

Travnews

NATAS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
TRAVEL AGENTS SINGAPORE

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+ CONNECTING MEMBERS AT THE 2ND NATAS GMM

+ EXPLORE THE HIDDEN SECRETS OF BEAUTIFUL POLAND

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2018-2020

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APPROVED MEMBERSHIPS

Company	Classification	Approval Date
Dreamcation Cruises and Tours Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	November 2018
Campers' Corner Outdoor Outfitters Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	December 2018
New Heart Holiday Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	December 2018
Royal Wings Travel Singapore Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	December 2018
Sin U Lian Travel Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	December 2018
Vsquared Telecom Pte Ltd	Associate Member	December 2018
DWF Compliance (Singapore) Pte Ltd	Associate Member	January 2019
FotoHub.com Pte Ltd	Associate Member	January 2019
Frozen Lime Asia Pte Ltd	Associate Member	January 2019
SG Luxe Collection Pte Ltd	Associate Member	January 2019
Wholesale Partners Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	January 2019
Radiant Holidays Pte. Ltd.	Ordinary Member	February 2019
P2P Travel Exchange Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	March 2019
Shinetown Telecom (S) Pte Ltd	Associate Member	March 2019

The total number of NATAS members as at 15 March 2019
Ordinary Members: 319 • Associate Members: 66 • Honorary Life Members: 5

SAY HELLO TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!
NATAS welcomes the following companies as new members.

Campers' Corner Outdoor Outfitters Pte Ltd

Campers' Corner Outdoor Outfitters has been providing travellers with quality outdoor gear for travel and adventure since 1989. Its three retail outlets stock well-known international brands including Arc'teryx, Marmot, Lowa,

and Kuhl, for which the company holds sole distribution in the Singapore market. Besides outfitting travellers, Campers' Corner Outdoor Outfitters also organises outbound travel adventures. Over the years, the company has worked with Tourism Tasmania and offered packaged adventure trips to Nepal, Fiji and Japan.

Dreamcation Cruises and Tours Pte Ltd

Dreamcation Cruise and Tours Pte Ltd was incorporated in March 2018 with the aim of serving the Muslim community in the region. A fully integrated online-based travel agency, it is a one-stop travel portal, offering a wide range of travel services from outbound (escorted, free & easy, private tours), M.I.C.E, worldwide cruises, customised tours and special projects. Besides its online travel centre (www.dreamcation.com.sg), the company uses various distribution channels for its services including social media (Facebook, Instagram, WeChat), digital marketing (SEO/SEM), regional distribution network (Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei) and strategic collaborations.

DWF Compliance (Singapore) Pte Ltd

Headquartered in the UK, DWF is a full-service law firm with subsidiaries in Singapore and 25 key locations. Recognised as the top 20 legal firms, its Singapore arm DWF Compliance (Singapore) provides various advisory including Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) compliance services for travel agents. Besides customisation of PDPA Policy and Procedures and PDPA advisory, the firm also provides Outsourced Data Protection Officer (DPO), PDPA training, privacy notices, corporate binding rules and data transfer agreements.

FotoHub.com Pte Ltd

Established in 1987, FotoHub is a one-stop professional imaging solutions provider offering services ranging from on-site to online digital imaging. Besides mobile printing and passport/ID photo taking, the company also offers personalisation of imaging products and services such as HD Photobooks, HD Metal Print, FotoCanvas, FotoMug, FotoCalendar in addition to archiving, traditional developing, photocopying and document printing. Over the years, FotoHub has received numerous awards and accreditations from various organisations such as Enterprise 50 award, Singapore Prestige Brand Awards and the Singapore Excellence Medallion Award.

Frozen Lime Asia Pte Ltd

Frozen Lime represents a diverse and growing portfolio of speciality hotel brands across the Asia Pacific catering to the corporate travellers, leisure explorers, group retreats, residential meetings and memorable events.

New Heart Holiday Pte Ltd

New Heart Holiday is an inbound tour agency specialising in serving Chinese tourists from China. Besides having strong partnerships

with tour agencies in China, the company manages tour itineraries and lodgings for travellers visiting Singapore.

P2P Travel Exchange Pte Ltd

Established in 2001, P2P Travel Exchange Pte Ltd is a homegrown fully licensed travel agent under the Singapore Tourism Board. With a dedicated and customer service-driven team, the company prides itself on meeting and exceeding its customers' requirements and has earned a strong reputation as a reliable travel management company. And with a commitment to delivering the best in total travel solutions, P2P Travel Exchange provides travellers with a safe, happy and worry-free journey from departure to arrival.

Radiant Holidays Pte. Ltd.

A unique brand of CTC Travel, Radiant Holidays was established on 25 January 2018 as a result of continuous business transformation and innovation. Specialising in the development of high-end travel, the company offers personalised services in both Outbound and Inbound tours and an array of spectacular travel packages in the Singapore market. With a commitment to quality travel, Radiant Holidays strives to provide a truly experiential and memorable vacation to every traveller.

