

# INDONESIA: MIDEAST TRAVELERS BOOST LOCAL TOURISM



Over the last few years there has been a notable increase in the number of tourists from the Middle East countries coming to Indonesia. They became the major contributor to the number of incoming visitors. It is for this reason that the government has put in place strategic measures to boost tourism marketing in these countries.

The government is to cooperate with the leading airline companies including Garuda Indonesia as well as other airlines such as Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways in a bid to reach the Middle East market.

**According to Tourism and Creative Economy Ministry over 2.6 million tourists from foreign countries visited Indonesia in the first quarter of the year, this being an increase of 5.13 percent compared to the same period in the previous year.** This increase is attributed to growing numbers of tourists from Russia, the Middle East countries and emerging markets such as Thailand, China and India. Further statistics showed that there was a 3.2 percent rise in April this year in comparison to April last year.

Mari Elka Pangestu of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy notes that United Arab Emirates (UAE) took the lead having recorded the highest growth both in the tri-annual and monthly bases with 86 and 159.59 percent increase respectively.

She continued to say, that although UAE is a small country it cannot be ignored owing to the fact that visitors from this country tend to stay longer, thus spending much. Stressing on the point of collaboration with respective airlines, she notes that the ministry plans to increase the number of those visiting the country from 8.04 million reported last year to 9 million in 2013.

Acknowledging the role of increased airline travel between Indonesia and the Middle East, she notes that the 28 flight services daily between these two regions has encouraged more people to tour the country.

The importance of this market has seen Emirates increase its Dubai-Jakarta trips to three times daily starting March 2013, while Garuda Indonesia entered in an agreement with gulf carrier Etihad to help boost the same.

**Other countries that reported increased number of tourists includes Egypt and Saudi Arabia with a growth of 22.56 and 18.13 percent each in that order in the first quarter of the year of the year as compared to last year.** Russia and China both reported a growth of 20 percent in the same period.

Statistics available from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show that most tourists arrived to the country via Ngurah Rai International Airport in Bali, that showed an increase of 5.36 percent from 904,495 tourists recorded in the first quarter of last year to 952,956 visitors this year. Lombok International Airport recorded the highest increase of arrival of 7,535 from 4,931 in the same period last year an increase of 49.12 percent. The Soekarno -Hatta International Airport recorded an increase of 8.21 percent.

In addition, the average star-hotel room occupancy in all 23 provinces showed a slight decrease from 0.32 points in March last year to 0.01 in March 2013.

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