

# The Potential of The Big Island of Melaka and the Tomb of Sultan al-Arifin Sheikh Ismail as a Visitor-Friendly Religious Tourism Destination

## *Potensi Pulau Besar Melaka dan Makam Sultan al-Arifin Sheikh Ismail sebagai Destinasi Pelancongan Keagamaan Mesra Pengunjung*

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**Abstract:** Big Island Melaka is one of Malaysia's historical and religious tourist destinations. However, many people are unaware of the island's historical and religious significance. The purpose of this research is to explore and describe the current state and history of Melaka Big Island as an Islamic tourist destination through content analysis methodology. The results of the study found that the Big Island is a historical island that contributed greatly to the effective spread of Islam in Melaka and its surroundings. The existence of the tomb of Sultan al-Arifin and other figures is the main attraction for many religious tourists to come to the Big Island to get to know more about the historical side of this Big Island. However, some tourists continue to engage in khurafat activities and violate Islamic restrictions. The Big Island should adopt the idea of Islamic tourism to make it free from aspects of shirk and khurafat as well as cosy and welcoming to visitors. Local authorities need to be concerned about monitoring the activities carried out by visitors to this Big Island. With various studies on programmes and activities that have been carried out, it is hoped that the management of Pulau Besar will be better for the purpose of being recognised as an Islamic tourist destination that is visited by tourists at the local and global levels.

**Keywords:** Big Island, Islamic, tourism, khurafat;

**Abstrak:** Pulau Besar Melaka merupakan antara destinasi pelancongan bersejarah dan keagamaan di Malaysia. Walau bagaimanapun, ramai orang tidak menyedari tentang pentingnya nilai sejarah dan aspek agama di pulau ini. Penulisan ini bertujuan bagi meneroka dan menghuraikan keadaan semasa dan sejarah Pulau Besar Melaka sebagai destinasi pelancongan Islam melalui metodologi kualitatif analisis dokumen. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa Pulau Besar merupakan sebuah pulau bersejarah yang memberi sumbangan besar kepada kejayaan penyebaran Islam di Melaka dan sekitarnya. Keberadaan makam Sultan al-Arifin serta tokoh lainnya merupakan tarikan utama pelancong keagamaan ramai datang ke Pulau Besar bagi mengenal lebih dalam sisi sejarah Pulau Besar ini. Namun demikian masih terdapat aktiviti khurafat serta dilarang agama yang dilakukan oleh sesetengah pengunjung. Konsep pelancongan Islam perlu diaplikasikan di Pulau Besar bagi menjadikan tempat pelancongan tersebut bebas daripada unsur syirik dan khurafat serta selesa dan mesra

pengunjung. Pihak kerajaan tempatan perlu mengambil berat terhadap pengawasan aktiviti yang dijalankan pengunjung Pulau Besar ini. Dengan pelbagai kajian berkenaan program dan aktiviti yang telah dijalankan diharapkan pengurusan Pulau Besar ditambah baik bagi tujuan ianya diiktiraf sebagai destinasi pelancongan Islam yang ramai dikunjungi oleh pelancong di peringkat tempatan mahupun antarabangsa.

