Grand Ion Delemen Hotel... Located at one of Malaysia's top tourim destination, Genting Highlands.

Genting tourism market to mount by Q3

MFAR Silver-rated hotel Grand Ion Delemen estimates the Muslim travel market in Genting Highlands will be at its peak by November and December

BY CAMILIA REZALI

TRAVELLING and discovering new sites around the world is a pick of the litter for every Malaysian. We are all itching for a good escape. Well, who doesn't love travelling? But when exactly will our travel industry will restore its momentum?

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a significant bleed of the travel and tour industry around the globe. A massive drop in international tourist arrivals is attributed to the closure of Malaysian borders since Mar 18 last year. According to a Tourism Malaysia report, the numbers of tourist arrivals to Malaysia dropped by 83.4 per cent in 2020, with only four million tourists.

For now, one of the ways to keep the tourism market on its feet is to depend on domestic tourism, said Tourism Malaysia Director-General Zulkifly Md Said during the launch of the international travel trade show ITB Berlin in March 2021.

"Domestic tourism has always been the saviour for the industry whenever the country was in a crisis. International tourism would be halted during a crisis, but domestic tourism would continue and actually provide revenue for the country," he said

According to Zulkifly, Malaysia has a wealth of attractions that locals can discover or rediscover. It's also prime time to holiday in your own country as tourism operators have introduced attractive deals to attract more people.

Genting tourism market will thrive

In parallel to that statement, hotels and resorts in Malaysia are also making their move - undertaking strategic measures to attract local travellers. Considering the significant figures of the Muslim population in Malaysia, several hotels and resorts are expected to broaden their Muslim-friendly services and facilities.

"We think the Islamic travel market this year will be dominant on the domestic market. It is quite important for us to keep operating because Genting Highlands will be the highlight of the Malaysian tourism industry."

Tee Yih Fung, General Manager of Grand Ion Delemen Hotel.

As of May 2021, the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) had recognised 44 hotels in Malaysia as Muslim-friendly through its Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Recognition (MFAR) programme, which was launched on Sept 3, 2020 to create more awareness of its significance in restoring confidence in this market segment.

@Halal took the opportunity to speak to one of the Silver-rated Muslim-friendly hotels, Grand Ion Delemen Hotel, to gain their views on the Muslim travel market. Grand Ion Delemen Hotel is a resort that has been operating for more than three years. The five-star resort is strategically located in Genting Highlands.

"We think the Islamic travel market this year will be dominant on the domestic market. It is quite important for us to keep operating because Genting Highlands will be the highlight of the Malaysian tourism industry," said the General Manager of Grand Ion Delemen Hotel, Tee Yih Fung.

Tee said many people were looking forward to the opening of Genting Highlands theme parks. Additionally, they are already seeing numbers picking up for Grand Ion Delemen, where there have been many activities being carried out from government meetings at the hotel. On this account, he is optimistic about Islamic tourism building up this year.

"Our prospects on Islamic tourism is positive. Specifically, the Malay domestic market is something that we are eyeing on. In time, we hope the tourism market will pick up and recover by the third quarter of this year, all the way till November and December."

Muslim-friendly as a saving grace

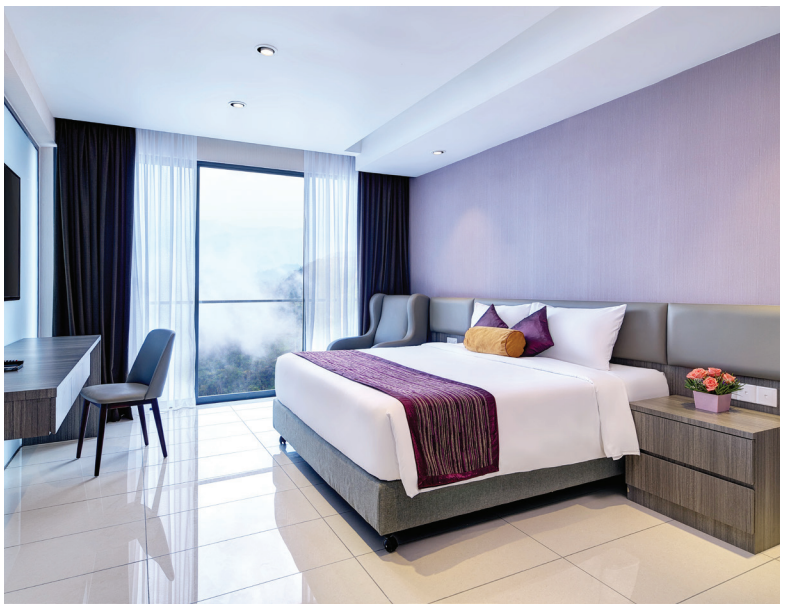
Since last year, Grand Ion Delemen Hotel has been looking at some of the cost-saving initiatives such as working arrangements and energy-saving efforts in our hotel. These are the plan that we carry out from last year to this year.

Until today, Grand Ion Delemen Hotel has survived the pandemic. To further stand their ground in the travel industry, being Muslim-friendly is another added advantage.

Glancing through the entire footprint of Genting Highlands, Tee said there was less emphasis on the Islamic market. Due to this, Grand Ion Delemen Hotel decided to expand its operation – by offering Muslim-friendly facilities and services.

"We decided when we built this hotel and run this hotel, our emphasis should be more on the Muslim-friendly market. Over the years, we considered ourselves lucky to be in this position.

"Our key emphasis is on creating a better Shariah-compliant environment in Genting Highlands," he added.

Fulfilling the opportunities of the Islamic tourism market is one point. But masking it all in a short time required solid financial support from the government because tourism is now considered a fragile industry. Besides that, there must also be promotional efforts in creating awareness among companies to capitalise on the high-potential market.

Meanwhile, let's put on our rose-coloured glasses and hope the tourism can soon heal when the Covid-19 pandemic passes.