



GCC in Prime Position to Maximize Muslim Visitor Arrivals During Ramadan from 2023

Singapore, June 16th, 2016 – The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states are set to benefit from the growth in Muslim travelers during the holy month of Ramadan, according to new research released today by [MasterCard](#) and [CrescentRating](#).

The growing trend by Muslims to travel during the fasting period will see destinations in the GCC region become the most attractive by 2023 according to data and analysis from the inaugural MasterCard-CrescentRating Ramadan Travel Report 2016.

A total of 50 destinations across the globe were analyzed in the study and benchmarked across three criteria – average daytime temperature, fasting duration and [Global Muslim Travel Index 2016 scores](#) – over the next 15 years until 2030.

It is the first ever report of its kind to provide destinations and businesses in the tourism industry with useful insights on how they can develop medium to long-term strategies to attract and cater to Muslim travelers during Ramadan over the coming years.

With Ramadan set to take place in cooler months from 2023, destinations in the Middle East such as the UAE, Qatar and Oman will become an attractive proposition for Muslim travelers. The report also showed that Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia could also benefit from this trend.

“Ramadan travel has been largely ignored by the industry despite the growing trend in the last few years,” said Fazal Bahardeen CEO of CrescentRating & HalalTrip.

“However, the report has revealed some very interesting insights especially for countries in the Middle East. Muslims traveling in Ramadan is becoming a reality and one which can benefit countries, through strategic destination marketing and planning by the tourism authorities.

“As one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in the world, the Muslim travel market brings tremendous opportunities. An increasing number of governments are boosting their efforts to attract more Muslim visitors to their countries. With travel during Ramadan also expected to grow in the next decade, the new MasterCard-CrescentRating Ramadan Travel Report will be valuable to businesses and governments in helping them gain a better understanding of the unique needs and preferences of Muslim travelers and how they can adapt or tailor products and services for them during the holy month,” said [Safdar Khan, Group Country Manager, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei; Group Head, Islamic Payments, Southeast Asia, MasterCard](#).

The report also shows that Malaysia remains the top ranked destination for most of the years until 2026.

Six key drivers have been identified in the report to be contributing to the increasing number of Muslims traveling during Ramadan.

These include the growing number of pilgrims to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, business travel, spending Ramadan with family, experiencing Ramadan in a different environment and culture, celebrating Eid with family as well as extreme weather conditions or duration of fasting.

The report also takes into account the special place that Makkah and Medina (Saudi Arabia) hold as the top destinations from a religious perspective, irrespective of the three criteria used for this analysis. As such, the Kingdom is excluded from the ranking and has been addressed separately on how Ramadan travel can help boost efforts towards achieving [Vision 2030](#).

The [MasterCard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index 2016](#) revealed that in 2015 there were an estimated 117 million Muslim visitor arrivals globally, representing close to 10 percent of the entire travel market. This is forecasted to grow to 168 million visitors by 2020 the equivalent of 11 percent of the market segment with a market value projected to exceed US\$200 billion.

The full report is available here: <http://news.mstr.cd/24QaRLE>

CASE STUDY

Name: Hajj Muhsin Sierra

Occupation: Director of Visit Al Andalus

From: Spain

Spending Ramadan in (destination): Malaysia

In 2015, I was in Malaysia during Ramadan as part of my work to build a new mosque in Saville, Spain. I have since fallen in love with the way Ramadan is celebrated in Malaysia.

Firstly, the fasting period is quite short in Malaysia. The weather is nice and so is the food. The people in Malaysia are also very warm, humble and friendly and the culture is very laid back. Hence I've chosen to spend Ramadan again this year in Malaysia.

In the city of Granada in Spain where I come from, there a lot of people who journey to the city to spend Ramadan with us despite the long fasting periods. Some of them come from England which experiences a longer fasting period of about 1.5 hours more than Granada, and so they like to travel and move around during Ramadan in the summer.

About the Ramadan Travel Report 2016

The MasterCard-CrescentRating Ramadan Travel Report looks at the changing patterns of travel during the holy month of fasting.

This report is the most comprehensive study of its kind giving destinations and business key insights in developing medium to long-term strategic plans to attract Muslim travelers in Ramadan over the next 15 years.

A total of 50 destinations were analyzed in this year's report. These were selected based on the top 50 destinations from the MasterCard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2016 report, of which 49 (excluding Saudi Arabia) were benchmarked based on the weighted averages of three criteria over a span of 15 years, which is an effective timeframe for the long term strategic planning for a destination.

The criteria used in this study were based on the convenience, comfort and ease of travel, and not based from the perspective of Islamic rewards.

As such, the MasterCard-CrescentRating Ramadan Travel Report focuses on the following three themes:

- Average Daytime Temperature
- Fasting Duration
- GMTI 2016 Score. For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that these GMTI scores remain constant over the next 15 years.

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About Crescentrating Pte Ltd

CrescentRating is the world's leading authority on halal-friendly travel. The company's vision is to lead, innovate and drive this segment through practical and deliverable solutions in what is regarded today as one of the fastest growing segment in the tourism sector. The company uses insight, industry intelligence, lifestyle, behaviour and research on the needs of the Muslim traveller to deliver guidance on all aspects of halal-friendly travel to organisations across the globe.

CrescentRating's services now include rating & accreditation, research & consultancy, workshops & training, ranking & indices, event support/partnerships and content provisioning.

Website: <http://www.crescentrating.com>

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About MasterCard

MasterCard (NYSE: MA), www.mastercard.com, is a technology company in the global payments industry. We operate the world's fastest payments processing network, connecting consumers, financial institutions, merchants, governments and businesses in more than 210 destinations and territories. MasterCard's products and solutions make everyday commerce activities – such as shopping, traveling, running a business and managing finances – easier, more secure and more efficient for everyone. Follow us on Twitter [@MasterCardAP](https://twitter.com/MasterCardAP) and [@MasterCardNews](https://twitter.com/MasterCardNews), join the discussion on the [Cashless Pioneers Blog](#) and [subscribe](#) for the latest news on the [Engagement Bureau](#).