
AS IT IS

Muslim Countries Hope for More Visitors after US Travel Restrictions

February 03, 2017

Some areas hope for more foreign students and visitors because of the new United States restrictions on people from seven Muslim-majority countries.

The U.S. order includes a 120-day suspension of refugee admissions and a 90-day entry ban for individuals from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Asia's largest budget airline company, Air Asia, is based in Malaysia, one place hoping to profit from the restrictions.

The head of the company, Tony Fernandes, suggested the U.S. move could lead to more Muslims traveling to Southeast Asia.

"With the world now getting more **isolationist**, it's time for ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) to start making it easier for tourists to come." Fernandes published the comment on the social media network Twitter.

Malaysia is a popular stop for **tourists** from the Middle East. Nearly 200,000 people arrived there in 2016 from countries including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Qatar, the Reuters news service reported.

Many people go to Malaysia for medical treatment. Because most Malaysians are Muslim, it is easy for visitors to find **halal** food products.

Other countries also hope to profit from the U.S. travel restrictions.

[Hide](#)
[Option](#)
[Dismiss](#)

Ajay Mittal is director of International Placewell Consultants in New Delhi. His company places Indian students in colleges and universities overseas.

Mittal said Germany and Singapore had increased efforts to advertise their colleges and universities. He said some students are worried that, even if they go the United States for an education, they might not get a job there at the end of their studies. He noted that the new U.S. administration has announced plans to tighten work visa rules.

Mittal said some students are very worried.

“Of particular concern are plans to review the Optional Practical Training, or OPT program, which gives foreign **graduates** in fields like science, technology, engineering” or mathematics “the right to find jobs in the U.S. for up to 36 months,” he said.

Rod Jones is head of the education business Navitas, Ltd. He said the company has received fewer requests for its U.S.-based English language courses.

“We have started to see students back off from the U.S. because of their concerns about potential issues they may face,” said Jones.

Reuters reported that Jones said foreign students should also consider Canada and Australia.

“The Canadian Prime Minister has come out and said ‘if the U.S. doesn’t want you, we’d love to have you’ and I think it is the approach of Australia too,” he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump has called for stronger measures to limit immigrants and refugees from some countries for security reasons.

Critics say such measures, like the temporary ban on immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries, treat Muslims unfairly. They also say measures limiting immigration hurt America’s image as a place that welcomes people from other countries.

I’m Mario Ritter.

[Hide](#)
[Option](#)
[Dismiss](#)

The Reuters news service reported on this story. Mario Ritter adapted the report for Learning English. George Grow was the editor.

What do you think about the temporary restrictions on immigrants and refugees by the United States? Let us know in the comments section below.

Words in This Story

tourism – *n.* visiting another country for pleasure

isolationist – *adj.* relating to the belief that a country should not be involved in the matters of another country

halal – *adj.* able to be eaten for those observing Muslim law

graduate – *n.* someone who has successfully completed a study program