Royal Wings Travel Singapore Pte Ltd

Founded in September 2013, Royal Wings has since established itself as the go-to brand for ideal travel experiences. With a focus on corporate travel packages, the company ensures quality by forming long-term relationships with various tour guides, bus drivers and hotels, in addition to constantly reviewing feedback from customers. Much of the company's success comes from its ability in reacting to and solving problems on the fly. Today, Royal Wings offers travel experiences to Southeast Asia and Japan.

SG Luxe Collection Pte Ltd

SG Luxe Collection is a dynamic boutique sales, marketing and public relations representation and consultancy company specialising in the luxury hospitality, tourism and lifestyle markets for MICE and Leisure for independent hotels. With the understanding that every client has its own unique requirements, the company provides a bespoke comprehensive solution to sales, marketing and public relations needs. To increase awareness, market share, revenue and profitability for its hotels and resorts, SG Luxe Collection adopts a systematic, strategic and innovative approach. With

strong partnerships, expertise and networks with hotels, resorts, tourism and embassies, SG Luxe Collection has anchored Southeast Asian buyers' resources since 2014 to bring destination and hotel awareness to the B2B and B2C spaces.

Shinetown Telecom (S) Pte Ltd

Shinetown Telecom is a telecommunications company providing international voice and data roaming services. Through its new SIM card AIRSIM, the telco offers travellers data and roaming services in more than 100 countries outside of Singapore. Besides unlimited data packages, Shinetown Telecom also provides voice call options through its AIRTALK ROAM service for travellers to always stay connected.

Sin U Lian Travel Pte Ltd

Sin U Lian Travel is an incorporated company specialising in chartered bus services and travel. The managing team has more than 20 years of experience and operates a fleet of 100 air-conditioned buses island-wide 24/7. A new entrant to the travel & tour industry, the company focuses on providing customised private tours both inbound and outbound. With a commitment to providing a personal touch beyond just making reservations for clients, Sin U Lian Travel delivers quality at competitive prices.

Vsquared Telecom Pte Ltd

Vsquared Telecom provides international voice and data roaming services across Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and China. Through its data roaming sim cards, the company offers travellers massive savings of up to 90%, compared to regular telco operator charges. By partnering with multiple mobile operators across Asia, Europe and America, Vsquared Telecom ensures customers enjoy the best coverage wherever they are.

Wholesale Partners Pte Ltd

Wholesale Partners Pte Ltd, the wholesale arm of Chan Brothers Travel, is a homegrown enterprise that boasts the strongest foothold and most established travel operations in Singapore. Built on a business model that comprises multiple dimensions and distribution channels, the company seeks to achieve wholesale growth and vitality both locally and overseas through sub-agents support, offering destinations from mainstream to the exotic, from FIT to groups. Besides FIT & GV2 worldwide, Wholesale Partners Pte Ltd also provides outbound series group tours, air-tickets and seat-in coach as well as self-drive tours.



NATAS
Travel 2019

2

SG Leader
Tourism Forum

10



Poland – A Land of
Striking Beauty

15



NATAS EVENTS

- 2 NATAS Travel 2019
- 5 Giving Back through Mercy Relief
- 9 Site Visit to Village Hotel and The Outpost Hotel
Ushering in the Year of the Pig with a CNY Appreciation Luncheon
- 10 Forging Connections at the SG Leader Tourism Forum
Enjoying a Taste of Greece at the Greek Wine & Gastronomy Festival: Epirus 2019
- 11 2nd NATAS General Membership Meeting
- 12 Helping Travel Companies Adapt to PDPA 2019

NATAS PRIVILEGE CARD

- 7 Enjoy Exclusive Rewards as a NATAS Member!

FEATURED DESTINATION

- 15 Poland – A Land of Striking Beauty

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NATAS Travel 2019



Response was overwhelming as more than 90,000 visitors dropped by to see the exciting deals on offer. And with participation from 697 booths and 94 exhibitors, they were not disappointed. Also gracing the event was Mr Keith Tan, Chief Executive of Singapore Tourism Board (STB).

Exciting performances, amazing prizes and travel deals galore – these were what greeted visitors at NATAS Travel 2019!

Held from 22–24 February 2019, the three-day show was a momentous occasion that marked the 54th edition of this highly anticipated event and NATAS' 40th anniversary. In line with the theme, "Look no Further, NATAS is here!", this year's fair proved to be bigger and better than ever before.





The feeling of wanderlust was in the air as attendees snapped up packages to Europe, the US and other exotic locations. Unsurprisingly, Japan topped the list of popular destinations, followed by China, Malaysia, Croatia and South Korea.

“The demand for travel remains resolutely high; and travel agents, amidst fighting trenches, have continued to stand steadfastly strong in this industry,” commented Mr Steven Ler, President of NATAS. “According to a survey by IATA in 2018, 43 percent of passengers prefer to use a travel related agency to book their flights, this is indeed testament to the fact that travel agents are maintaining their foothold in today’s context but it remains paramount that individual agencies continue to enhance their value proposition for sustainability and growth.”

