

## E. Java to promote Gus Dur's grave as tourist attraction

Indra Harsaputra, The Jakarta Post, Surabaya, East Java | Travel | Wed, October 17 2012, 5:20 PM



Gus Dur's grave: (Antara/Arief Priyono)

As a province known for its beautiful and natural environment that includes Mt. Bromo, travelers enjoy majestic sunrises and sunsets as well as serene sand dunes. East Java has so much nature to offer visitors.

However, some people prefer to travel to the province for spiritual reasons.

Tapping into Indonesians' penchant for spiritual enlightenment, the East Java administration said on Wednesday that it planned to promote the grave of Indonesia's former president and prominent cleric of the largest Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, in Jombang, as a magnet for both domestic and foreign travelers.

East Java Tourism Agency chief Jariyanto reasoned that Gus Dur's grave had been burgeoning as a tourism spot. Gus Dur passed away at the age of 68 in 2009.

"Between January and May 2012, the number of people visiting Gus Dur's grave reached 2.75 million. It means that around 550,000 people visit the grave each month, or 18,333 people per day," he said.

Jariyanto added that tourists visiting the grave were not limited to domestic tourists, but also travelers from overseas, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, the Middle East, Europe and the US.

Gus Dur's grave is not the only religious site located in the province, as it is also home to many other pilgrimage spots, including the sacred cemeteries of the Wali Songo, nine holy preachers who spread Islam throughout the island of Java during the 14th century.

"We have so many pilgrimage sites. Just imagine, out of the nine graves of Wali Songo, five of them are located in East Java," said Jariyanto.

Gus Dur's grave, however, still sees more visitors than the five graves of Wali Songo.

According to Jariyanto, the grave of Sunan Bonang in Tuban is visited by 2.23 million people a year, while Gus Dur's grave managed to achieve that feat in five months.

Some 1.44 million people, meanwhile, visited the grave of Maulana Malik Ibrahim in Gresik each year, followed by Sunan Ampel's grave in Surabaya with 1.27 million pilgrims, he added.  
(han/iwa)

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/10/17/e-java-promote-gus-dur-s-grave-tourist-attraction.html>