

# 'It's not always accessible': Muslim sisters on overcoming barriers to hiking

*These are the sisters of Haroon Mota, head honcho of [Muslim Hikers](#) on the subject of how even more daunting walking in the countryside is for Muslim women. From the [Metro](#)*

If you don't see people that look like you in certain contexts, it can make it seem as though you don't belong there.

This is one of the biggest barriers Muslim women can face when it comes to hiking. Rarely do you see women in head scarfs and religious dress on the cover of hiking and sports campaigns. Sisters Husnaa Mota, 21, and Tayyibah Mota, 27, are trying to change that. . . their older brother, Haroon, had an influence in getting them into the hobby in the first place – as he runs a hiking page for Muslims. Tayyibah says: 'I did my first hike when I was 13 with my brother Haroon.'

However, as Muslim women, hiking hasn't always been the most accessible activity. 'The main difficulty I faced with hiking was the lack of correct outdoor gear,' Tayyibah says. 'For the first few years, I didn't really own any of my own outdoor gear. Anything I wore, I borrowed from my brother. It was expensive, and there wasn't any modest outdoor clothing, so I wore men's shirts as they were looser and I felt more covered in men's clothes.'

*Yes – the church friends of mine who walk the Camino annually swear by the Ann Summers range of hiking basques and suspenders. They say the PVC collection is not very effective in heavy snow, but that in milder weather the mud wipes off easily with a damp cloth.*

'But during the pandemic, my eyes really opened up to the issues around the lack of diversity and inclusion and the absence of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in the outdoors.'

However, she had to overcome the barriers hiking initially put up in front of her. *Styles can be climbed over at the appropriate point; otherwise farmers fence their fields for a purpose.*

Tayyibah explains: 'Some of the barriers were internal. For one, not being completely comfortable or confident in wearing outdoor clothing. Often, outdoor clothing can be quite figure-hugging. We both observe the hijab and wearing modest clothing is really important to us.'

*The most important bit of the outdoor kit is the boots, followed by a coat/jacket of a fabric which is warm in cold weather, rainproof but of a breathable fabric so as not to over heat, with plenty of pockets in the right places, a hood and fastenings and seams which are themselves weatherproof. I'm not and never have been a serious hiker. I bumble along from car park to visitors centre taking photographs along the way, then back via the tea rooms. But my husband, daughter and plenty of friends are. Immodesty is not the adjective that springs to mind when I see their pictures on the Pennine Way or Ilkley Moor. I'll agree with the Misses Mota that the right clothing isn't cheap; but it will not date and it will last for years. The make [Barbour](#) (founded 1894) can be re-waxed many times and there are coats that have passed through a family for a century. But that is probably exceptional. Peter Storm and Regatta are more accessible. These two young women are talking absolute rollocks.*


'It's been difficult to find the right gear to wear, but over the last few years, brands have become more inclusive and diverse. . . A number of brands now sell activewear hijabs that are weatherproof, which is great and makes hiking for

many Muslim women a lot easier.'

Husnaa says: 'Sharing experiences online creates a positive impact in our small communities. It allows people to [connect, and be inspired](#). It encourages people to get outdoors because they can see people like themselves outdoors.'

*Which is the main thrust of the [accompanying video](#) – we want to promote the wearing of the hijab and we want to do it among people who look like us and have the same experiences as us. How very inclusive!*



 **Husnaa's and Tayyibah's tips for Muslim women wanting to hike:**