

# INDONESIAN CREATES SHARIAH-COMPLIANT PACKAGES TO ATTRACT SAUDI TOURISTS



Indonesia is a thriving resort that sees business from countries across the globe thanks to its natural beauty and fantastic experiences; however, there is one country they are focusing their sights on in particular for the 2014 season – Saudi Arabia. This market – Saudi Arabia and its Middle Eastern neighbours in the Gulf – is currently viewed as being on the lower end of the scale in terms of visitor numbers and interest but this is all set to change if their new strategy is successful. There are plans in place to increase the number of visitors arriving from the Gulf and expectations for their success are high. The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy seems to be very optimistic about their chances of encouraging more Saudi tourists; there were just 15,703 Saudi visitors recorded in 2013 but forecasts for 2014 suggest that this figure will rise dramatically to approximately 115,000. The country's current lack of Middle Eastern tourists, compared to other more favoured destinations like Jakarta, West Java and Bali is being attributed to a lack of promotion; new marketing strategies are needed and that is where the new Shariah-compliant packages come in.

It is hoped that these “Shariah” packages will appeal to Saudi guests in a new way, kickstart this forecasted growth and lead to greater revenue.

Saudi Arabia has not just been targeted because visitor numbers from this region are so much lower than other key markets; there is also the important fact that the small growth that has been seen so far has had such an important impact on tourism revenue. The few Saudi visitors that have chosen to holiday in the kingdom are doing so for longer than before – in many cases staying longer than the usual week-long break – and this means they are also bringing more money into the island. The Indonesian Ministry believe that they can continue to increase these visitor numbers, and the related expenditure, and they say that the best way to do this is through dedicated Shariah packages. These packages would promote the Islamic heritage of the islands to Saudis – primarily within the key cities of Makkah and Madinah – and offer peace of mind to families uncertain about travelling to the islands. By enticing these visitors with the promise of Shariah-compliant packages in a range of destinations, rather than specialised destinations or tours in minimal locations, the ministry should be able to open up archipelago's 17,500 islands to these Muslim visitors in new ways and achieve the high growth targets they have so optimistically predicted.

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