

# TRAVELING DURING RAMADAN REQUIRES MORE PREPARATION



on April 8th, 2024.

Traveling to a Muslim country during Ramadan can be a unique experience. However, it is important to note that tourist regulations during the fasting month vary among Islamic countries. Therefore, it is recommended that travelers plan their stay and be aware of the specific rules and customs of the country they plan to visit. This year, Ramadan started on the evening of March 10th and will end

## Eating and Drinking in Public

During the holy month of Ramadan, visitors to the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, or Oman, are expected to refrain from eating, drinking, and smoking in public places, including private vehicles. Chewing gum is also not allowed. **Most restaurants and cafes remain closed during the day.**

However, Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey are comparatively more liberal in treating Ramadan etiquette for tourists. In these countries, abstaining from eating and drinking in public is voluntary but is regarded as a polite gesture. In countries with stricter regulations, hotels typically offer room service during the day, and some also provide secluded dining areas for non-fasting visitors.

In Muslim areas of the Balkans, such as Albania, Ramadan is observed less stringently, with no restrictions and restaurants remaining open as usual. Tourists on package holidays with the entire board are also generally unaffected by Ramadan and can enjoy their meals as usual. However, open bars may be difficult to find outside tourist areas. After sunset, restaurants, and cafes open and are well-attended, so reservations are recommended at popular establishments.

The rules governing alcohol consumption during Ramadan vary from country to country. While Turkey has no restrictions on serving alcohol during this time, Tunisia only allows it in a few bars, and grocery stores do not sell alcoholic beverages during Ramadan. Visitors are advised to be flexible and check with their hotel regarding alcohol policies during Ramadan.

## Opening Times and Traffic

Road safety is a significant concern after sunset, as traffic density increases and the accident rate is highest. In certain countries, like Morocco and Tunisia, public transport is often fully booked days in advance due to an influx of residents traveling to visit their relatives. Moreover, public transport usually operates only in the afternoon, which leads to further capacity utilization. Finding a taxi in the evening can also be challenging, as drivers are at "Iftar" during that time. In such situations, renting a car or hiring a private driver can be comfortable.

Travelers visiting these countries during the holy month should prioritize their clothing choices, especially in public places. While beachwear is still accepted on hotel beaches, it is advisable to cover up in public. Clothing like shorts and tank tops should be avoided out of respect for local customs.

Sightseeing during the fasting month requires careful planning, as the opening hours of tourist

attractions may be shortened. In countries like Egypt, museums and pyramids close up to two hours earlier than usual. In Tunisia, tourist attractions may not be open as late as usual, so planning visits in the morning is best.

Many shops remain closed during the festival of breaking the fast after Ramadan ("Eid al-Fitr"). Travelers should take note of this and plan accordingly.

### **A Special Experience**

During the fasting month of Ramadan, one or two restrictions must be followed, but it is also an opportunity to gain unique insights into the local culture. **In Tunisia, for instance, visitors may immerse themselves in the party mood of young adults by visiting the narrow streets and hip-roofed terrace cafés in the evenings** or exploring the many restaurants with live music. In Egypt, tourists can witness the festively decorated streets in the cities and explore the two largest cities, Cairo and Alexandria, on foot, as the roads are less congested during Ramadan.

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