**Kata kunci:** Pulau Besar, Islam, pelancongan, khurafat;

## Introduction

Malaysian Islamic tourism is growing every year. According to Statista research (2022), 5.53 Muslim tourists visited Malaysia in 2016, while 5.38 Muslim tourists visited Malaysia in 2017. In an official announcement issued on June 29, 2022, the Malaysian Department of Statistics reported a significant reduction in domestic and international tourist travel for the year 2021 due to limits and rigorous controls on domestic and international travel. Domestic traveller numbers decreased by 67.8%, while daily visitors decreased by 40.2%. From 147.0 million trips in 2020 to a record 72.4 million journeys, domestic travel dropped by 50.7% (JPM, 2021). Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, said that by putting the Tourism Recovery Framework (TRF) 2.0 into practise, Malaysia was able to draw 10 million foreign tourists and create RM28.2 billion in tourism revenue by 2022 (BERNAMA, 2022). ITC won two significant prizes in 2021: the Strategic Business Alliance Award at the Malaysia Tourism Council's Best Islamic Tourism Leadership Gold Award; and the BrandLaureate World Halal Best Brand E-Branding Awards. The State of the Global Islamic Economy (SGIE) Report 2022, produced by DinarStandard in collaboration with Salaam Standard and with assistance from the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, once again ranked Malaysia as the best place in the world for MFT (ITC Gov, 2022). The above shows the great interest of tourists in visiting Malaysia. Recognising the huge potential in Islamic tourism under the Muslim-friendly tourism concept, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture will continue to improve the market through infrastructure, facilities, training, capacity development, standards, and certification, in addition to promotion by tourism promotion agencies. Through the services provided, ITC encourages the development of Islamic tourism as well as the equalisation of Muslim-Friendly Tourism (ITC Gov, 2022). In 2019, 200.3 million Muslim visitors spent US \$194 billion (RM790 billion) on travel expenses, demonstrating the sector's enormous potential (BERNAMA, 2022).

Melaka State, commonly known as the Melaka State of History, is located in Peninsular Malaysia's southern

region. Melaka is well-known for its distinctive history, which dates back 110 years to the governance of the Malay Sultanate of Melaka. The Melaka Sultanate began with the advent of Parameswara, a Palembang-based Srivijaya king who ruled from 1400 until 1424. During the reign of Sultan Mansur Shah, the last sultan of the Melaka Sultanate, who was finally defeated by the Portuguese in 1511, the Melaka Empire reached its pinnacle of glory. Melaka state sits on Peninsular Malaysia's southern coast, directly across from Sumatra. Melaka State, with a land area of 1,650 square kilometres and borders on Negeri Sembilan to the north, Johor State to the south, and Melaka Strait to the west, is Malaysia's fourth smallest state.

Melaka is divided into 81 precincts (*mukim*) and three administrative districts: Alor Gajah, Jasin, and Melaka Tengah. The Historic Melaka City Council, Hang Tuah Jaya Municipal Council, Alor Gajah Municipal Council, and Jasin Municipal Council are the four local authorities in Melaka State. Melaka's overall population is expected to reach 932,700 people in 2020, up from 419,400 in 1970, with an average yearly growth rate of 1.6 percent (DOSM Melaka, 2020). Melaka State is expected to be one of the world's most popular tourist destinations in 2022. The platform elevated Melaka as a holiday destination that would attract the attention of many next year, while also reviving the country's tourist industry as a "popular trend" destination for 2022. According to a report by the tourism portal Lifestyle Asia, Melaka is ranked 8th on the list (<https://www.melakahariini.my/>). Melaka City is the eighth city to be built in Malaysia's southern region. On July 7, 2008, the city was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, alongside George Town (WHC, UNESCO, 2008).

Melaka Big Island is one of Melaka's most popular tourist destinations, and it is known for its mystical stories and folklore. Local and international visitors frequently visit the island, with a range of goals and needs. Although it is well known for its magical stories, this island was originally the key centre for the propagation and growth of Islam in Melaka and Nusantara (Meerangani, 2020). The existence of historical sites, religious study centres, and the tomb of Sheikh Ismail and his followers on this island attests to

this. The study's goal was to explore and highlight of Big Island Melaka potential as a destination of Islamic pilgrimage and to welcome Islamic tourism for visitors.

