

Volunteering for Allah

The month of Ramadan is a special month for Muslims. It is a holy month in which Muslims fast, increase prayer, and give in charity. Every Ramadan, I count the days and wait impatiently for Eid! It's a difficult month because you must fast from dawn to dusk. This year, the fasting is 15 hours long! Yeah, it's crazy, right? My mom, dad, older sister, and brother do it. My parents say I'm still young, so I don't fast. However, this year is different, really different. My parents have been planning for a long time to take us to Makkah and Madinah to do Umrah. We are going this year, and I am extremely excited but also a bit sad because we must leave my cat Cookie Dough behind.

Today's the day. All the packing was done, the house was clean, and we were ready to go. We waited in our Black GMC Yukon XL while my dad put our luggage's in the trunk. Half an hour later, we were at the airport. We were early, so we sat in our gate for an hour, and then we boarded. I was happy to know they had TVs and meals! I watched a few movies, and then fell asleep.

I woke up after a while to the sound of the captain on the speaker saying we were going to land in the Qatar airport in 20 minutes. Once we arrived, we ate suhoor at Burger King, and then boarded the flight to KSA. It was four o'clock in the morning when we arrived to Jeddah airport. I was amazed at how big it was. We took a few pictures, and then headed for the exit and found a taxi. It was a long drive, but we finally arrived at our hotel. We were very, very tired, so the first day we only rested. The second day, we did our first Umrah on the first day of Ramadan. Everyone was fasting, even me! We did 7 tawafs around the **ka'abah**. Then we prayed 2 raka'a, and headed to do saee, going back and forth 7 times from Mount Safa to Mount Marwa. After that we cut an inch of our hair.

Doing Umrah is tiring, especially while fasting. It was very rewarding to break the fast with everyone at the moment we heard the adhaan of Maghrib. We broke our fast with a few dates and some water. After the prayer, we went to the restaurant and my parents bought me a treat to celebrate my first Umrah and my first fast!

The next day I was excited to fast again. My parents promised we would have sushi for iftar! I know sushi doesn't sound like a filling meal to have when you break your fast, but I LOVE sushi. We prayed Fajr at Masjid Al-Haram and stayed the whole day, until Maghrib. "You know you don't have to fast Anisa, you're only nine years old. However, you took the initiative. I'm so proud of you!" my mom said excitedly.

"Yes, I know... even though you told me I don't have to. I took the initiative because I wanted to try it and I'm so glad I did. It just feels so rewarding!" I told my mom with a grin. "Fasting is like... volunteering for Allah. I pray He accepts it from us all. Ameen."