

PRESS RELEASE

(for immediate release)

MALAYSIA SECURES 11TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR OF MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TRAVEL LEADERSHIP IN GMTI 2026

SINGAPORE, 18 JUNE 2026: Malaysia was once again crowned the **Top Muslim-Friendly Destination (OIC)** in the **Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2026 Report**, announced today at the Halal in Travel Awards at Aloft Singapore. This marks the 11th consecutive streak for Malaysia as a leading ecosystem for Muslim-travel.

Apart from taking home the grand prize, the nation also secured the top spot in the categories for **Muslim-Friendly Accessible Destinations (OIC)** and **Muslim Women-Friendly Destinations**.

The accolades, presented jointly by Mastercard and CrescentRating, celebrates Malaysia's sustained dedication to the Muslim-Friendly Tourism and hospitality (MFTH) sector. Accepting the award on behalf of Malaysia was the Deputy Secretary General (Tourism) of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), Mr. Chua Choon Hwa, who expressed sincere appreciation to the organisers for their continuous role in driving the global industry forward.

"It is an honour to see this segment blossom into what it is today. When Malaysia first tapped into the Muslim-market, it was still a foreign concept to most destinations, and now, the warmth of Muslim-friendly hospitality can be felt across continents," said Chua.

He also emphasised that this enduring success is a direct result of the structured efforts of Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), an agency under MOTAC. ITC continues to ensure that Malaysia's national hospitality guidelines set definitive global standards.

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Commenting on the achievement and the critical importance of a solid technical framework, ITC Director-General Mohammad Faisal Abu Suaib Khan stated, “Retaining the top global ranking for 11 years in succession validated the structural soundness of Malaysia's Islamic Tourism framework. Our primary focus remains on the development and implementation of clear hospitality standards that encourage trust among international travellers.

Through our comprehensive assessment systems, we equip tourism businesses with the exact tools needed to meet the requirement of discerning travellers. Consistency in quality is our priority, and we are dedicated to sharing these proven standardisation models with global partners to make travel seamless and reliable for everyone.”

This achievement is also a shared success made possible by the collective efforts of the authorities like the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), Department of Standards Malaysia and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT). Through supportive national policies, planning frameworks, development requirements and quality standards, Malaysia has cultivated a comprehensive Muslim-friendly ecosystem where facilities such as prayer spaces, qibla direction indicators, halal-certified food offerings and other faith-based amenities are seamlessly integrated into the visitor experience.

Originally developed to enhance the quality of life of Malaysians, the Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR) and Muslim-Friendly Tour Guide (MFTG) programmes have now become a natural advantage for Muslim travellers, reinforcing Malaysia's position as a leading Muslim-friendly destination. Local hotels, tourist guides, travel agencies, attraction sites, transport operators and diverse enterprises, including SMEs and MSMEs — especially ones under MFAR and MFTG form the operational backbone for this framework.

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This expertise in standardisation has led to significant international expansion for Malaysia's tourism frameworks. In May 2026, ITC established a landmark strategic alliance with RusQuality (Roskachestvo), Russia's premier Halal assurance body, through a Memorandum of Mutual Recognition (MoMR) signed at the KazanForum in Tatarstan. This historic agreement harmonises Muslim-friendly tourism guidelines between Malaysia and the Russian Federation, granting reciprocal rights to official branding.

Building directly upon this momentum, the ITC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Taiwan Halal Certification Development Co., Ltd. (THCD) earlier this month. Under this partnership, THCD acts as the local administrator for Malaysia's MFAR programme in Taiwan, managing local training, capacity building, and industry audits. These dual partnerships showcase the accelerating global adoption of Malaysia's technical tourism metrics across both OIC member states and non-OIC destinations.

Following these developments, ITC will remain steadfast to serve as a premier global consultant in research, training and institutional capacity building. This also includes an impressive event pipeline, namely the 5th World Islamic Tourism Conference (17-20 September 2026), Islamic Tourism Month 2026 (1-30 September 2026) and Halal Street Food Festival and Modest Wear Expo (22-25 October 2026).

These headline-grabbing gatherings and international collaborations fit perfectly with the national Malaysia MADANI vision, which emphasises sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation. By driving international cooperation and maintaining strict quality controls, Malaysia continues to lead the orderly evolution of inclusive hospitality worldwide.

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Additional information:

Global Muslim Travel Index

Since the launch of the Mastercard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) in 2015, Malaysia has consistently ranked as one of the top destinations for Muslim travellers. The country has retained its No. 1 position for years, except in 2020 when the report was not published due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Malaysia's continued leadership is attributed to its strong focus on enhancing Muslim-friendly travel facilities, particularly:

- The widespread availability of halal food,
- Extensive prayer facilities, and
- Dedicated tourism services tailored for Muslim travellers.

Malaysia's infrastructure, safety, visa accessibility, and a supportive policy framework further support its performance. These strengths, combined with ongoing initiatives such as the Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR) and Muslim-Friendly Tourist Guide (MFTG) recognition, reinforce the country's status as a trusted and inclusive destination for Muslim tourists.

Tourist accommodation premises that meet the general MFAR requirements are ranked as MFAR Platinum, Gold, Silver or Lite according to their level of compliance with the guidelines.

About Islamic Tourism Centre

Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) is an entity under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia, tasked to develop the Islamic Tourism segment for Malaysia. It advocates for Muslim-friendly tourism and hospitality (MFTH) by offering research and market intelligence, training, industry development consultation, services standards and recognition, and information exchange.

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FAST FACTS

- The global Muslim travel market is projected to reach 245 million international arrivals with an estimated expenditure of USD235 billion by 2030.
- Muslim travellers represent a market of nearly 2 billion people globally across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and beyond.
- ITC is supporting the growth of the Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality ecosystem globally by developing a structured framework to help destinations and tourism and hospitality businesses understand and serve the needs of Muslim travellers. Two of ITC's key frameworks are the Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR) and the Muslim-Friendly Tourist Guide (MFTG).
- Malaysia currently has nearly 500 Muslim-friendly recognised tourism industry players, including 68 hotels, 32 travel agencies, and 364 tourist guides, with more businesses coming on board.