## Malaysian Islamic Tourism

Islamic tourism is not a distinct paradigm from the mainstream of the current tourism industry. However, it is necessary to cover all aspects regarding the standards of Sharia-friendly tourist attractions. This type of Islamic tourism, on the other hand, places a greater focus on adherence to the value of travel and Sharia-compliant activities. Furthermore, the impact of this exercise is not solely focused on spiritual and physical health but is also capable of shaping people in a more positive direction than before. Muslim-friendly tourism is a form of religious tourism where travellers must adhere to Islamic Sharia law's travel regulations. It could be made a Muslim-friendly Sharia product or service by including Islamic Sharia-compliant amenities in hotels or other tourist destinations (Bangsawan, 2019). The Islamic Tourism Centre describes Islamic tourism as "any activity, event, experience, or relaxation carried out in the context of journeys that are in accordance with Islamic principles, with the goal of experiencing the Islamic way of life and exploring the history, art, culture, and heritage of Islam" (ITC, 2021).

"Halal tourism" is a term used to describe Muslim tourism. Religious tourism, or trips to places of worship for pilgrimages or other purposes, is the most common definition of halal tourism (Kasdi & Saifudin, 2019). Islamic tourism is a novel concept of tourism. Islamic tourism is a delightful pastime that can restore your health, comfort, quiet, and feeling. Islamic tourism can help a person forget their sorrows and fortify their resolve by adhering to Islamic laws and regulations (Abdullah et al., 2020) Islamic tourism is on the rise not only in Malaysia, but also in the rest of the Muslim world. Islamic tourism is a style of travel that is guided by Islamic ethics and includes Muslims who want to keep up their religious traditions during their journeys (Suban, 2021). Halal tourism, according to Kasdi et al. (2021), is an activity carried out with the intention of fostering religious essence or value through visiting places of worship, grave sites, or historical locations of religious significance. Halal tourism, as stated by Battour and Ismail (2015), is any tourist element or action approved to be used or performed by Muslims in the tourism business according to Islamic principles. Halal tourism is defined as tourism that places a high value on religious observance. Every activity carried out must adhere to halal standards (Vargas-Sanchez et al., 2020). In practise, halal tourism encompasses cultural, natural, and man-made tourism that adheres to Islamic

beliefs and values (Kessler, 2015). According to Suid et al. (2017), the distinction between the notion of tourism based on the fulfilment of Islamic Sharia and the concept of secular tourism based on its aim is significant. Islamic tourism aims to satisfy the desires of tourists seeking sites that may meet their demands without offending them in any way (Hamza et al., 2012).

The Islamic tourism model encompasses all sorts of tourism aimed at performing spiritual rituals, upholding religious beliefs, tracking ancient civilizations and their heritage, acknowledging a city's or country's history, ethnicity, art, and recreation (Mat Akhir, 2010). With the establishment of the Islamic Tourist Centre (ITC) in 2009, which is one of the institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Tourism responsible for creating and promoting Islamic tourism products in Malaysia, Islamic tourism in Malaysia is booming (Munirah & Ismail, 2012). Halal tourism has grown in popularity in recent years as a result of Muslim tourists becoming increasingly interested in worldwide tourist locations, and their experiences are being linked to their awareness of Allah's magnificence (Mohsin et al., 2016). Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, and Singapore are among the most active countries in Southeast Asia in terms of seeking opportunities and expanding Muslim tourist potential (Henderson, 2010). In March 2015, the Global Muslim Travellers Index (GMTI) named Malaysia the leading destination of choice for Muslim vacationers. This endeavour was continued when the Islamic Tourist Centre (ITC) employed the tagline "Muslim-friendly" to promote and develop the country's Muslim tourism sector (<https://itc.gov.my/>). Malaysia is one of the Muslim-majority countries with the greatest potential for muslim-friendly tourism growth. Malaysia is regarded as a global centre for Sharia-compliant services and halal products (Bangsawan et al., 2019). This can help in promoting Malaysia as a tourist destination with a variety of Muslim-friendly facilities for both local and international visitors.

