



UmrahHolidays International forms key partnerships to extend its B2B reach across China

- *Part of the WebBeds family, UmrahHolidays International (UHI) is the first global B2B company to provide “Umrah Experiences”*
- *Haoqiao, the major Chinese travel wholesaler, becomes official retail distributor for UHI*
- *Mafengwo, known as “China’s TripAdvisor”, will become UHI’s exclusive OTA partner*

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WebBeds, the world’s second largest B2B accommodation provider, has announced the signing of two landmark partnership agreements that are expected to significantly boost the fast-growing halal travel and Umrah pilgrimage sector in China.

UmrahHolidays International (UHI) is a recent addition to the WebBeds global family, providing B2B solutions to travel agencies worldwide, including hotels, visas, meet and greet services, transfers and sightseeing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With its expert local knowledge, user-friendly technology and commitment to customer satisfaction, the company is uniquely positioned to handle all Umrah bookings, including individuals and groups.

Leveraging this expertise, UHI has now secured partnerships with two key Chinese travel companies: Haoqiao, one of the largest wholesale players in China with an extensive nationwide network of more than 17,000 retail travel agents, and Mafengwo, a highly influential online travel agency (OTA) which has been nicknamed the “TripAdvisor of China”, with over 130 million registered users who generate three terabytes of data daily.

Under the new partnerships, Haoqiao will become the official retail distributor of UHI in China, while Mafengwo will be the company’s exclusive OTA partner. Together, this combination of widespread online and retail distribution will enable UHI to extend its reach across China, where international tourism is becoming increasingly popular among the country’s estimated 20 million Muslims¹.

“China is a hugely exciting market for UHI, WebBeds, and the global halal travel sector. By forming partnerships with two of the country’s leading online and retail travel companies, UHI can now cater to customers in every corner of China, however they choose to book. We look forward to working with Haoqiao and Mafengwo, and enabling thousands of Muslims in China to make their important Umrah pilgrimage,” commented Daryl Lee, CEO Asia Pacific, WebBeds.

“We understand that for many Muslims, the Umrah pilgrimage is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But all too often the planning and booking process can be complex and daunting. UHI’s deep local knowledge, global network and multilingual team will take away the stress. Chinese customers can rest assured that they will enjoy a full range of professional services from four of the most trusted names in the industry: WebBeds, UmrahHolidays International, Haoqiao and Mafengwo,” said Aly Siky, CEO, UHI.

“China has a large and vibrant Muslim population, and an increasing number are now looking for opportunities to make their pilgrimages to the holy lands of Saudi Arabia. This is a growing sector of the market, so we are delighted to become the exclusive OTA partner of UHI in China. We expect to see a sharp rise in online bookings for Umrah travel following this collaboration,” said Yu HongShang, Senior Director, Mafengwo.

“An Umrah pilgrimage is a major milestone in the lives of many Chinese Muslims, so it is vital that they are offered the face-to-face contact and personalised service that a traditional travel agency can provide. At

Haoqiao, we work with the largest network of retail agents in China. Our new partnership with UHI will enable our clients and their customers to receive the best possible support from experts in the Umrah travel sector,” added Yu ZhangTao, CEO, Haoqiao.

The Umrah is an important Islamic pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. Unlike the Hajj, which has to be performed on specific dates, the Umrah can be undertaken at any time of the year. Through UHI, the first global B2B company to provide Umrah experiences to partner travel agencies worldwide, Muslims travellers can book standalone accommodation at a choice of more than 600 hotels in Makkah, Medina, Jeddah and other nearby cities, or full Umrah packages.

According to the Mastercard-Crescentrating Global Muslim Travel Index 2018², the global halal travel market is forecast to surge from 131 million international travellers in 2017 to 158 million in 2020, by which time the sector is expected to be worth US\$220 billion. China is already one of the world’s largest outbound markets for halal tourism, but with such a large Muslim population and rising affluence, it is expected to grow in future.

For more information about UHI, please visit www.umraholidays.com.

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¹ <https://www.topchinatravel.com/china-muslim/muslims-in-china.htm>

² <https://www.halalmedia.jp/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GMITI-Report-2018.pdf>

About WebBeds:

Formed in 2013, WebBeds is the world’s second largest and fastest growing B2B accommodation supplier to the travel industry, operating its business through a portfolio of brands comprising JacTravel, Sunhotels, Totalstay, Lots of Hotels, Destinations of the World, (DOTW) and FIT Ruums. WebBeds provides a global distribution network of travel trade partners with the choice of 250,000 hotels, comprising over 28,500+ direct contracts, 60+ third party providers and 25 major hotel chains in over 10,000 destinations worldwide.

Customers can access this huge choice of inventory, (ranging from affordable guest-houses to luxury hotels and including international chain hotels, city-centre and resort properties) via market-leading, trade-only websites or simple and seamless platform to platform API connectivity. Clients can also book transfer services in 950 destinations along with thousands of guided excursions and tickets for attractions. WebBeds also provides tailor-made travel arrangements for groups of all sizes covering corporate and leisure, special interest, education and MICE via its dedicated and award-winning DMC division.

The company has a staff of over 1,800 travel professionals and 50 offices worldwide.

WebBeds is a subsidiary of Webjet Limited (ASX: WEB) – an ASX 200 listed company operating a digital travel business with over AUD\$3.5 billion in total annual turnover, as at December 2018.