

MUSLIMS TRAVELING TO JAPAN IN GREATER NUMBERS



The total number of people traveling to Japan in 2016 was above 24 million, a figure that is more than the 20 million target set by the national government for 2020. This achievement came just 4 years before the set data and visitors from Muslim nations represented a steadily increasing part of the total amount.

Japan has embraced halal tourism several years ago and the effects are quite visible. The number of people traveling to Japan from Muslim nations is growing. The qiblah (arrows pointing towards Mecca) can be found now in many Japanese hotel rooms, **airports and shopping centers are equipped with prayer rooms, and halal food has become a staple in many Japanese restaurants.** Several companies that do business with Muslim nations also offer halal food in their cafeterias. Moreover, there has been a steady increase in the number of Muslims settling down in Japan.

According to the data released by the Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO), nearly 271,000 Indonesians travelers came to Japan in 2016 alone, a figure that stood at just 63,000 in 2009. Similarly, more than 394,000 Malaysians arrived last year, up from 89,000 seven years ago.

This sharp increase in the number of Muslims traveling to Japan from Southeast Asia is partly due to the fact that Japanese government lowered the requirements to get visa into the country, the growth in low-cost airlines coming into Japan and a growing middle class with a larger disposable income, according to the JNTO.

Also, another factor contributing to this increase has been the ease and rate with which the Muslim travelers have their specific needs met within the country.

According to JNTO representatives there have been a combination of factors that are behind the impressive figures, including the low yen rate, which has made holidays in Japan much more affordable for people from Southeast Asia, in particular.

Date: 2017-05-15

Article link:

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