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OF KHOJA SHIA ITHINA-ASHARI MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Madinah and Bab al-Ilm Short Summer Courses Frequently Asked Questions

Timetable

Q. How long will we be in Qum and Mashhad?

During the three-week course, you will spend around 12 days in Qum and 5 days in Mashhad. There will also be short trips to other cities.

The final itinerary will be confirmed nearer the course starting date, and you will be handed a detailed timetable on arrival.

Q. Where will we be staying in Qum and Mashhad?

Girls are normally accommodated in Jamiat al-Zahra (SA) in Qum.

The boys' accommodation differs from year to year. Last year, they stayed at Dar al-Zahra (SA).

The accommodation in Mashhad is in a hotel.

Q. What will the course involve?

The timetable for the course is filled with visits, lessons, recreational activities, and ziyarats. The timetable includes the ziyarat of Imam al-Ridha (AS) and Sayyidah Fatimah al-Ma'sumah (SA), a visit to Masjid-e Jamkaran, climbing Mount Khidhr, lessons on various Islamic topics, and meetings with learned scholars.

Time is also allocated for sports (including swimming) and shopping.

Q. How often will we get to go shopping?

This will be specified on the timetable. If there is a need for further shopping time, you must first obtain permission from the organisers who will ensure that the extra shopping time does not clash with other activities on the timetable.

In previous years, we have found that the amount of time allocated for shopping has been more than enough.

Q. How often will we be going to the Haram?

Insha'Allah there will be an opportunity to visit the Haram almost every day, both in Qum and in Mashhad. On Tuesdays while in Qum, you will also visit Masjid-e Jamkaran.



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Behaviour and Attitude

Q. What sort of behaviour and attitude is expected from me?

The behaviour and attitude that is expected from you can be summarised as follows:

1. Respecting and observing the rules and regulations of the course and of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
2. Being willing to learn and improve.
3. Striving to be a model for others.
4. Being appreciative of the work of the organisers, mentors, and volunteers, and being patient with them.
5. Taking a keen part in all programmes, including asking questions and taking notes.
6. Being punctual at all times. If there is a genuine reason for being late, participants must inform their mentors about this.
7. Not leaving the premises or any programme without permission.
8. Refraining from interacting with the opposite gender.

Q. What is the dress code for girls and boys?

All participants must dress modestly. For boys, long sleeve shirts and tops are recommended; khanzus can also be worn. Tight-fitting clothes, shorts, and sleeveless vests are not permitted outside the accommodation.

The dress code for girls is full hijab (including non-transparent socks), ensuring that one's hair, arms, and feet are fully covered. Girls will be required to wear hand socks (these will be available for purchase in Iran for those who do not have any) and an Iranian chador. The Iranian chador will be provided on the very next day of their arrival. The sisters however are required to enter and exit Iran in their Abayas.

Q. Are there any specific rules which need to be followed during my stay at the Hawza?

Yes, the rules form part of your application. Please note that you cannot apply for the course without formally accepting to abide by these rules.



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In addition, the accommodation has its own rules; you will be briefed on these upon arrival. These rules must also be adhered to. The Qum Hawza's own specific traditions and culture must be respected.

Q. While staying at the Hawza, will I be able to leave the premises as and when I wish?

This will depend on your age and gender. Primarily, due to the rules of Jamiat al-Zahra (SA), girls are not allowed to leave the Hawza unless they are accompanied by a mentor. Bab boys are not allowed to leave the premises alone. As for Madinah boys, their mentors will decide. In all cases, you can only request to leave during free time.

Q. Will I be able to bring any hand-held games?

Hand-held games must not be brought onto the course. Any participant found using such devices will be asked to hand them over to the organisers for safe keeping.

Facilities

Q. Are there Western toilets available?

The boys' accommodation has Western toilets. The girls' Hawza has one Western toilet; the rest of the toilets are of Eastern style.

There are Western toilets in some of the places that will be visited, such as the Haram in Qum. The organisers always try to book hotels in Mashhad that have Western toilets.

Q. What facilities are there for washing clothes?

A washing machine and wash basins are available for the girls. Washing powder can be bought on site. Girls who suffer from skin conditions should bring their own washing liquid.

For the boys, a paid laundry facility is available; however, undergarments and socks have to be hand washed as these cannot be washed at the laundry.

Q. Will there be any place to store my valuables safely?

Upon arrival in Qum, the organisers will take responsibility for safe keeping your passport. It is your responsibility to look after all your other valuables.

The accommodation that you will be staying in is safe; however, please note that the organisers will not be held responsible for any items that are lost or stolen.



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Q. What will be the food?

While in Iran, participants will be provided with a variety of food, including traditional Iranian, fast food, and Indian cuisine.

Participants can bring their own snacks with them.

If participants feel that there is a chance that they may not like some of the food provided, alternatives will not always be available and so they are recommended to bring packet soups, cereal bars, pot noodles etc.

Q. How many people will there be per room?

This will be determined closer to the time of the trip.

In the past when the girls have stayed at Jamiat al-Zahra (SA), each room has had 6 beds.

Q. Will we be drinking bottled water throughout the trip?

Bottled water will be provided throughout the trip. The water that is available at the Harams and accommodation is safe to drink. Temperatures can get very high at that time of the year and so you should make sure that you keep yourself hydrated.

Q. What happens if I get sick?

The organising team will look after you. Healthcare facilities in Iran are adequate and going to a doctor or to a hospital can be arranged if necessary. All participants must take their own personal medication.

Generally speaking, the type of sicknesses that arise on the trip are sore throat, dehydration, flu, diarrhoea, and stomach bugs.

Miscellaneous Questions

Q. How much money should I take?

The package is all-inclusive; accommodation, food and transportation are all covered.

Shopping, laundry, extra luggage charges etc. are not covered.

We have found that £200 or \$270 is usually sufficient to cover these additional expenses.

However, it depends mainly on the amount of shopping the individual would like to do, especially buying books from Ansariyan Bookshop!

Q. How will I exchange my money?



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The organisers can exchange money for you. Alternatively, they can advise you on the best place to exchange money and how to do it.

If a big amount is exchanged and left over at the end, you can convert it back into the original currency at the airport before leaving Iran.

Q. What is the role and duty of mentors?

Mentors provide extra help and support on the course and ensure that participants get the most out of their trip.

If you have any further questions, please email us at MadinahBabCourse@world-federation.org