## Big Island Melaka

Big Island Melaka is one of the states of Melaka's historical and religious tourist locations with the potential to be promoted as a Muslim tourist destination. Despite the lack of public attention and few references to the island, it continues to be identified as a pilgrimage location with a considerable annual visitor presence, whether from within or around the country. Pulau Besar or Big Island is an island in Melaka Tengah, Melaka State, located in the district of Pernu. The community refers to this island as a mystical island (Tourisz, 1989) and is known as an eco-tourist island. The Big Island is located in the Strait of Melaka, about 3 miles from

Bandar Hilir, 5 kilometres off the Umbai jetty, and 10 kilometres south of the city of Melaka (Onn, C.K et al., 2009). Big Island is the largest island in the state of Melaka, with an area of around 168 hectares. The Melaka Islands Development Council is a state government entity tasked with facilitating the island area's development, initiatives, and activities. Figure 1 below shows the location of the Big Island in the State of Melaka.

**Figure 1.** Map of the location of the Big Island Melaka



There are ferries connecting Jeti Anjung Batu, Umbai, on the mainland, and the Big Island, as well as speed boat rentals in Jeti Umbai, Melaka. Ferry travel is scheduled, but the speedboat, as well as the length of the trip, is determined by the tides of the sea and the time set by the passengers. The island is also believed to have a variety of histories, legends, and mystical stories. Since the time of the Malay Sultanate of Melaka, various Guardians of Allah have been buried on this island, including the tombs of Sultan Al-Arifin Sheikh Ismail, Sheikh Yusuf Al-Sidiq, Saiyid Ibrahim, Siti Sarah (Syarifah Rodziah), and the Seven Brothers (Ab Rahman, 2017) There are also several other tombs, including the tomb of Grandma Kebayan, the tomb of Tok Janggut, the tomb of a Thousand and the tomb of Nisan Satu. On this island, there are other mystery spots such as the Disula Tree, Perigi Kaki Pulau, Bunian Palace and Lake, Batu Belah, Skull Stone, Yunus Cave, and other places where mysteries remain unsolved (al-Tawari, 2022)

### The Big Island's Early History

In accordance with its large geographical bounds, the growth of Islam in the Malay realm has taken a long time and covers numerous nations such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, and Patani. The growth of Islam in Malaysia has gone through two stages: the arrival stage and the development stage

(Yahaya, 2001). Historians generally divide the arrival of Islam into the Malay kingdoms into three theories: India, China, and the Arabian Peninsula. Local historians like al-Attas (2019) and Hamka (2018) are more likely to claim that preachers from the Arabian Peninsula began the Malay Islamization movement. The spread of Islam was facilitated by the collapse of Indian royal rule throughout Southeast Asia. Walisongo's role as an Islam preacher in the Nusantara region was developed with the emergence of the Melaka Sultanate. After the Strait of Melaka, the Peninsula of Malay Land, the Riau Islands, and the East Coast of Sumatra were conquered, Melaka became the hub of language, Malay, and Islamic culture (Fournié, 2019). Melaka is a global port city that acts as a global trade hub. Furthermore, Melaka's port serves as a focal point for the propagation of Islam, which is the greatest in the Malay realm and has produced a huge number of Muslim believers. (Ismail, et al., 2021).

During the Sultanate of Malacca's reign, traders used Big Island as a stopover to collect food, firewood, and clean water while waiting for their turn to dock at Melaka's port. Before Melaka was established as the seat of government, the Big Island became a focal point for these trade ships. Before continuing their journey to their desired destination, merchant ships stop here to replenish their supplies of water and firewood (Fakir, 2008). The Big Island is also a focal point for the Malay Islands because it is the site of numerous scholars who had a role in the development of Islam in the past. The Big Island was also the command post for Malays attempting to reclaim Melaka from the Portuguese after the Malay Sultanate of Melaka fell to the Portuguese. The Big Island became popular as a stopover for fishermen and traders passing through the Strait of Melaka to get supplies of clean water, food, and firewood before waiting their turn to dock at Melaka Harbour around the 15th century. The Big Island became popular as a stopover for fishermen and traders passing through the Strait of Melaka to get supplies of clean water, food, and firewood before waiting their turn to dock at Melaka Harbour around the 15th century. The Big Island's function as a source of clean water was recognised by Chinese traders, who dubbed it "Water Island @ Wu Shu" (Huan, 1970). This assertion is backed up by the discovery of several old wells along the Big Island's shoreline that are thought to be hundreds of years old. The position of the wells is likewise only a few metres away from the ocean's edge. However, most of them have broken and should no longer be used. According to Huan (1970), Chinese traders would dock and relax on the Big Island to collect their water supplies and necessities. This is due to the custom of fishermen living at the mouth of the Melaka river bringing their wares to be swapped for the goods of traders who stop on this island based on their individual necessities.

