

GOING GLOBAL WITH MFAR: THE FRAMEWORK BRIDGING HALAL AND TOURISM



KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, 25 SEPTEMBER 2026: International visitors arriving in Malaysia for the Global Halal Summit 2026 (GHaS) and in search of trade opportunities in the Halal sector may find a new opportunity worth exploring with Malaysia — Muslim-friendly travel.

For 11 consecutive years, Malaysia has been ranked No. 1 in the world for Muslim-friendly travel ahead of destinations such as Turkiye, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. At this year's GHaS, the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), an agency under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, is stepping up its presence to promote the framework it developed — the Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR) — to support a structured Muslim-friendly tourism ecosystem globally.

From Domestic Service to Global Appeal

The reason behind Malaysia's successful position is an ecosystem built first for its people — a Muslim-majority population whose everyday needs include access to Halal food and facilities for daily prayers.

In Malaysia, prayer facilities are widely available in shopping malls, airports, highway rest areas, hotels and public attractions. Halal food is accessible from neighbourhood restaurants to international brands and fine dining establishments. Muslim-friendly considerations such as modesty, privacy and family needs are also familiar elements of everyday life.

Over time, infrastructure and services developed to serve Malaysians became an advantage for Muslim travellers from around the world. In 2025, Malaysia recorded 9.7 million Muslim visitor arrivals, with the country targeting 15.2 million by 2030.

Building Assurance Across the Tourism Experience

Established in 2009, ITC is mandated to develop the Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality ecosystem through research, training and capacity building, industry development, standards development and knowledge exchange.

MFAR is one of the mechanisms through which ITC translates this mandate into a practical framework for the tourism industry. It provides businesses with a structured pathway to understand and meet the needs of Muslim travellers, while giving travellers greater assurance when choosing tourism services.

The framework was developed through collaboration with Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM), Department of Standards, academic researchers and industry stakeholders. It brings together Halal requirements with wider tourism considerations such as prayer facilities, cleanliness, services, recreational activities and sustainability.

Industry players from hotels and travel agencies to spa and wellness centres are adopting the guidelines to respond more effectively to Muslim travellers. The result is an environment that integrates the faith-based requirements of Muslim travellers with Malaysia's wider tourism offerings.

Under ITC's guidance, hotels can provide Halal dining options and appropriate facilities that support privacy and gender considerations; spa centres can provide private treatment rooms and same-gender therapists; while travel agents can design

itineraries that take prayer times, family needs and local cultural experiences into consideration.

While MFAR incorporates the Malaysian Standard MS 2610 and Halal certification requirements administered by JAKIM, it addresses a broader tourism experience. Halal compliance is an important foundation, particularly for tourism establishments providing food and beverage services, but it is one part of the wider Muslim-friendly framework.

MFAR also provides a progressive recognition pathway. Businesses can enter the framework at Silver level and advance to Gold or Platinum as they meet more comprehensive criteria.

The response from the industry has been encouraging, says Mohammad Faisal Abu Suaib Khan, Director General, ITC.

“Currently, we have more than 500 businesses and services registered as Muslim-friendly in Malaysia, including 390 tourist guides, 73 hotels, 39 travel agents and 11 spa centres.”

International hotel brands such as ParkRoyal, Marriott, Shangri-La, Ibis, Le Meridien, Westin, Pullman, Wyndham, DoubleTree by Hilton and Mövenpick have also received MFAR recognition in Malaysia.

MFAR Goes Global

At this year’s summit, where the Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) and Halal Certification Bodies Convention (HCBC) are being organised by the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) and JAKIM respectively, ITC has taken on a strategic partnership role to advance the adoption of MFAR globally.

For Halal Certification Bodies, MFAR provides an opportunity to extend the assurance already established through Halal certification into the wider tourism experience. As more Muslim travellers seek reliable information about accommodation, dining, wellness and tourism services, there is growing value in having recognised frameworks that businesses can work towards.

Two Halal certification bodies recognised by JAKIM, namely FAMBRAS Halal of Brazil and Korea Muslim Federation, have signed Memorandums of Understanding with ITC to support the adoption of MFAR in their respective countries.

