

Malaysia Retains Top Spot In Global Muslim Travel Index For 5th Consecutive Year
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 4 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has retained the top spot in the MasterCard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index 2015 (GMTI) for the fifth consecutive year.

The index, published by electronic payment services provider MasterCard and CrescentRating Pte Ltd, took into account various criteria, including Muslim-friendly travel facilities and halal awareness and initiatives.

CrescentRating chief executive officer, Fazal Bahardeen, said the results reflected Malaysia's aggressiveness in promoting Muslim travel worldwide.

"Last year 5.9 million Muslim travellers arrived in Malaysia from 5.7 million in 2014. This year we expect a five per cent growth," he told reporters after the launch of the index here Wednesday.

Tourism Malaysia deputy director-general (promotion), Datuk Azizan Noordin, launched the index.

Bahardeen said the number of Muslim arrivals to Malaysia was expected to reach between 6.5 million and seven million visitors by 2020.

He said apart from the country's active role in promoting Muslim travel, Malaysia was also a family-friendly destination and provided easy access to halal food.

"Muslim travellers are generally family travellers," he said.

Azizan said based on 2013 statistics, West Asia travellers were recognised as the highest spenders with the longest span of stay and spent an average of RM7,724.70 throughout 8.3 nights.

He said tourist arrivals from West Asia into Malaysia surged to 353,955 last year from less than 20,000 in the late 90s.

Azizan said the top three sources of visitors were Saudi Arabia (113,921), Iran (72,264) and Iraq (27,124).

Meanwhile, Bahardeen said, globally, Muslim travellers were expected to grow to 150 million visitors by 2020, accounting for about 11 per cent of the entire travel economy, with a market value of US\$200 billion.

Last year, he said, this segment was worth US\$145 billion with 108 million Muslim

travellers representing 10 per cent of the entire travel economy.

"There is a huge room for growth in the Muslim travel segment as the Muslim population made up 26 per cent of the global population," he said.

GMTI, which covers 100 destinations worldwide, will provide travellers, governments, travel services and investors comprehensive benchmarks to enable them to track the health and growth of the Muslim travel segment.

Among top five destinations on the index are Turkey, United Arab Emirates Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

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