Melaka's developing popularity as a major centre of administration and trade in the Malay Archipelago has indirectly made the Big Island notable as a small-scale trading hub, a source of clean water and basic necessities, and a research centre for Islamic religious science. Aside from traders, there are also vacationers and preachers who are interested in settling on this island due to its proximity to Melaka's port. The Big Island has emerged as the most opportune location for Islamic preachers to promote and expand the teachings of Islam, given its reputation as a centre of pure water supply among traders and adventurers. Big Island's reputation as the principal seat of Islamic preaching development in the Malay realm was originally entirely contributed by Sufi preachers who arrived in Melaka. The bulk of them contribute to the spread of Islam by building study centres to help local communities better understand Islam. Sheikh Ismail, who was known as Sultan al-Arifin by the people of the Big Island, as well as its environs, was one of the great preachers of the time. To propagate the teachings of Islam, he and his disciples erected a tiny hamlet and a study centre on the Big Island. This study centre on the Big Island is among the focus locations for the spread of Islam and plays a large role in the spread of science and the development of Sufism around the Nusantara (Awang, 2006). The vast majority of preachers dedicate the rest of their lives to assisting local communities in learning more about Islam. According to a survey done by the Melaka Museum Corporation in partnership with the Melaka Islamic Religious Council, as many as 29 tombs have been successfully discovered throughout the Big Island area. Several guardians' tombs, including those of Sheikh Ismail, Sheikh Ibrahim, and Sheikh Yusuf, as well as the tombs of Sharifah Rodziah and the tombs of the 7 brothers, became popular tourist destinations for spiritual pilgrimages and religious rites (Fakir, 2008). The local government, through the Melaka State Museum Corporation, has taken initiatives by constructing a museum on the Big Island that shows historical and legendary tales, as well as acquiring and refurbishing some of the island's tombs.

### **The Tomb of Sultan Al-Arifin Sheikh Ismail**

Sultan Al-Arifin Sheikh Ismail was an Islamic scholar and preacher who arrived on the big island with his entourage and preached and taught Islam to the Melaka population and its environs. Sheikh Ismail was born in Baghdad on 17 Rabiulawal in 867H and 1463AD. His father, Saiyid Sheikh Abdul Qadir, and mother, Sayyidah Fatimah, are both descendants of the Prophet (SAW). Sultan Al-Awliya Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani, a world-famous guardian of Allah, was his ancestor. According to history, when he travelled to