No.	LIST OF PARTNERSHIPS	SIGNATORIES
MOU SIGNED AT THE GHAS NIGHT		
1	Development of the Muslim-Friendly Ecosystem in Brazil between Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) and FAMBRAS Halal Certificação Ltda (FAMBRAS Halal)	Mr. Mohammad Faisal Abu Suaib Khan, Director-General, Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) Mr. Nizar Al Ghandour Internal Relations Director, FAMBRAS Halal
2	Development of the Muslim-Friendly Ecosystem in South Korea between Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) and Korea Muslim Federation (KMF)	Mr. Mohammad Faisal Abu Suaib Khan, Director-General, Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) Mr. Kim Dong-Eok, President of Korea Muslim Federation

The partnerships will see the Halal certification bodies promote MFAR through awareness seminars, training and joint promotions with ITC.

They are not the only ones. Countries such as Russia, Taiwan and Indonesia have also shown interest, with ITC guiding the adoption of MFAR to their local environments.

For ITC, the international interest reflects the potential for Muslim-friendly tourism to become a more structured component of the wider Halal economy, connecting Halal assurance with hospitality, travel, wellness and other tourism services.

Looking ahead, ITC aims to develop a global MFAR database of recognised Muslim-friendly tourism service providers.

“This can serve as a practical reference for Muslim travellers when planning trips and making decisions about accommodation, activities and other tourism services,” says Mohammad Faisal.

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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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ISLAMIC TOURISM: FAST FACTS			
MUSLIM POPULATION			
2.02 billion Muslims globally	1.62 billion Muslims in OIC member countries	274 million Muslims in the ASEAN region Source: Pew Research Centre	350 million Muslims in non Muslim-majority countries
FUTURE POTENTIAL			
USD424 billion (RM1 trillion) Forecasted Global Muslim Traveller Expenditures, 2029 Source: State of the Islamic Economy Report 2026			
MALAYSIA’S PERFORMANCE		MALAYSIA’S PROJECTION	
9.7 million Total Muslim Visitor Arrivals in Malaysia, 2025		15.2 million Total Muslim Visitor Arrivals to Malaysia in 2030	
MALAYSIA’S MFTH PRODUCTS AND SERVICES			
390 Muslim-Friendly Tourist Guides (MFTGs)		123 tourism businesses Breakdown: 74 Hotels 39 Tour Operating Businesses and Travel Agency (TOBTAB) 11 Spa and Wellness and Massage Premises Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR)	
VM2026 TARGET			
47 million International visitors		10.3 million Total Muslim international visitors	

MALAYSIA'S PERFORMANCE

TOP RANK (OIC COUNTRIES) IN THE GLOBAL MUSLIM TRAVEL INDEX, 2015-2025	MUSLIM WOMEN-FRIENDLY DESTINATION, HALAL IN TRAVEL AWARDS, 2023	NO 1 MUSLIM-FRIENDLY DESTINATION, 2024/25
Sources: Mastercard-CrescentRating	Sources: Mastercard-CrescentRating	Sources: Global Islamic Economy Indicator, DinarStandard

MUSLIM TOURIST ARRIVALS & SPENDING (2015 - 2024) (Source: Data taken from Tourism Malaysia)

YEAR	MUSLIM TOURIST ARRIVALS		SPENDING (RM)	
	CONVENTIONAL	MUSLIM	CONVENTIONAL (RM)	MUSLIM (RM)
2015	25,721,251	5,149,470	69.12 BIL	13.40 BIL
2016	26,757,392	5,524,244	82.10 BIL	16.72 BIL
2017	25,948,459	5,381,226	82.17 BIL	16.43 BIL
2018	25,832,354	5,251,927	84.14 BIL	16.60 BIL
2019	26,100,784	5,329,786	86.14 BIL	16.72 BIL
2020	4,332,722	882,629	12.69 BIL	2.35 BIL
2021	134,728	23,747	238.73 MIL	44.2 MIL
2022	10,070,964	2,123,218	28.23 BIL	5.37 BIL
2023	20,141,846	4,518,901	71.31 BIL	14.70 BIL
2024	25,016,698	5,416,408	102.23 BIL	19.54 BIL
2025	42,196,892	9,739,471		

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