The Sharī‘ah aims to offer that which is divinely beneficial for all of mankind. Among its primary aims is to attain benefit, and repel harm and difficulty. The Sharī‘ah creates ease in order to achieve these two things. One of the times that one experiences difficulty is during travel. Journeys can be long and arduous, and the Sharī‘ah has made special dispensations for the one undertaking a journey. Among the things that are made easy for the traveller is that fasting is not obligatory, though it must be made up afterwards. The traveller is also exempt from the weekly congregation of Jumu‘ah. Also, the period for which one is able to wipe over the khuff is longer compared to a resident. Another one such special gift that the traveller is given is that the number of units in the prayer are shortened.

How to become a traveller?

In order for one to be deemed a traveller by the Sharī‘ah, there are certain conditions that are stipulated:

- **Distance**
  - One has to travel at least 51 miles/81 km or more to be qualified as a traveller.
  - The distance is based on a one-way trip and not a round trip.
  - As soon as the person travels beyond the boundaries of their city, then the travel dispensations come into effect.

- **Duration**
  - One is only considered a traveller if one wishes to stay at a place for 14 days or fewer. Thus, if one intends to stay at a specific place for 14 days or fewer but the days subsequent to the fourteenth day a person is required to remain at the place for some reason, and each subsequent day the person makes intention to leave but an issue makes their stay incumbent. This person will remain a traveller throughout their stay even if they remain at the place for a period extending beyond 14 days as they never intended to reside there for more than 14 days. For example, Ahmad lives in London and goes to Turkey for a period of 14 days. On the 14th day, he was scheduled to fly back to London, but due to severe weather conditions, he was stuck in Turkey for the next day. The same
occurred in the next five days. Each day, he intended to leave but was unable to due to severe weather conditions. As he did not intend to stay for more than 14 days, he will still be regarded as a traveller in the six days that followed while he was stuck in Turkey and the travel dispensations will apply to him.

– If one intends to stay at a specific place for more than 14 days, then that person will not be regarded as a traveller. Although, the person is still eligible to practice on the dispensations given to a traveller while the person is on their journey. For example, Ahmad lives in London but decides to travel to Scotland and stay there for month. Thus, he will be regarded as a resident in Scotland. However, he is still afforded the travel dispensation while he is travelling on his way to Scotland. So certain prayers offered on the way may be shortened: at a service station, perhaps.

– If a person makes the intention to stay at a place beyond a distance of 51 miles for more than 14 days, then that person will be regarded as a resident of the place even if he actually stayed at the place for 14 days or fewer.

**Note:** As soon as one makes the intention to travel a distance of 51 miles or more intending to stay for the duration of 14 days or fewer, then one is deemed as a traveller according to the Shari’ah.

**Note:** As soon as one fulfils the above conditions, one is deemed as a traveller and the dispensations afforded to the traveller come into effect. There is no consideration given to the purpose of travel. So even if travel is undertaken to commit a sin, then that person is still given the special dispensations given to a traveller. For example, a person may live in London and travel to Manchester (beyond 51 miles) for a period of 3 days to commit a burglary. That person will still have to shorten prayers. The sin is in the perpetration of the crime. Travel itself however, is not a crime and thus, one is still afforded the dispensations of prayer.

**Number of units**

Among the special dispensations afforded to the traveller mentioned in the beginning, one of them is being able to shorten the prayers. However, the shortening of the prayers only refer to the prayers which are composed of four units. So this only includes the prayers of Dhuhr, ‘Asr and ‘Ishā’. They are shortened into two units. As for Maghrib, Fajr and Witr, they are performed in the usual fashion.

**Note:** It is wājib for a person to perform the qasr prayer for a traveller. One should not perform these prayers in full even if one has an abundance of time and is free from any difficulty.

**Note:** The shortening of the prayers for a traveller is only when performing the prayer individually or when that person is the imām or when praying behind an imām who is also a traveller.

**Traveller behind a resident Imām**

When one is qualified as a traveller, shortening of the prayers become necessary. All the four unit prayers become shortened to two units.

However, if a traveller is praying a four unit prayer behind an imām who is a resident, then the traveller is required to complete the prayer in full praying all four units in subordination to the imām. For example, Ahmad, Muhammad and Ali are from London and are travellers in Manchester. They are praying Dhuhr in the local mosque where Ibrahim is the resident imām. All three travellers are expected to continue praying with the imām until he finishes. It is not allowed for the them to do
salām after the second unit. Ending the prayer after two units will require the traveller to repeat the prayer.

**Note:** The residents who are praying a four unit prayer behind an imām who is a traveller are required to perform the prayer in full. So, after the imām does the salām, the followers who are residents must stand up and complete the remaining two units. For example, Ahmad, Muhammad and Ali are residents of London and they are praying ‘Asr behind Ibrahim who is a traveller from Manchester. Ibrahim only prays two units and performs the salām. After, doing the salām, Ahmad, Muhammad and Ali are required to complete the full four units.

**Note:** If a traveller is praying Dhuhr, ‘Asr or ‘Ishā‘ and mistakenly performs four units and has sat in the second unit for the length of tashahhud, then the first two units are regarded as his obligatory prayer performed and the second two units will be regarded as nafl. However, sajdah sahw would have to be performed in order for the prayer to be valid. Failure to so would require the prayer to be repeated.

If the person fails to sit in the second unit for the length of tashahhud, then all four units would be regarded as nafl and the obligatory prayer would have to be repeated.

**Multiple residences**

A person’s hometown is the place where he resides with his family and belongings without having a definite intention of relocating. So a traveller will automatically become a resident upon entering his hometown whether he intends to stay at the place for 15 days or fewer.

It is possible for one to have multiple residences. For example, if a person lives on campus in a university for a period more than 14 days, then that becomes a place of residence. However, one’s own home also remains as a place of residence as well even if one only goes to their house for fewer than 15 days. For example, Muhammad lives on campus at Cambridge University during term times which are longer than 14 days, and at his house in Wales outside of term. Muhammad will have to pray the prayers in full while he is on campus and when he goes home even if he stays there for fewer than 15 days. Although, he would shorten his prayer for Dhuhr, ‘Asr and ‘Ishā‘ if he was on en route to one place from the other.

**Praying on a plane**

When one undertakes a journey on a plane, one is still required to maintain all the necessary prerequisites and integrals of the prayer. More specifically one is required to stand up and pray to the best of one’s ability. If one is unable to stand up due to some reason such as a lack of space to stand and pray, or the place being too busy to complete a prayer or maybe due to too much turbulence, then one may pray sitting down on the seat. One is required to at the very least say the takbīr standing up facing the Qiblah as that is not difficult to do. However, one is required to repeat the prayer afterwards.

A person must do their utmost to find the direction of the Qiblah. One is required to start the prayer towards the Qiblah and will not be accountable if the direction changes due to the shift of the plane’s direction.