Medina to view the Prophet's tomb, he heard a voice instructing him to spread Islam's teachings to the Java Islands. As a religious believer, he attempted to fulfil the mandate given. Then he continued his journey, eventually arriving on the Big Island with his entourage (Faqir, 2008). Sheikh Ismail and his companions of 16 individuals came to the Big Island and arrived around 1495 AD or 900H. His teacher, Sheikh Yusuf al-Siddiq, and his brother, Sheikh Ibrahim, were also in the group. They were among the first preachers to arrive on the Big Island with the goal of making it a focal point for Islamic da'wah development in the Malay region. The second wave of preachers arrived on the Big Island from Syria, Yemen, and the Arabian Peninsula, totalling 43 people. When Sheikh Ismail and his entourage resided and preached on The Big Island, The Malay Sultanate of Melaka was commanded by Ruler Mahmud Shah (1488-1528 AD), the final sultan before Melaka surrendered to Portuguese invaders in 1511 AD (Meerangani, 2020). Islam's teachings are gaining traction on the Big Island, and he has a sizable following across the Malay Archipelago, including India, Samudera Pasai, Champa, Kelantan, and the rest of the Malay Archipelago. Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri are two of Sheikh Ismail's most well-known students (Faqir, 2008). Sheikh Ismail is a practitioner of the Qadiriyyah Tariqa founded by his ancestor, Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani. He was one of the first in the Malay realm to promote the tariqa's teachings. The effectiveness Sheikh Ismail and other preachers have played in implementing elements of tawhid and good morals has piqued the local community's interest in Islamic teachings (Harun, M.F., 2015). Sultan Al-Arifin Sheikh Ismail died on 17 Rabi al-awwal in 925H or on March 28, 1519 AD at the age of 58 years and was buried on the Big Island. His grave became the main attraction for tourists to Pulau Besar, who came to honour his services and significant accomplishments as a scholar and preacher who once spread Islam throughout the Malay Archipelago.

### **The Big Island's Potential as a Pilgrimage and Islamic Tourism Destination**

Islamic tourism is a religiously themed vacation in which activities are guided by Islamic beliefs, such as praying five times a day, avoiding alcohol, and eating halal food are all part of the itinerary. As a result, Islamic tourism can be used to highlight the culture of Islamic community life (Munirah & Ismail, 2012). Islamic tourism is a concept that aims to help people better understand Islam via interpretation and a greater grasp of the religion (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004). Despite differences in political, social, and cultural backgrounds, Muslim communities believe in and commit to the ideas of halal and haram (Ghadami, 2012).

The Big Island is known for the beauty of its clean and clear beaches, as well as the greenery of its flora and fauna that has been preserved in part. It is one of the attractions for tourists to visit, in addition to the pilgrimage to the tomb of Sultan al-Arifin. Sultan Ariffin's reputation as a superb scholar and a famous preacher, as well as the location of his tomb on the Big Island, is a lone draw for people who prefer the guardians and scholars' pilgrimage programme. Construction of a Friday *surau* (place of worship) near the Big Island Tomb Complex provides facilities for visitors to perform prayers. There is also a restaurant facility next to the tomb complex. Visitors can enjoy trips across the sea along the way to the big island, which can only be reached by sea road. Speed boat rental packages are also available at reasonable rental prices for anyone interested in exploring the island's splendour. Amazingly, several *waqf* wheels along the shore are still operational, allowing people to obtain clean water for a variety of needs. Sultan Ariffin's reputation as a superb scholar and famous preacher, as well as the location of his tomb on the Big Island, is a lone draw for people who prefer the guardians and scholars' pilgrimage programme.

Many local Muslim visitors, including Malays, Indians, Pakistanis, and travellers from other countries, come to the Big Island for pilgrimage. In addition, several Hindu Indians and non-Muslim Chinese from the local area visit the island on pilgrimage. According to the findings of Ab Rahman, et al. (2017), there are components of superstition (*khurafat*) stated by Islam in many practices carried out on Melaka's Big Island. Among them, such as the act of asking for wishes, praying, worship rituals, meditating, and surrounding the side of the tomb of Sultan al-Arifin Sheikh Ismail and the graves of seven brothers (Mat Salleh et al., 2021). The Melaka State Fatwa Committee has issued several resolutions that all visitors to the Big Island should follow. The Melaka State Fatwa Committee, which met on the 11th of Ramadan 1435H/09th of July 2014, issued a fatwa prohibiting *khurafat* practises and beliefs on the Big Island of Melaka (JFNM, 2014). A BH Plus survey of the island in 2017 found that some parties, including non-Muslims, used the tomb of Sultan Ariffin Sheikh Ismail, as a place to hold rituals contrary to Islam. According to the findings of a more thorough investigation, there is a substantial amount of evidence to support the presence of *khurafat* rites found in several tombs on the Big Island. Among these was the finding of plugs that had been used, as well as empty bottles called "rose water" and "frankincense," despite the presence of notices banning such activities (Zakinan, 2017). To make the big island a tourist destination according to Islamic guidelines, the still-existing practises of *shirk* and superstition must be removed. The Melaka State

