a topper, for now. The Rayhan, their food is okay, that is the continental they serve is okay but I think the rooms, they need to improve on their rooms especially in terms of the housekeeping aspect of their rooms. And they need to do some touch-up and a lot of a kind of refurbishing of some of their rooms. Really that is where we are having challenges, but by and large, all said and done, we are here for *ibadah* in as much as we are looking for value for the money spent.

### MUNA

Maa shaa Allah! Muna, Muna alhamdulillah Muna was okay because I think if you will really want to score or assess what you have, all you need to do is to take a look and a survey of others and I think that will convince you. COMEREL has done a good job there but I know and I believe they can improve on it going forward.

### TRANSPORTATION

I think there is room for improvement because that promptness is not there. It may not be the fault of the management itself but I think they need to work on their drivers more to be at the designated spot on time for the pilgrims especially after every *farila* like leaving Musdalifa, leaving Muna to Musdalifa, leaving Muna to Makkah and the likes. A situation where, because of the encumbrances, the blockade put in by the authorities, where pilgrims have to walk in long-distance about a kilometre to board the bus only to get there, the bus is not either there or far farther away from

the designated spot, it's a backbreaker for the pilgrims, not all are so healthy; I think they need to take a look at that.

### PRICE FOR THE PACKAGE

Alhamdulillah, for whatever it is we undertake in this life, if you have a hitch-free exercise I think that alone should be enough for you to give thanks to Allah, so far alhamdulillah I think like they will say: (Kwaliya tabiya kudin sabulu) for this Hajj 2019 in sha Allah.

### PERFORMANCE RATING

I will scale COMEREL an 8, so there is room for improvement.

### FUTURE EXPECTATION

The hotel in Makkah; more varieties when it comes to the local dishes and probably they should push the authority, Saudi authorities more on the arrangement in Muna so that the A-plus will really be A-plus 5 star for the guests.

DR OLUWASEUN SHAKIRUDEEN ABIOLA



Frankly, resolving to travel with COMEREL is one of the best decisions that I made when I decided to perform Hajj.

I was referred to COMEREL Travels by a very dear brother of mine who, at the point paying another tour operator advised me to, instead, use COMEREL because, as far as he was concerned, it was the best in service he had ever received. I

am very glad I did use COMEREL because the services so far have been excellent as far as I'm concerned. So far so good; the journey has been very peaceful although tiring considering the magnitude of the effort that goes into planning this kind of trips. I must commend the management and the chairman of COMEREL travels for a job well done so far.

**INDUCTION COURSE**

I was able to attend the induction course in Abuja although it was a bit inconvenient especially since I am based in Lagos. I just figured it was part of the journey towards Allah's pleasure. Although if I wanted to recommend it to a lot of other people in Lagos it will be a bit inconvenient for them, I advise or recommend that COMEREL Travels has some sought of a liaison office in Lagos where such arrangements can be made in the coming years. I planned to be part of your team inshaa Allah, going forward to bring more pilgrims to your services inshaa Allah.

I think the notice to the induction course was short, that was why it was inconvenient for many to attend, hence the low turnout. Subsequently, we could notify the pilgrims at least two weeks ahead before such inductions and see what the turnout would be. I am sure if people got prior notice they would be able to make it, the challenge mostly for a lot of people was the fact that it was a Saturday and as I said very, very short notice I think at some point, I even had to call to find out when the induction course would be but alhamdulillah so far so good.

**PACKAGE PRICE**

Although pricey, I must say COMEREL has so far impressed me with the level of service. So I'd

like to implore the management of COMEREL to look at the downward review of the prices. I know it's a bit challenging considering all the planning that has to go into it but I believe with more pilgrims the prices should go down.

**ARRIVAL TO MADINAH**

We were well-received in Madinah. The buses were great, the people were fantastic, very, very warm. Our hotel is one of the best in Madinah and the services so far have been excellent. The bulletin although coming usually a little bit late but at least it guided us all through. I remembered sharing some of the bulletins with my wife and she was very impressed at the level of detail and especially the level of knowledge that she also gained throughout the journey.

**OBEROI HOTEL**

The food in Oberoi was excellent. I like the fact that the rooms had two bathrooms which is very unique. I had a boy where we were sharing bathrooms which is about three to four of us and you know how that can be a bit clumsy when it's just one bathroom especially with a lot of people, and I have been told that I have a bit of Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). I was quite impressed with the fact that Oberoi had two bathrooms; the cleanliness was excellent, the service was wonderful, the closeness to the mosque is also extremely essential and which was very good.

I believe comfort is essential for you to be focused on your spiritual journey; having to battle a logistics issue, the logistic challenge is very distracting. Ironically a friend of mine that left Nigeria and flew through England expecting a better experience actually complained very bitterly to me the other day and I am sure when

he does visit me where we are he will be extremely impressed. He has been complaining throughout and that is a service from England. I am actually very glad *alhamdulillah rabbil aalameen* that I came with COMEREL because I was going to go through that route, choosing a tour operator offshore...

At present we are Proudly Nigerians where local operative can deliver this level of service; being accustomed to a high level of comfort I am very very impressed.

**CONTINENTAL DISHES**

On dishes, I am leaning more to the fact before the variety. Unfortunately, the continental food is not that so great in Saudi Arabia because they are not used to pepper or salt which give our food taste. Having tasted both I tend to lean more to the local dish because it's more flavourful, more delicious and a lot more palatable and you don't get tired of it as easily. I am very impressed with the level of service, I am very impressed with the level of details. The food is excellent, almost the same as you get at home, in Nigeria, so for me, it's being like a home away from home.

**INTERACTION WITH THE MANAGEMENT**

Constant feedback is the only way to keep raising the bar in terms of service and for a country like Nigeria where we are not used to efficient services, COMEREL would only get more clients that appreciate its level of service. Interaction between the management and the pilgrims is essential. I appreciate the fact that they always come to our level to mingle with us, to discuss issues, to joke around, to play with us it's heartwarming and it's very encouraging. Not everyone is as spiritually developed as others so it is good to carry everyone along, which

COMEREL has done very well.

**THE SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE**

I will say that the spiritual guidance added value to the service. The truth is that I like the fact that COMEREL does not leave you on your own in the journey, but if you have any questions or any challenges there is always somebody available to attend to you; very, very knowledgeable scholars that go out of their way to enlighten and educate us.

**TRAIN OR AEROPLANE**

I have been on that journey via air once and it was pleasant enough, but based on the feedback I have gotten from a lot of other pilgrims that have done that journey with COMEREL via air, it wasn't that pleasant and I am experiencing the train for the very first time. I must say it was one of the best parts of this trip so far - on time, excellent service, clean, great. Absolutely amazing. It's probably the best train I have been on in the world so far, and I have been to a lot of places.

