

# FOR MUSLIM TRAVELERS MALAYSIA IS THE TOP CHOICE



According to a survey that was carried out by CrescentRating and MasterCard, Malaysia is still the favorite destination for Muslim travelers. The survey that involved 81 non-Muslim countries as well as 29 Muslim destinations ranked Malaysia most preferred holiday destination for Muslims followed by Turkey, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Indonesia.

The results came as a shocker regarding the fact that there had been two extremely unfortunate air mishaps involving Malaysia Airlines planes in 2014.

**The ranking was based on each of the country's attentiveness to the specific needs of Muslim travelers as well as other variables.** This included whether or not there were restaurants that served halal food, whether or not Muslims were provided with facilities (rooms) they could use to pray in various public places such as hotels and shopping malls, as well as the destinations' attractions.

Based on the variables, the scores of the various nations were recorded into the Global Muslim Travel Index. From the tabulation, Malaysia, which is a Muslim-majority nation, leads as the most favorite Muslim destination with a score of 83.8, followed by Turkey at 73.8, United Arab Emirates at 72.1, Saudi Arabia at 71.3, Qatar at 68.2 and Indonesia at 67.5.

According to the Chief Executive of CrescentRating, Fazal Bahardeen, there was a rise of 200,000 Muslim visitors in 2014 in Malaysia compared to 2013. In 2013, there were 5.7 million Muslims while in 2014, the number rose to 5.9 million. He credits this increase to the excellent attractions in Malaysia, quality halal food, accommodation, a variety of shopping options, as well as the availability and accessibility of different provisions for prayer rooms in various locations. He said that the country has one of the best framework for the Muslim holiday makers.

The report was released a few days before the first commemoration of the yet to be solved aviation mystery in which flight MH370 of Malaysia Airlines disappeared, on March 8, 2014. It was a flight from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to Beijing, China when it disappeared. The flight had 239 people on board. Again, on July 17, 2014, during the flight MH17 of Malaysia Airlines a total of 298 people died when the aircraft was shot down while above Ukraine.

Despite the two disasters, from January to October 2014, there was a rise of arrivals to Malaysia of 9.6 per cent year-on-year. However, there was a drop in the number of Chinese travelers by 11.2 per cent. Most of the people on the MH370 plane were from China.

**The worth of the Muslim tourism market as of 2014, was estimated to be at \$145 billion.** It has also been projected to hit \$200 billion by 2020. As a result of this, the tourist survey indicated many nations that are non-Islamic have made several improvements in their destinations to be able to attract Muslims. The destinations are becoming more favorable to be able to accommodate Muslim tourists. With some of the best halal food surroundings, Singapore was rated the best choice among countries that are non-Islam, followed by Thailand. Taiwan was ranked 10th, while Japan came in 11th, due to the many adjustments they are making to fully accommodate Muslims.

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