


"Islam is a religion of peace and tourism is an activity of peace. It is part of the process of peace building and developing relations between people. The building of peace – whether involving people or the environment – is very much part of Islam" Imtiaz Muqbil, Thailand's Travel Impact Newswire Executive Editor

Jom Holiday

Malaysia An Ideal Place For International And Inland Islamic-Influenced Tourism

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Malaysia has a lot to offer in the Islamic-influenced tourism industry. These "exciting things to do and explore" ranges from architectural designs, historical remains, museums and monuments, to science based products, hospitality, services, and many more. Islamic architecture throughout the world has a regional identity, a stylistic evolution and relevance to the eternal principles of Islam. Malaysian architecture on the other hand is a mosaic of Islamic, Mughal, Modern, and British ones.

This reflects the history of our society. Malaysia has been under influenced of Islam, then three major colonial regimes, British colonial rule being the last before Malaysia (known as Malaya then) gain independence, modernized the nation and improved the quality of life of the population.

In Kuala Lumpur, one need not go too far to enjoy the Islamic-

influenced tourism. The National Planetarium (locally known as the Planetarium Negara) is a picturesque building made up of a blue-domed structure that sits atop a small hill at Jalan Perdana. In this place visitors have the chance to see a blend of advanced technology and traditional Islamic architecture. Interestingly this is just the place to be for learning young minds and their families.

About 30km south of Kuala Lumpur, the Perdana Putra building in Putrajaya incorporates elements of Islamic-Mogul architecture. This beautiful building currently houses the offices of the Prime Minister, the

Deputy Prime Minister, as well as several other ministerial departments. While in Putrajaya one will be amazed by the 370 meter-long bridge which is inspired by Moorish Islamic architecture and part of the 'protocol route'. The bridge is built across a lake together with eight rest areas, with minarets of different styles, to allow visitors to enjoy the panoramic views of Putrajaya Lake, the Perdana Putra Complex and the Putra Mosque. Sri Perdana, the official residence of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, dominated with Malay and Islamic architecture also incorporates several western and contemporary elements to reflect a universal outlook.

In the east coast, Islamic-influenced tourism in Malaysia is incomplete without a visit to the Islamic Civilization Park in Pulau Wan Man, Terengganu. The Islamic Civilization Park is an interactive journey of 21 Islamic monuments of the world. It is a Malaysia vacation entertainment and educational destination. It is an opportunity for visitors to see the sensations wonders of the Islamic world.

Islam is the official religion of the country and this has a significant contribution to Malaysian Muslims lifestyle and visitors to Malaysia. Hence, Islamic-influenced tourism does not only offers leisure but also several beautiful and reputed mosques that are found in Malaysian states and federal territories.

The Masjid Kampong Kling, built in 1748, is one of the oldest mosques in Malaysia. The mosque is located on Malacca's busy north-south running Jalan Hang Lekiu, on the corner of Jalan Tanjong, or Temple Street,



both filled with Chinese shop-houses. However, when Masjid Kampong Kling was erected, the neighbourhood of Kampong Kling, which runs along the coast to the west of the Malacca River, was still primarily inhabited by South Indians or Klings. The multiple styles revealed in this mosque attest to the syncretic building tradition that flourished in Malacca, a major trading port in the fourteenth through the eighteenth centuries.

In Alor Setar, Kedah, Masjid Zahir which officially opened in 1912 is an architectural landmark. With black domes set off against slender minarets, this Mosque is one of the most elegant and aesthetically pleasing mosques in Malaysia. Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Mosque,

Putrajaya, also known as the "Iron Mosque" features a district cooling system, and without assembly of fans or an air conditioning system. The mosque employs "Architectural Wire Mesh" imported from Germany and China, which is also constructed at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid, as well as the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. The main entrance is reinforced with Glass Reinforced Concrete to increase the integrity of the structure and uses fine glass to create an illusion of a white mosque from far.

Interest in Islamic art has grown enormously in recent years. Reflecting this awareness, in December 1998 Malaysia became home to Southeast Asia's largest museum of Islamic Art. The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia



houses more than seven thousand artifacts, as well as an exceptional library of Islamic-art books. The art objects on display range from the tiniest pieces of jewellery to one of the world's largest scale models of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca. The Islamic Arts Garden Complex is a centre for Islamic arts heritage, calligraphy arts, design of national cultural motifs as well as the ICT centre for the Al-Quran, Hadith and Islamic arts, and centre for the development of Islamic art souvenirs (www.restu-art.com).

The Melaka Quran Museum, exhibits the Holy Book in various types as well as relics and artifacts on the development of Islam. Visitors could obtain knowledge on the spread of Islam to various parts of the world. The museum would also serve as a knowledge centre on the Quran as well as on Islamic arts and heritage (www.perzim.gov.my). The Melaka Museum of Islam on the other hand is a display centre of documents and artifacts pertaining to Islam and also to be a centre for research into the coming of Islam into Melaka and its subsequent spread to the rest of Malaysia.

In East Malaysia, the Islamic Museum Sarawak presents to the people of Sarawak as well as to visitors the splendor and the beauty of Islamic Civilization. In order words, with the establishment of this museum it is hoped that the public will have greater appreciation and understanding on the contribution of Islam to human civilization. This Museum consists of seven galleries (www.museum.sarawak.gov.my). In the neighbouring state of Sabah, the Sabah Islamic Civilization Museum has six galleries: An introduction to Islamic civilisation, Islam in Nusantara, Islam in Malaysia, Islam





in Sabah, The Prophet Muhammad Gallery - exhibiting the history of Muhammad's struggle to spread the Islamic faith.

The growth of interest in Islam and its civilization does not only contribute in terms of Islamic architectural in Malaysia but also had contributed to the landmark change in the educational philosophy in Malaysia. In 1983, in the district of Gombak, north of Kuala Lumpur, the International Islamic University Malaysia was

established under the Government of Malaysia's Company Act that allowed the University to use English as the medium of instruction in all of its faculties.

Supported by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and several Muslim countries, IIUM is the fruition of one of the major aspirations of the contemporary global Muslim community, which is to regain the ummah's leadership in the quest for knowledge.

The Islamic-influenced tourism in Malaysia is not just about leisure but also choices of various delicious, healthy and affordable halal cuisines available throughout the country. In Kuala Lumpur for instance, one may have the choice from the local delicacies to the contemporary western food that is also available from the hotels which have received halal certificates from competent authorities (previously by Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC) or now, JAKIM). These include several hotels in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur such as Corus hotel, Ming Court, Legend, PNB Darby Park Executives Suites, Ancasa Hotel and many more. As the capital of Malaysia, the city of Kuala Lumpur has one of the most modern transportation systems.

It has a comprehensive network of buses, taxis, monorail, light rail transit and commuter trains that provide convenient and quick access to various parts of this city and its surrounding. Finally one may also get additional online information on traveling in Malaysia (www.malaysiavacationguide.com). □