**ARRIVAL AND WELCOME AT TRAIN STATION IN MAKKAH**

I am so proud to be a Nigerian. We have a lot to offer the world, unfortunately, we have been overtaken by a situation beyond our control but I believe Allah (SWT) in His infinite mercy has a plan for us and this is just the beginning of many more beautiful things to come. I must commend COMEREL for such an excellent, excellent service, for them to be recognized by the Saudi government it's a big deal on its own. So, it's just a beginning of so many other things, more accolades. It is not the first award COMEREL has received and it will not be the last. So much more to be offered as I said, we can only support COMEREL as best as we can. May Allah continue

## FEEDBACK FROM HAJJ 2019 PILGRIMS

RAZAK ABDUL ADISA  
KOLA SHOFU



to guide and protect us all Maa shaa Allah.

### BUSES

The buses were excellent. I don't even know it is almost as if I am a shareholder in COMEREL. All the buses are brand new; excellent seating, wide, comfortable; the drivers have been polite and drove with care. They were always on time, clean; excellent service so far.

### MAKKAH HOTEL (RAYHAAN)

The hotel is not fantastic but it is okay. I suspect they have not maintained the rooms in quite a while because the carpets are a bit damp, the ACs have a little bit of smell, the cleaning is a little bit to be desired. The truth is with such a large volume of people you can only expect so much. I also believe they didn't plan ahead and that is the hotel, not COMEREL. I am sure if COMEREL had a hand in the planning of the hotel or part of planning the hotel, things would be much very different but I will say in the scale of 1-10, I will give the hotel 5 or 4 ½, honestly.

### RATING

On a scale of 1 to 10, I will give COMEREL 7. The 7 because 8 will be pushing it but 7 is very good in terms of rating.

### EXPECTATIONS IN MINAH AND ARAFA

To be honest I don't know actually what to expect, in terms of services. I know COMEREL will always give us the best. I am looking forward to the prayers; I am looking forward to focusing on Allah (SWT); I am looking forward to the acceptance of all our prayers and acts of *Ibadah* by Allah (SWT). COMEREL as I said, I leave everything to them because I trust in their service.

### Induction Course

The induction course is important for one who intends to perform one of the pillars of Islam. As we sacrifice time and material resources we hope this spiritual

investment will bring maximum benefit in making us have Hajj Mabruur.

The induction was meant to start by 10.00 am and by the time we came in everything was actually set up and we are just waiting for the arrival of the guests. I'm impressed with the retinue they brought to address their guests and the potential pilgrims, and I think they provided enough information to address and assure each and everyone that by the time we arrived in the Holy City everything would be in control. They also showed evidence of close interaction and collaboration with the government agencies to show that they are working in sync; I think I cannot remember anything that I feel is a gap that would make me feel concerned in terms of required numbered officials that got across the end-to-end support for all the potential pilgrims.

### WHY I CHOSE COMEREL

Interestingly, I was in the office my line manager arrived from Hajj in 2018. I went to find out from him whether I could use the same agency that he used. His advice was that I should not use the agency with which he travelled for Hajj, but he

## FEEDBACK FROM HAJJ 2019 PILGRIMS

saw one Hajj operator in Makkah, and even though he did not travel with the group, he was certain, from what he observed, that company was better than the Hajj agents he followed. He now gave me the name of the Hajj agency: COMEREL. That was how I contacted COMEREL, and that was how the journey started with my registration. I went online to COMEREL website, I did research and I also did contact some friends also who gave a good account of COMEREL, that indeed they are number one (1). And so far so good, based on what I'm seeing so far I'm optimistic.

### CONTACTING COMEREL

The moment the connection has been established, I was rest assured of the process; it went very smoothly. Prior to establishing that contact and connection, my email correspondence is something that I feel they can improve upon to actually follow up on the email that was sent in making an enquiry about the services that they offer. It was until I was able to get a name of one of the officials through a friend that the process actually accelerated. It may also be that the time I contacted them they were yet to actually get prepared for this year's Hajj pilgrimage or maybe I actually contacted them too early when they were about formalising the cost of the package, the different packages; maybe that was what led to the delay in responding to my email. But I feel that is an aspect, in order to address the anxiety of potential pilgrims to actually respond and follow up, based on email enquiries.

### SAUDI ARABIA

In Saudi Arabia, I hope to see what I found and what I heard based on the experiences of people that used COMEREL in the previous

pilgrimage. I hope to see a smooth service. The Muna which used to be one that is from experience and what we watch from television a quite challenging period for pilgrims, I hope to see five-star service. In terms of the logistics arrangement, I hope that I would receive superb human touch and personal touch and very exclusive arrangement for all the pilgrims. So I'm very optimistic and hopeful. I don't have any doubt but let me come from the pilgrimage to be able to confirm that indeed all my expectations are met.

I don't have any doubt. I'm going with my wife which shows that I'm doubtful. If I was, I wouldn't have gone with my wife. I would leave her behind to go and experience it first, then come back and tell her that now is your time to go; the Hajj operator is superb. I'm very confident and that is the reason why we are going as partners for the Hajj.

### AFTER HAJJ

The kind of information and the experiences people go through when they land in Jeddah for Hajj, I would say choosing Madinah for us was a good decision by COMEREL. We went through immigration with ease; the passport control went smoothly and by the time everybody received their luggage, the buses were actually waiting for us and they took us to our various hotels. At the hotel lobby, we didn't have to go through all the check-in formalities. COMEREL has done that for us and they just handed us our room keys or cards and we just walked to our rooms. It is worth what anyone can ask for in terms of giving one a kind of ambassadorial treatment, a kind of presidential treatment; it was very smooth after a long journey. I was able to check-in to my room, to settle in very well.

The days we spent in Madinah comfortably. The hotel was good proximity to Haram, was just walking distance. I could hear the *Azan* right from my room and I could see the Prophet's Mosque right from my room window. Anytime they call for prayer it doesn't take me long to get to the mosque to pray. And also, in terms of comfort, in terms of the feeding, COMEREL also went the extra length to give the African treatment here in order for the pilgrims not to experience the difference in food to what they were used to at home.

The food options also included African dishes, specifically Nigerian dishes, so you could still feel at home while you are away from home. So, with that, you can give COMEREL the pass mark in the aspect of comfort which they are known for. We have 3 strategies or values that they always want to deliver to their customers, they call it *Comfort, Efficiency and Reliability*. So, if you look at that from what I explained; from the passport control at the airport; from the bus transportation to the hotel; from saving me the trouble of going through all the check-in processes, my cards are already collected, my own card and key already collected for me; from the food experience; from the proximity to Haram, very comfortable. Efficiency; I'm an Engineer. Efficiency means output versus input; so, based on that, their Efficiency was excellent and they were very reliable also. Reliability means that if out of 10 days they were able to give you 10 days' reliability that is 100% reliability, so I think they score very high mark in all those 3 points.

Yam happens to be one of my best food. They gave us boiled yam with stew. I enjoyed that, and they also served *semo* which I enjoyed with *eguisi* soup. They provided the *pap* if you want

which I also enjoyed. So, I would say the yam, the *semo* and also the stew that goes with it - the likes of the *eguisi* - was also fantastic.

**SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE**

The spiritual guidance provided by COMEREL generally for this Hajj pilgrimage was informative. COMEREL interventions were very useful. A day before any activity or any event they prepared us and provide an opportunity for questions. And they did this even before we embarked on a journey right from Nigeria during the induction. If you want to follow COMEREL for Hajj operation, attend the induction course. It would give you the first experience of what to expect. Then, when you now come to Madinah and Makkah, they prepare you a day before any major event of the Hajj, supporting each movement with relevant authorities from the Qur'anic and the tradition of the Prophet. They also bring along scholars who are very deep in the religion, who have the experience and are able to provide clarifications when required. That is very good. And the scholars also make themselves available, if the answers they provided are not satisfactory or you have additional questions they are always available and they are even willing to come to your room which they did in my case, to provide additional explanation and so, that would remove any anxiety, any anxiety on your side in terms of what you need to do and how you need to do it.

**ZIYAARAH**

In Madinah, I went to the *Raudah* and then they also used the opportunity to take us to historical places like Quba. That was the first mosque in Madinah. They took us to *Uhud* where the second war in Islam took place, where the

Muslims were buried...the cemetery; we went to that site. And they were able to give us the right guidance in terms of what to do and what not to, in order to avoid Bid'ah. They also took us to the *Qur'anic Museum*, which is within the Prophet's Mosque.

COMEREL was able to take around all these places. I did not know of the existence of some of these facilities until I travelled with COMEREL. The *Raudah* was a big challenge as Many Muslims were there trying to have access. I nearly missed it. I wonder if it is possible for COMEREL to organise a group visit to the *Rauda*. Maybe next time.

**THE TRAIN**

The train was a surprise package; I wasn't expecting it. The itinerary was when we arrived in Madinah, our departure to Makkah was meant to be by air, by flight from Madinah to Jeddah. The night before the day that we were supposed to travel to Makkah we were informed of using the fast train that connects Madinah via Jeddah. I have heard about it when the rail was built and commissioned. We were informed it was exclusively for Arab citizens or other nationals. So, when we were informed that we would be using it and that we were also reminded that we would be the first black group that would be using the train services between Madinah and Jeddah, it was like a birthday gift and I wouldn't have asked for anything more. It took many people by surprise, but many pilgrims were excited that the arrangement was made; it was a perfect arrangement. And top of that also, another icing they put on it, was that our luggage was collected a night before departure, so, we didn't have to go with our luggage for checking in to the train. We just went with our hand luggage, our travelling

luggage was taken to the hotel to Makkah, waiting for us at the hotel. So it was light; it was ease. All that was part of what COMEREL stands for *Comfort, Efficiency and Reliability*. So, the comfort aspect of it they handle it very well in terms of arranging our luggage and taking it on our behalf to Makkah without us being laboured to carry the luggage into the train. In terms of the Efficiency using the rail service, it was smooth and a good experience. On top of that, was a surprise package, and we were also put in a business class. So, we used the business coach of the train and what more would you ask for? So, I think it was fantastic. They would be scored high; I mean you would be short of giving somebody 100%. They always try to push the envelope when it comes to delivering service to their customers.

**OBEROI AND RAYHAN**

In proximity to Haram both Oberoi and Rayhaan are quite close. In terms of the meals both also provide Nigerian choices in addition to the other meals provided by the hotels. In terms of the rooms, I would say the Madinah hotel, Oberoi has an edge over the one in Makkah. Rayhaan appears to be a little bit bare in terms of the toiletries, but the room is comfortable. In terms of cleanliness, they are both clean and all the lifts are working. There is no noise unnecessarily; you hear the *Azan* for your prayer. If you are unable to get to the Haram, they have a big mosque you can pray. So, I think, neck-on-neck, but the Oberoi Medina would have an edge in terms of facilities in the rooms basically.

**TRANSPORTATION**

This is the first time I am patronising COMEREL. The first time I saw the bus, it was amazing,

quite colourful, very neat. It was indeed a hard moment for me as a proud Nigerian, I was elated with what COMEREL also stands for in terms of pushing the image of Nigeria, acting as good ambassadors of Nigeria. They proudly show that these are the transport services provided by Nigerians and for Nigerian pilgrims. We were made occupants of the clean buses, new buses with good colourful label indicating the name of the agency COMEREL and also indicating where we come from *Proudly Nigerian*. It was something to be proud of; it was an exciting and proud moment. So, the buses took us to Makkah at the main entrance of the hotel. We were advised to travel light to Muna, so they provided what you call COMEREL gift or bags in case we are not prepared for such light bags to help in storing our personal effects. COMEREL informed us about the main requirements for the next trip or events which is Muna.

The buses were there at the hotel tunnel entrance and conveyed us to Muna. We arrived Muna with expectation, and as I mentioned earlier, this is my first Hajj. Muna is not part of Umrah which I had experienced before. I didn't know anything about Muna. I have heard a lot of stories, about the discomfort people are subjected to when they are in Muna, but I would say in the case of COMEREL, the experience was comfortable. Ours was the A-plus package. The Tent was quite spacious with a piece of dual-purpose furniture that serves as a seat and also as a bed. We were 5 in a room. Each tent has dedicated toilet for the 5 occupants. COMEREL was able to use its discretion to select the pilgrims that could live harmoniously among themselves and they got it right. The people that I stayed with I met them for the first time on Hajj and it was a good experience, good networking

in addition to going for spiritual events. And the facilities for the buffet were fantastic. When we arrived at Muna we are to spend additional days; it was also close to the Jamaraat where you have to do the stoning ritual. So, in all cases, COMEREL pilgrims are housed very close to either the Haram in both Makkah and Madinah or the Jamaraat in Muna.

The trip from Muna to Arafat was also lovely. And then from Arafat, the buses were also waiting for us and conveyed us to Muzdalifa. Muzdalifa is an open plain (place), no Tent required, after we spent the night in Muzdalifa, we left to Makkah after the Fajr. So, I think it was good nothing to complain about.

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

Yes, in this first Hajj in my life, I got value for my money. I remember when I was making the payment, I was told by friends, relations, giving me other alternatives that are much cheaper. My response to them was that I have heard you, but I have been given assurances by people that used COMEREL; that it is top-notch and as a result I wasn't expecting anything less. So, when I paid for it, though considered expensive when you compare it with others that were offered in Nigeria when you now experience the value of the services provided to you, you know it commiserates with what you paid for. So, I got value for my money.

So, I can assure anybody that wants to patronise COMEREL for Hajj, they should not have anything to worry about in terms of the money they pay. They are going to get value for their money. At the end of the day, it would not be where they would be scratching their heads: what a waste! No, no no...every dime spent for this package as A-plus that I paid for, I enjoyed it,

I would not ask for anything more.

**RATING**

On a scale of 1 to 10, I would not give anything less than 9.

**ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT**

Like every human being, you would want some little things to be provided, rather than leaving them to the imagination of the human beings. For example, it would have been good although what we get is okay, in managing people's expectation rather than hoping to always surprise people in terms of what they get, inform them clearly, for example, the A-plus package, you would be this much per tent. In our own case, we were 5. I have heard that in previous COMEREL packages for Hajj they put 4 in a room, and then I inquired from people, and they said it is not easy to establish from the beginning how many will be in a tent. They've been on this operation for years, about 10 years, if not more, so, they can say for A-plus package 4 to 6, for transparency; and for other packages, these are the numbers in a tent. Not that they want to do any hanky-panky but is just good to provide such transparency so that people can measure whatever they get at the end of the day, based on what they paid for. And this is applicable to many other things. It will be good to actually lay it out clearly, what are the details of the package that you are paying for, rather than leaving it to the operator's magnanimity in terms of how people in tent, etc. COMEREL should make it clear to people. In my own case, I think they are able to yield to my request because I came with my wife, I requested for a dedicated room and they were able to provide 2 in a room that's for my wife and me in Madinah and Makkah. There could be others whereby

they may come with a larger family, so, maybe providing flexibility, for me I don't have that problem because we are just two and they were able to meet with my requirements. And also, it will be good to start compiling some of these experiences they have acquired over the years, which are unique to Hajj. Like today, when we were coming from Muna to Makkah after the last stoning, many of the roads were blocked, so, the buses could not actually approach the tents. We had to walk almost about 5 kilometres away to meet with our buses. It was not due to any fault or inadequacies or lack of preparation by COMEREL. So, this kind of experiences would be good to get compiled such that people who are preparing for Hajj, can actually acquaint themselves with some of the experiences that are not unique to COMEREL but are peculiar to the Hajj. So, that when they now experience it, they will know that is how they talk about it.

I think these are the things that would help, Other than that I think COMEREL is a good agency. They are patriotic Nigerians; they are good Muslims; they provide and pursue and drive for the comfort of their customers. I think they want to maintain standards and they are succeeding. And they are very approachable, the G.Ms, the Amir, the MD and the other brothers that are part of providing and supporting. The brotherhood is very good. It should be sustained and supported.

Alhamdulillah, I'm really, really glad, that I have achieved the major milestone in my life, the 5<sup>th</sup> pillar of Islam which is embarking on Hajj. Allah Subhanahu wa ta'alah has made it possible for me to come, embarked, performed and completed it, and by tomorrow inshaa' Allah we will be leaving next tomorrow. So, the last event will be Dawaful Wadaa'. It was a good

experience. I pray Allah SWA will make it possible for me to come back. The kind of horrors, challenges people go through in performing Hajj, if Allah made it easy for you and provide you with the resources, you should consider COMEREL, because that will make your experience enjoyable; they will make the Hajj easy for you.

AVM ILYAS USMAN SAMBO (Rtd)



**INSISTENCE ON COMEREL**

The main reason why I keep coming back is the efficiency and the satisfaction I get in following them for Hajj operations. I have been very happy with what I have seen and I think for a long time to come, I will continue

following them.

**COMEREL AND OTHERS**

There is no basis for comparison between COMEREL and other private Hajj operators. When I tried another agent after my first encounter with COMEREL I felt that time there were certain things I was disappointed with so, I tried another agent and that was when I actually realised how lucky I was to have followed COMEREL the first time. I realised that actually those disappointments I thought I had were actually part of the normal things that happen when you leave home to anywhere. They are not the main things that matter. As far as I'm

concerned if you get 3 things when you come for Hajj operation, then you have gotten everything. Firstly, when you have accommodation that is excellent and within the Haram both in Makkah and Madinah, and also the Tent in Muna and Arafah, those things are excellent with COMEREL. The second thing somebody needs is the logistics movement within. COMEREL provides excellent movement within the Hajj operations. Then the third one, that one requires is the spiritual guidance, at each point in time there is somebody there to give you guidance, somebody to attend to you, so, I think once you have that..... any other thing is insignificant.

COMEREL makes one feel very proud. When you look at what is happening when you come for Hajj, the way the other countries particularly those in the Arab nations, the way they look at Africans generally, these services provided by COMEREL, have proved that look we can also excel, we can compete favourably anytime anywhere in the world with anybody. I think what they have done I don't think there are any other international agencies that have gone better than them, maybe Darussalam; apart from that, I don't think there is anyone that is better. Our tent in Muna, A-plus is the best and is the closest to Jamarat; the service we got in that place is just first class, simply first class. And we want to use this medium to congratulate the COMEREL Team for the efficient service they have rendered. All I would advise them is for them not to maintain but to make it better if they can use the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), that means anything you have achieved is in the past, you always strive to achieve better.

**THE TRAIN**

The Haramain high-speed train should be maintained as a means of transportation between Madinah and Makkah. The only thing I want them to improve on as regards to transportation from Madinah to Makkah is the timing. If they can improve on the timing for example, we checked out of our hotel at about 2 pm but our train was by around 6 pm so, we had about 4 hours difference. If you can reduce the time to maybe a maximum of two hours that would just be excellent. The problem of going to Jeddah by air then, from there you start coming by road to Makkah has been eliminated. This one is directly from Madinah to Makkah and the reception, the services within the train are just excellent. As far as I'm concerned is even better than all the train I have entered in Europe. This one is better than that.

**RATING**

On a scale of 1 to 10, I would give COMEREL eight (8).

**Room For Improvement**

Communications, that is advocacy, that is telling people what to expect. A lot of people especially those coming for the first time always expect a perfect Hajj operations which is not possible, so, what I want COMEREL Team to do is to tell people these are the services we are supposed to render you, however, this and this can go wrong or we can have some issues that are beyond our control. So, prepare their mind for some kind of disappointment, for example, we are coming by train I don't believe it is the intention of COMEREL to keep us for about 4 hours waiting. After telling us we are coming by train they should have told us that they would try to see we leave within a very reasonable

time, but if it fails because of booking it is beyond our control. This kind of information will assist and prepare our minds toward that. Then also there are certain services COMEREL does which may be the reason why their rate is a little bit higher than the other Nigerian companies that offer the same services, for example, in Madinah and Makkah. In Madina, the package is full-board, which means breakfast, lunch and dinner; and with other companies, it is the continental or the normal food that they provide in the hotels that are giving. But COMEREL goes to the extra mile of bringing in local food from Nigeria and also organise to have private dining, a private restaurant just for its people. These are extras that are provided, and these are services that you don't get from other companies. The same thing here in Makkah, even though is half-board; we don't have lunch, only breakfast and dinner, but still within the same framework, COMEREL still provides us with local food. It is surprising for you to be in Arafat or in Muna, you have *Fura da Nono*, you have *Masa* and so on. It is really amazing. So, I want them to always tell people these are extras that we always provide, giving us bags that can make our movement easy to *Muna*, and the customized bags as well.

