



## **Agoda and Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah sign MoU to achieve vision 2030 goal of 30 million pilgrims**

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SINGAPORE, Dec. 5, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Agoda, one of the world's fastest growing online travel agents (OTA), and Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) supporting the Kingdom's vision of 2030 goal to increase its capacity to over 30 million pilgrims by utilizing Agoda's technology and travel expertise, marketing platform capabilities, intelligence tools and resources.





The agreement was signed on Monday 3 December, 2018 by H.E. Dr. Mohammad Saleh bin Taher Benten, the Saudi minister of Hajj and Umrah and in the presence of Damien Pfirsch, VP Strategic Partnerships & Programs Agoda, during an official ceremony at the office of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah. Umrah guests to the Kingdom can now visit a dedicated Agoda portal [agoda.com/umrah](http://agoda.com/umrah) to access select hotels that have been certified by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah for Umrah visitors and pilgrims bookings, as well as the wider reservation site. Pilgrims can easily find an array of accommodation options and securely book through the multilingual and multi-currency portal.

Under the MoU, the first to be signed by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah with a global OTA, the parties will explore how together they will redefine the future of travel for pilgrims from across the world to the Kingdom, working in collaboration to help to build future services including guest flow and booking accommodation. The MoU will leverage the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah's knowledge and understanding of the needs of pilgrims to the Holy cities and Agoda's technology expertise, to enable the partners to explore ways to use technology to manage the anticipated increase in guests to the Kingdom and make accommodation reservations more accessible, easier, faster and secure.

According to Saudi Vision 2030 announced in 2016, the last decade has seen the number of Umrah visitors and pilgrims entering the country from abroad treble. The annual pilgrimages play a significant role in Saudi Arabia's tourism industry, with the government aiming to grow this sector to 15 million Hajj and Umrah visitors annually by 2020, and 30 million by 2030.

John Brown, Chief Executive Officer of Agoda, said: "We are proud and honoured to have been selected by the Ministry to provide our best-in-class technology solutions as they strive to implement their 2030 vision. With Agoda's expertise in accommodation and travel services, global distribution services, e-marketing and digital branding we want to be a key partner helping them to achieve their goals of accommodating 30 million Umrah and Hajj guests to the Kingdom."

#### **Note to editors:**

#### **About Agoda**

Agoda is one of the world's fastest growing online travel booking platforms. From its beginnings as an e-commerce start-up based in Singapore in 2005, Agoda has grown to offer a global network of 2 million properties in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide, offering travelers easy access to a wide choice of luxury and budget hotels, apartments, homes and villas to suit all budgets and travel occasions.

Headquartered in Singapore, Agoda is part of Booking Holdings (Nasdaq: BKNG) and employs more than 3,700 staff across 53 cities in more than 30 countries. Agoda.com and the Agoda mobile app are available in 38 languages.

[www.agoda.com/press](http://www.agoda.com/press)

#### **About Ministry of Hajj and Umrah**

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah (<http://www.haj.gov.sa>) seeks to facilitate the performance of Hajj, Umrah, and the visit of the Sacred Places for every Muslim, in a manner that involves serenity, tranquillity, security, and safety, so giving them psychological comfort, and enabling them to perform their acts of worship easily. Also, it is keen on making the Hajj, Umrah, or the visit a wonderful memory, letting the Guest of Allah form the best possible impressions and mental image about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Ministry aims to provide them with the best services upon their arrival and removing the troubles that could be experienced by the pilgrim in their Hajj trip upon their departure, so that they returns to their country holding the best memories about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their Hajj trip.

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