Government, in collaboration with the Melaka Islamic Religious Council, has constructed a *surau* and selected two *imams* to manage it alternately. Visitors can also consult with the *imams* if they have any questions about the rituals they wish to perform on the island. Muslim tourists who are found to be doing Sharia-prohibited practises on the Big Island, such as superstition practices, can be subject to fines. Non-Muslim travellers making pilgrimages to the big island will be advised not to desecrate Muslim tombs with worship items. To eliminate the practice of superstition and *shirk*, the Melaka government established a Religious High School and Tahfiz Al-Quran on the Big Island of Melaka. Its goal is to provide value to education-oriented tourism products and efforts to restore the Big Island's image as one of Melaka's Islamic tourism products (Meerangani, 2020). The results of the Astroawani observation in 2020 revealed that no more superstition activity has ever been a topic of concern among many people. This is a good result of the Melaka Islamic Religious Council and the Melaka Islamic Religious Department's efforts and endeavours to prevent persistent superstition practices. However, there may still be those who do superstition, but not openly. Sheikh Ismail's tomb is still the focus of the public because of his contribution to developing Islam throughout the Malay Archipelago (Abdullah, 2020). The Big Island's wonderful natural beauty, as well as the application of Islamic concepts to every tourist that arrives, must be maintained as a step toward making this island a joyful religious tourism destination and bringing peace of mind. As a result, the Big Island is likely to become a regional and international Islamic tourism destination.

## Conclusion

Melaka's Big Island is a religious tourist destination with natural beauty and the potential to be an excellent Islamic tourist destination. The facilities provided by the government and *waqf* authorities stimulate visitors' interest in spiritual activities such as pilgrimages to the tomb of Sultan al-Arifin Sheikh Ismail and the tombs of other scholars to take the wisdom of their struggle in preaching. Despite the fact that *khurafat* is prohibited by Islam, research has found that several people nevertheless use it to fulfil their other desires and needs. Studies conducted by Abd Rahman et al. (2017) and reviewed by Berita Harian (2017) found that there are *khurafat* practises carried out by some visitors even though there are prohibition posters from the Islamic Religious Council. A study by Ismail and Ismail (2020) found that mystical practices are still found by some visitors silently. This could damage the image of Islamic tourism. Concepts in Islamic tourism must be free of items that are prohibited by Islamic Sharia, *khurafat*



such as *shirk*-inducing acts. Melaka Big Island, as a site of spiritual pilgrimage and religious tourism, requires special attention to ensure cleanliness, comfort, and the absence of practises that contravene Islamic Sharia. It is also to draw the public's attention to the island of Basar Melaka in order to learn more about its history and to enjoy the beauty of nature as God Almighty's creation.

There are various proposals that need to be realised to make the big island a really viable destination for visitor-friendly Muslim tourism.

1. Transportation to Big Island needs to be enhanced in terms of service and visitor convenience and comfort.
2. The authenticity of the Big Island's cleanliness and sustainability, as well as its natural beauty, must be preserved.
3. Historical sites, such as Sultan Ariffin's tomb and the tombs of other preachers, must be protected against superstition and immoral components.
4. Improvement of public facilities and public knowledge of visitor facilities on the Big Island, as well as the development of a safe and comfortable resting area for guests.

The local government should maintain promotions and awareness campaigns to encourage visitors from the surrounding communities and visitors to the Big Island to respect the strengthened arrangements as well as to maintain the condition of the Great Island and historical sites such as Sheikh Ismail's tomb and other historical sites. Cooperation between the government and the community to preserve the Big Island as a historical treasure has the potential to turn it became one of the most welcoming religious tourism destinations in the world.

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