Also with the level of...the number of Islamic scholars that they bring, everyone brings his experience and also at each point in time explained in details what we are supposed to do, I think, that is excellent. While we stayed in Muna a lot of other people within the A-plus, rushed to our place to come and pray, and even come and eat, this shows that there is something extra that they don't get from where they stay or from their own agents. So, I think COMEREL should try at least if they cannot

improve they should maintain it, the principle of Total Quality Management should be introduced so, that they can always strive to improve for better services.

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

I have got value for money. And I will still come again through COMEREL by the grace of God inshaa Allaah for as long as I can afford it, I will come with COMEREL.

There is that personal touch; the COMEREL Team is always there at any point in time, either in person or through telephone, you get somebody, but what is even more amazing, which I really appreciate is the fact that the MD is always there with us doing everything, communicating and trying to tell us what is in stock for us.....he is there.....not that he has gone somewhere to hide and enjoy himself while we are suffering; if we are suffering or enjoying he's there with us. I think that is one of the things, that personal touch that made the difference.

HAJIYA RAKIYA  
GAMBO ILYASU



**TENTS IN MUNA**

*Alhamdu lillah!* the tents in Muna are very comfortable, very comfortable! At least compared to what we used to have, there is an improvement, a great one this year.

**TENTS IN ARAFAT**

The tent is meant to be a temporal stay, it was okay, *alhamdu lillah*, except when the downpour (the rain) came heavily, but we know it is something that is *Rahmah* from Almighty *Allah*, so we endured it. It was a great day, *alhamdu lillah!* The *Arafat* was fine!

**THIS YEAR'S HAJJ**

I enjoyed so many things during this year's Hajj. First and foremost, the *Haramain* Train from Madinah to Makkah. It was a beautiful ride; it was very clean, very sparkling, and beautiful. It was very fine and I really give COMEREL thumbs-up for that, for being the first tour operators to use the *Haramain* Train to transport their group from Madinah to Makkah. It was beautiful, they should keep it up!

I am indeed proud of COMEREL as a Nigerian company, competing with other Hajj service providers around the world. The logo on the bus, '**Proudly Nigerian**', says clearly; it means so much to all of us. We are all very proud of COMEREL; they've done well, and I pray that they will continue doing well with *Allah's* help.

**ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT**

*Alhamdu lillah*, as we all know, even the MD (Managing Director) was able to inform us when we were leaving Madinah that, whatever we see in Madinah, we should leave it in Madinah, meaning that, Madinah is quite easy for them to manage. If there is anything they could handle, they could change, they could do so. But in Makkah, you cannot; Makkah has their own way of doing things, tour operators are just there to look. So, is not actually COMEREL's fault, whatever fault we noticed, that is why a lot of people were able to stomach it and just let it go

because we know that it is beyond COMEREL! So, whatever improvement we want, is the improvement from the Hajj authorities to make it easy for people. Things are difficult, like yesterday, coming back to Makkah from Muna was very tough. We trekked and trekked, and trekked, we didn't know where COMEREL vehicles were. So, those ones you cannot blame COMEREL; is the system, which is very difficult to penetrate. We thank God; COMEREL is doing well as a Nigerian tour guide operator.

**HAJJ IS NOT A PICNIC**

I believe if the pilgrims have gone through the Induction COMEREL gave, or if they have listened to other Mallams speak about Hajj rites, it is not a picnic. Hajj is a spiritual thing, and when you come here, you know how much you have paid, you don't come for a picnic with such huge amount of money. You come here for serious spiritual deliberation between you and your God. So, most of them when they come, they know that they are not coming for a picnic; they know that there is a lot of tough things and a tough time to go through. Though, the good thing for the COMEREL Team is that it is just a short period, unlike those that come through the states from Nigeria that spend 30 days to 40 days. So, I don't think they will complain about what they went through, it is the spiritual guidance there, and a lot of them took benefit of it.

**RATING**

On a scale of 1 to 10, I can say COMEREL has 9.6 over 10.

**MY DREAM FOR A BIGGER COMEREL**

COMEREL should try to reach out to people, get more passengers, so that, they will be able to have enough people on board. They can do it; they just need to do some advocacy, and meet people, meet groups, so that they can bring their own and they

should not rely on only one package. I believe last year that they had such few passengers, was because it was only one package. I know in this world, we are not all equal. So, we have the very rich, the rich and the other side. So, if you can provide for all these strata, maybe at about three or four different packages. COMEREL used to do it in those days, but if they can bring those packages back, I believe people will be ready to really patronize them. And seeing them winning awards from the National Hajj Commission year in, year out, of course, they work very hard to earn such awards. And sincerely speaking what we get from COMEREL services is beautiful, like their name; they provide **comfort**, they provide **efficiency** and they are **reliable**. And that is what an average person that wants to procure services with their money, that is what you want. When you want to procure this, you give your money, you can go and sleep. When it is time they will call you, let's go, we are ready for you. Unlike the ones that will just take you, drop at Jeddah, you will not see anybody again until after the Hajj, they will now wheel people to Jeddah, in fact, some days at the Airport then you don't know when you are leaving. At least for us, with COMEREL you know when you are leaving Nigeria and you know when you are coming back. Certain everything is there, you can plan very well, plan for yourself and plan for your home, unlike the other ones.

I feel comfortable with COMEREL services. I have been patronizing COMEREL for quite a long time. If I don't enjoy their services I wouldn't have been with them today.

*Alhamdu lillah, alhamdu lillah*, being with COMEREL is beautiful, is comfortable!

## FEEDBACK FROM HAJJ 2019 PILGRIMS

MUSTAPHA TASIU



**COMEREL** I got to know about COMEREL, I will say, in two ways:

Number one: We are neighbours, we share the same office complex and, number two: A friend of mine that has

performed Hajj and Umrah and has gone with COMEREL, advised that I should follow COMEREL because this is my first Hajj. I've been to Umrah several times with other service providers. The service of COMEREL according to my friend is incomparable, and that is why he advised I should go with them.

And going about in this induction training, I can say, I've justified what my friend told me because most of these service providers, don't do induction training and if they do, it's not as detailed (as COMEREL), because, it is as if everything we need to know, we need to learn that we are going to do in Makkah we are already aware of it, and I think based on this fact, COMEREL is the best.

The main reason why we go to Hajj is to worship God. so I hope to see us worshipping the Almighty Allah with very very comfortable provisions like what COMEREL has provided.

### INDUCTION COURSE

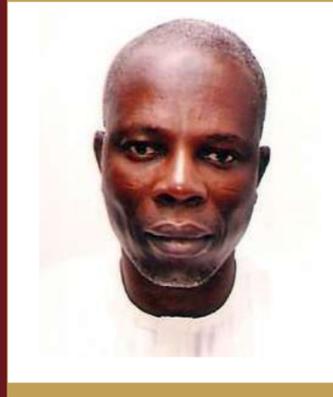
I didn't want to come to the induction course but when I came, I have learnt a lot. Like this practical training, and even talking about the

health, most of us have health challenges, so, talking about the Health Talk by the medical doctor, honestly, it really helped. Then again, the issue of these drug errands, some people took their prescribed drugs, unfortunately, the package of these drugs has caused them a lot of hardship, so coming to this training has really helped us and told us about many things we need to know. So this induction training, I'm happy that I'm part of it and I want to encourage people to be part of this kind of induction training; this should go a long way to help.

### RATING

Honestly, I'm giving COMEREL 100/100! That is the sincere position, but I will give them the real result when we get to Hajj but so far so good. From the inception to all these preparations all this induction training; they have done excellently well!

TAUHEED ABAYOMI  
AMUSAN



### I HAVE TRAVELLED WITH COMEREL BEFORE

My memory of COMEREL has been pleasant. It's being good. My first trip with COMEREL was about ten years ago, 2011 to be precise. I came for Umrah, and it

was quite good. I have no regret about it. I had a second journey with them again in 2014 for Hajj,

## FEEDBACK FROM HAJJ 2019 PILGRIMS

and now I'm here again for another Hajj. So, in the last 10 years, I have had voyages with COMEREL three times, and indeed as their name says, it has been all *Comfort*; it's been *Efficiency* and it's been *Reliability*. Just as they say COMEREL - you'll be fine.

### INDUCTION COURSE

Unfortunately, I couldn't attend the induction course because of my office schedule but, I have attended Induction Course earlier organised by COMEREL and having been to Hajj 3,4,5 times, I felt that well I'm an old person, though knowledge, we always learn, I really wish I would have attended the Induction Course but for time and the schedules.

### IMPROVEMENT

The COMEREL staff have become more cautious; they have a listening ear. Make a complaint, they respond to it immediately. The courtesy of the staff has improved. One innovation came this year; for the first time, COMEREL conveyed the pilgrims from Madinah to Makkah using the train. In 2011, there was no train, in 2015. In 2016, I don't think there was any train. But this time around there was the train, a fast train that took us through the Miqat in Zhul Hulayfah; took us to Jeddah and brought us straight to Makkah. That's a great innovation! But I missed something! I missed the process of physically changing in Zhul Hulayfah. We heard it announced in the train; it's good enough. Technology has changed a lot of things but I like that traditional stopover in Zhul Hulayfah or any of the Mawaaqeeet. Technology has improved a lot of things; it was comfortable. We left Madinah at about 6 pm and then we came here straight. Of course, we had a delay when we

entered Makkah because of the traffic but that's okay; Hajj is not supposed to be totally, totally stress-free. I believe Hajj should have some form of stress because that is the nature of Hajj. We thank Allah there are a lot of efforts by COMEREL and it's actually yielding results.

### THE LOCAL FOOD

The local dish should be retained in COMEREL packages. One of my major challenges in Saudi Arabia is the local food. I find it very difficult to eat Saudi local food. So, when I got the Nigerian food, it makes this Hajj very easy for me. My very first Hajj in 1999 I came with FCT pilgrims and there was no arrangement for FCT pilgrims to make food. We had to buy food in the restaurant, which made it difficult for me to eat. I could not eat well and before the end of the Hajj, I fell sick because I was not feeding well. One of the things I dread coming to Hajj is to eat Saudi food, but when I have Nigerian food available it makes it a lot easier.

### ARRIVED IN MAKKAH

With the reception in Makkah, the Makkah end of the train was fantastic; it was quite good. We were chanting our *Talbiyyah* and they were welcoming us with a lot of joy, with a lot of happiness. These are people who are guests of Allah; it was very warm that people who were already tired, who were sleeping, suddenly came alive again, and I think that's the spirit of Hajj. You know you'll meet people, Muslim brothers, Muslim sisters and you rejoice meeting them.

### VALUE FOR MONEY

I have got value for money in my subscription to COMEREL package. There's indeed value for money I must say but we are still in the process.

We just finished Umrah and tomorrow is 8<sup>th</sup> of Zhul Hajj, we will be going to Minaa and from Minaa we will go to 'Arafah and back to Minaa. So, there is still room while we come after this, but I think it's good. Sometimes I wish that it's less expensive.

**MINAA AND 'ARAFAH**

In Minaa, I know they will put us in a very tidy tent. I hope to see a very tidy tent. I like a very tidy clean environment, in Minaa that's what I look forward to. I also believe I will get Nigerian meals to eat and we will stay there in our Ihraam chanting the Talbiyah, seeking Allah's favour, believing Allah will favour us with His Mercies.

So, I look forward to us being guided particularly because most the stampedes you have are actually around the *Jamaraat*, so I want to see a situation where we have a good guide, COMEREL (should) provide good guides so that it can be as less stressful as possible. And I must say this, COMEREL has over the years done one very good thing, they have always brought scholars, Aalims, to guide the Hajj. We have Ameerul Hajj, our brother, brother Sa'id Ishaq; a fantastic brother. We have some other brothers that have also joined him. So I look forward to a great Hajj this year in sha Allah and we pray that Allah will accept it from us and when we leave here we be like a newborn baby again, inshaa Allahu Ta'aala.

**THE BUSES**

The important (thing) is for the buses to be comfortable and to be air-conditioned. I think the buses, to me, they are good; and one good thing that the MD Malam Abubakr has tried to do when we went to Uhud, he tried to keep to time. I was so impressed when he said, fifteen

minutes we (will) spend here and everybody will leave here. That is discipline; Muslim should be disciplined. We must keep to the time. Some of us take time for granted which is not good; a Muslim shouldn't do that.

**RATING**

For what I have seen so far, the operation is still ongoing, on a scale of 1 to 10, I will give you 7.5 because only Allah is perfect.

**AIR COMMODORE GAMBO MUHAMMAD ILYASU (Rtd)**



**HOTEL IN MADINAH**

The starting point for the Hajj has always been Madinah. And for a very long time, Oberoi has been the main hotel that COMEREL has been using. The hotel has remained an excellent choice. It has lived up to the standards; I

think or I believe COMEREL should continue to operate with Oberoi. It should be maintained, considering their high standards and the kind of respect they have for COMEREL and then, of course, the kind of services that the pilgrims derive from them.

**HARAMAIN TRAIN**

I have observed a lot of improvements, a lot of innovations in the operations of COMEREL for this year. One of such innovations is the Haramain Train. All over the world the best form

of transportation is by train. Although, the train has its own disadvantages, like if you have to go along with a lot of luggage. That is a bit of a problem with the trains, but based on the fact that COMEREL has an arrangement of sending the pilgrims luggage unaccompanied to Makkah from Madinah; that makes the transportation by train very ideal and fantastic. And this year, you know, COMEREL has experimented it for the first time and you could see the enthusiasm, you could see the happiness in the pilgrims as well as even the *Mu'assasah* who intentionally organised a kind of reception for the Team. I think that is a plus for Comerel.

**COMPATIBILITY OF THE TRAIN**

The train is very comfortable, in fact, when the MD (Managing Director) was briefing us in Madinah about the transportation by the train a lot of us were sceptical, and a lot of us were also of the view that which of the classes of the train we were travelling in? Is it going to be Economy? Or Is it going to be First class? But I think the MD kept the secret to himself. When we came and boarded the train to our surprise and happiness we discovered that all of us were on First Class. And the seats are fantastic! The trains were very clean, neat and of course speedy and of course with some kind of light refreshment. We were served some kind of light refreshment on board the train. It was amazing, it was fantastic, it was good!

**SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE**

I have always argued to my fellow pilgrims, that when you pay to come on Hajj, through COMEREL, you are not just paying for the comfort; you are also paying for the spiritual guides. And all along, right from the Induction Course, up to our stay in Madinah, through the

Ziyara, and then of course, up to the time we took our intention for Hajj, coming down to Makkah, and then to Muna, to Arafat, to *Muzdalifah*, and then of course, back to Makkah for *Tawaaf Al Ifaadah* and *Sa'yi*, and then back to Muna, we were properly, properly, properly spiritually guided, and that is a very good thing for Comerel. And what I also found most amazing or most interesting is the guidance in Muna, because every day, at least, at the end of every Salat, there is an Imam that will give us a short talk on the spiritual aspect of why we were in Muna, and this is quite good; it is good; it is nice!

**THE HAJJ PLATFORM**

I mentioned innovations at the beginning; another of such innovations which I have observed is the Hajj Platform. I have always said, no two Hajjs are the same, thus, the old system of going about distributing bulletin would have been problematic, especially for this year, when the situation became completely dynamic. The situation keeps on changing, for instance, now, I was just reading the latest about our departure from Makkah. Up to the time of the Salat Al l'shaa, the situation was not very clear, but when the situation became very clear, it was so easy and convenient to at least inform all the members through that platform of **COMEREL 2019 HAJJ PILGRIMS**. So, I think that is something that COMEREL should keep it up. And of course, in addition to the fact that members were well informed, activities were reported real-time. I think that is very good! Right from the time of the Induction, the time when visas were issued, to our departure, arrivals, all the movements were reported real-time. I think that is a plus to COMEREL.

**ASSESSING THE COMEREL SUCCESS**

Assessing the success of COMEREL is a One Million Dollar question! The way I see it, the economy of the country is not too good, and it indirectly affects the operation of COMEREL. Last year as I recall, COMEREL used only a single bus for all the pilgrims that came for Hajj, and this year, COMEREL used three buses. I think there is an improvement. But Hajj operation is quite expensive, especially the way COMEREL is doing it. I know that they are doing it not because they want to make a profit but because they want to satisfy their customers. So, that put them in a very, very difficult situation. And like I was having a chat with the MD, the minimum number of pilgrims that COMEREL needs in order to break even is 200 pilgrims, and you could imagine if COMEREL used just a single bus last year, it means the pilgrims were not even up to 50. This year, for them to use three buses, it means the pilgrims must be maybe within 120 or 130. So, that is an improvement. But COMEREL is not there yet, although their services are quite good, quite excellent, quite appreciated; in order for them to break even, they need to at least get more passengers. But I have seen something for this year which I think has helped COMEREL, that is in terms of coming up with another package, a cheaper package than the initial one that was used throughout for the last Hajj. So, I think if they keep changing their strategies, they will get there one day.

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

I have got more than the value of what I paid to COMEREL. I have always argued, anything you don't get from COMEREL is certainly beyond their powers. If you see any commission or omission of what ought to be done and is not

done it is certainly beyond COMEREL. I believe that especially for this year when we were in Muna you can imagine by let's say 8:00 -8:30 am almost all of us, both those in the A-plus Tent and A Tent, by 8:30 am we had already settled down in our Tents. And of course, if you just peep through your Tent you will see people going round.... In fact, some agents as soon as they give you that tag of A-plus Tent, you are on your own, the way and manner you will locate where to stay, where to eat is your own headache, but it is different with COMEREL. By 8:00 – 8:30 am the transports were already provided by 30 minutes to one hour, we had already settled in our Tents just waiting to take our breakfast and then commence our spiritual activities. So, I think we have gotten value for our money.

**MUNA TENT ARRANGEMENT**

In fact, as I commented to the officials of *Mu'assasah* when they came to find out how satisfied we were, honestly, for the first time I saw a kind of 5 star arrangement in our A-Plus Tent in Muna. In fact, when I opened the toilet I was amazed, the toilet was looking like the kind of toilets that we have in some of these 5-star hotels. Although there were small issues which I pointed out to the officials of *Mu'assasah* when they came - you keep looking for remote control, either the AC was too cold or it was not working properly; no remote control, and of course, the not-scented toiletries ought have been provided before we moved to *Arafat* and not when we returned to *Muna*, after *Tawaf al Ifadah* and *Sa'y*, when we were partially out of the restriction of *Ihram*. So, those are the few things, but I think, you can even see all these door tags - *do not disturb, make up the room* - it is very amazing. And of course, the carpeting. In

fact, even if you don't have the conventional bed you could sleep comfortably on the carpet. It was just a pity towards the end of our stay there was this downpour, heavy rain which some of the Tents, of course, because those temporary facilities were not meant for the rainy season, anyway, they were just... It was assumed that throughout the season there won't be any rain, but this year was a bit different and that caused a little bit of discomfort. Apart from that, the Tents in Muna were excellent completely.

**DINING SPACE**

Like I mentioned previously, COMEREL, the emphasis which COMEREL places are more on customer satisfaction rather than making a profit. I remember the MD mentioning that the place that was converted to our kind of restaurant was actually meant for the pilgrims to occupy and of course heavy money was paid for that space. So, you can see that is actually in tandem with the principle of COMEREL to make the pilgrims happy rather than maybe trying to get more people. Because without that provision it means all along we have to go out and join the general people to be able to eat our food. I think that is meant to give maximum convenience to the pilgrims, and I think that is good. I don't know how COMEREL will be able to recover their money, anyway, in that direction, but I think being a pilgrim myself and then having enjoyed the convenience there I think is worth it, is good.

**RATING COMEREL ON THE SCALE OF 1 – 10**

I will give Comerel 9.5 over 10 that is (95%).

**ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT**

If COMEREL will try as much as possible to overcome some of those areas that are, maybe,

beyond them, I don't know how they can do that. For instance, now, the flight out of Jeddah was around 10:45; our leaving the hotel according to the last post was by 2:00 am. I know it is beyond them, but if there is a way to fill that gap - I don't know, I don't how they can do it. And then, of course, the issue of, I don't know, this *Rayhaan*. This hotel, I don't know, I have some little reservations about the hotel. Although no one hotel that you can pick that is 100% perfect. Like one of the considerations for this *Rayhaan* is their restaurant, and believe me, I found their restaurant excellent, but their beds are a bit uncomfortable. I know for this year, a lot of hotels were used around here - Fairmont, *Daar Al Tauhid*, *Swissotel* and so on and so forth. So, if they can look into these few areas, I think I can give them 100%.

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

1. All payments by the pilgrim to the agent shall be made into the designated bank's account of the Agent to be given to the pilgrim. The Agent's staffs do not collect cash and payment of cash is strictly prohibited. Pilgrim should ensure that he/she gets the Agent's official receipt for every payment made.
2. The pilgrim shall not pay into any of the Agent's accounts until he/she has been cleared to pay and this is in the mutual interest of both parties.
3. Pilgrim shall complete all payments before all travel documents are presented to him/her by the Agent. Under no circumstance will a pilgrim get travel documents without complete payments.
4. The Agent reserves the right to increase the price of its package if a situation warrants it. Where this happens, the pilgrim will be notified. NOW it is further agreed as follows:
5. The Agent or its staff shall not be responsible for any negligence that results in any sort of inconvenience to the pilgrim in the course of the pilgrimage if the negligence was not the fault of the Agent or its staff.
6. Where any default is proven to be the fault of the Agent's staff, the extent of its liability to the pilgrim is refund of the principal sum paid to the Agent less a 10% ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGE.
7. Any complete refund mentioned on the brochure is understood by both parties to mean the total amount paid by the pilgrim less a 10% administrative charge.
8. Any ticket refund is handled by the airline; the Agent does NOT pay refunds on tickets until the airline pays.
9. There is NO REFUND on group tickets unless the trip was aborted through Agent's fault.
10. The Agent reserves the right to alter its travel dates and check in dates where it deems such an action to be in the best interest of the pilgrim. This shall be done with prior notification to the pilgrim.
11. Any room option on the brochure is subject to availability after the planning of the rooming list. Where the room option the pilgrim wants is not available, the pilgrim will be requested to downgrade or upgrade to the next available room option. This will be done

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

- after consulting with the pilgrim. Where it is an upgrade, the pilgrim will pay the difference and if it is a downgrade, the Agent will refund the difference.
12. The Agent's staffs are not porters and should not be looked upon to carry luggage for the pilgrim. The Agent's staff may help pilgrim at their sole discretion.
13. The information in the brochure is correct as at the time of issuance. Any alteration resulting from events or policies not within Agent's control thereafter shall not be blamed on it and does not attract any refund unless in the unlikely event of not providing a suitable and commensurate alternative.
14. The extent of the Agent's liability in the unlikely event that the pilgrim's luggage is missing while in the exclusive custody of one of the Agent's staff is as stipulated by the Warsaw Convention as amended by the Hague Protocol: US \$26 per kilogramme for checked luggage and US \$514 per pilgrim in the case of hand luggage.
15. Where the government of Nigeria, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia or any transit country refuse the pilgrim entry due to a visa on his/her international passport, the affected pilgrim will not be refunded in part or in full by the Agent.
16. Any destination mentioned in the package, which is cancelled by the government officials in Saudi Arabia without adequate notification from the said officials is not the Agent's fault and will not attract any refund pilgrim.
17. An abrupt change of mind by the pilgrim resulting in the cancellation of any trip less than four weeks to the departure date will not attract a refund. If payment was done less than four weeks to departure, any cancellation by the intending pilgrim will not attract a refund by default.
18. Delays in getting visas from the Saudi Embassy in Nigeria, which can cause a delay in flight date or time is not Agent's fault and will not attract any refund.
19. The Saudi Embassy now requires all pilgrims to appear in person at their Visa Service Centre (VSC), run by VFS Tasheel, for biometric enrolment before each trip to Saudi Arabia. The enrolment is by appointment and as such, any failure to be at the VSC on the appointed date and time is the sole responsibility of the intending pilgrim and the Agent will not be held liable for any default in this

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

regard and its likely attendant effect on travel dates. The service charge paid at the VSC is the responsibility of the intending pilgrim. The extent of the Agent's involvement with the VSC is to book an appointment for the pilgrim.

20. All service fees in Saudi Arabia are paid way ahead of the pilgrims' arrival and the service providers do not refund them; the Agent shall only honour any refund claim where it was its fault.

21. The pilgrim shall not pay into the Agent's bank accounts until the Agent has cleared the pilgrim and the Agent should be contacted before making a payment.

22. The Agent absolves itself and its staff of any blame in the unlikely event that the pilgrim is deemed to have committed an offence according to the laws of any of the countries they visit through the Agent.

23. Failure of the pilgrim to read these terms and conditions is not an excuse to demand a refund, the pilgrim is hereby advised to read this agreement.

24. Apart from single occupancy options, any other room option is subject to the availability of other intending pilgrims willing to pay for the same option.

Otherwise, the pilgrim will be advised to choose the next available option.

25. For further details on the terms and conditions above as well as this agreement kindly visit [www.comerel.net](http://www.comerel.net) for free download. Please avail yourself the opportunity to download them and peruse. THE PARTIES FURTHER AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

26. The pilgrim's passports and payments must be in the Agent's office latest six (6) weeks before the pilgrim's departure date for Umrah and the end for Hajj.

27. The pilgrim shall ascertain that all the information in his/her international passport is correct, with at least 6 months validity by his/her departure date and without any hindering documents for his/her trip like an Israeli visa or stamp. Also, avoid traveling with anything having Jewish inscriptions on them.

28. The Agent reserves the right to refuse service to a paying pilgrim if the pilgrim behaves in a manner that is adjudged rude and uncivil towards other pilgrims and Agent's staff.

29. The Pilgrim shall ensure that he/she

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

uses the Agent's Pilgrim ID Card accordingly.

30. The pilgrim's children and infants on pilgrimage must have separate international passports.

31. All rooms are double occupancy by default. Any additional occupancy will be based on availability and any extra bed may be smaller than the original two beds, which will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. If the hotel chosen by the agent for the pilgrims has no further accommodation, the agent shall provide accommodation in another hotel with similar standard to the one earlier chosen for the pilgrims.

32. The Pilgrim must notify the Agent's doctor of any unusual or militating medical conditions. This is to help the pilgrim in case of emergencies.

33. Pilgrim should avoid using the chain lock on the inside part of his/her room doors when alone and when the pilgrim is sharing a room, it is not allowed for whatever reason.

34. The pilgrim's children must be accompanied by either a parent or a guardian and parents and guardians are primarily responsible for maintaining discipline and order among their

children/wards. The Agent will not be responsible for the movements of any child outside the itinerary of the package. Exceptions to this will be discussed and agreed upon by both parties.

35. Hajj and Umrah Ramadan dates are flexible, as they depend on moon sighting. They are not exact. Any date in Dhul Hijjah can differ by a day both ways. The dates used for the itinerary are therefore subject to moon sighting.

36. The Saudi Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs issued a new directive on 14th December 2017 forbidding taking photographs and recording videos within the two holy mosques in Madeenah and Makkah respectively. This also includes their roofs. In the light of this, pilgrim should kindly keep his/her camera phones and cameras away. These items may be impounded by the security operatives guarding the mosques.



# SUMAYSHA

SHOP NO. 16 & 17, AREA 1, SHAGARI PLAZA, GARKI - ABUJA FCT.  
TEL: 08033116008, 08035307513, 08027767335, 08075197202.  
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