Besides the exclusive promotions and freebies, holidaymakers were also delighted by the many stage programmes happening throughout the fair. Some of the highlights include a showcase of inner Mongolia with celebrity Jeffery Ong, an upbeat performance of Uzbekistan’s national dance “Andijan polka”, a cute introduction to JR West’s special Hello Kitty-themed trains and an exciting sneak preview of the world’s first Ant-Man and The Wasp: Nano Battle-themed attraction slated to open at Hong Kong Disneyland.





But what thrilled visitors the most was the NATAS Grand Draw. Attendees walked away with an array of prizes ranging from car rental vouchers, complimentary dining coupons and FlowRider experiences to airline tickets and hotel and villa stays. The lucky Grand Prize winner received a pair of return business class tickets on Singapore Airlines to Seattle!



“The NATAS Travel Fairs hold a long and illustrious history since its inception. What started as a simple roadshow has grown into Singapore’s largest and most celebrated bi-annual consumer travel fair; joined by almost 200,000 visitors annually,” said Mr Steven Ler. “On this note, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all of you who have made this possible.”

Once again, thank you for being a part of NATAS Travel 2019! And for those of you who have yet to book your trips, see you at the next NATAS travel fair, NATAS Holidays, held in August this year!



Giving Back through Mercy Relief



NATAS has come a long way since its inception in 1978 and it has been an exciting 40 years for the association and its members. In conjunction with the association’s 40th Anniversary, NATAS Travel 2019 has signed an MOU to adopt Mercy Relief, Singapore’s homegrown humanitarian non-governmental organization, as part of its CSR project. Thank you to all who have donated generously to this cause!



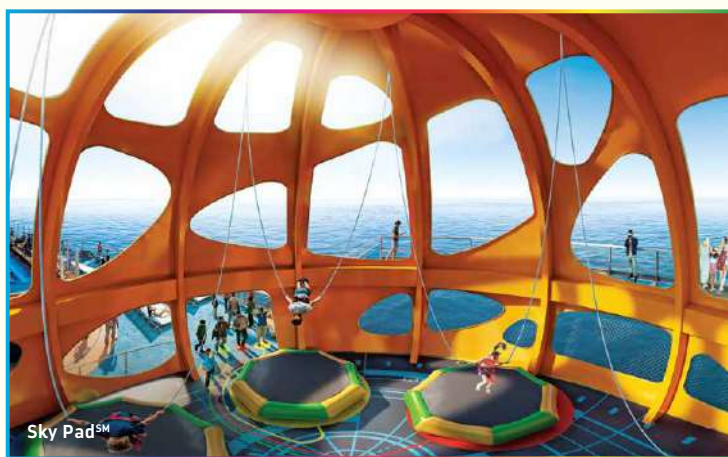
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Don't miss her inaugural season in Singapore this May!



3/4[^]-NIGHT MALAYSIA GETAWAY

Singapore Departures 2019 May 18, 21[^]
Ports-of-call Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Penang[^]

9-NIGHT EXOTIC ASIA CRUISE

Singapore Departure 2019 May 25
Ports-of-call Ho Chi Minh City (Phu My), Nha Trang,
Hong Kong (Overnight), Shanghai (Baoshan)

For more information, call 6305 0033 or
visit RoyalCaribbean.com.sg



*All of the above information is correct at time of print, subject to availability and change without prior notice. Images of Spectrum of the SeasSM reflect current design and may include artistic renderings and/or images of existing Quantum Class. All ship features, experiences, and itineraries are subject to change without notice.

Enjoy exclusive rewards as a NATAS member!



Love rewards? Then you'll love our exclusive member privileges! As a NATAS Membership Privilege Card holder, all NATAS member companies and their employees are entitled to special privileges offered by participating merchants. The number of cards issued to each company depends on the number of membership categories subscribed to. All cards are valid until 31 December 2019 and will subsequently be renewed with your NATAS membership.

Do note that the privileges are for personal consumption and can only be transferred to your employees. They do not apply to tour groups.

Don't see your favourite merchant listed as a participant? We'll be adding more merchants over time so check back on the NATAS website for an updated list!

Please note that the offers below are subject to terms and conditions. For an updated list of merchants, as well as the detailed terms and conditions of each offer, please refer to our website: <http://www.natas.travel/Home/MenuItem.aspx?Mitem=6>

BEAUTY & WELLNESS



Anthony Hair Boutique

- 20% off on Birthday Month for all hair services only
- 10% off for all hair services only

Caring Skin

First trial of Singapore 1st Rainfall Facial-Nano Perfector at \$88 nett inclusive of GST. (UP: \$280)

HealSpa

- 30% off all ala-carte services for first time customers
- 10% off all ala-carte services for returning customers

Liang Yi

Free TCM consultation by Physician

Lifespa

Choice of Matis Customised Facial Treatment or Jamu Body Massage at \$30 nett

N2O Nail Spa

20% discount off all services

Natureland

Member rate for all services

The Body Firm

Special Rates and free perks, including facial, Instant Fat Burning, Manicure & Pedicure, etc.

The Nail Social

Complimentary Quickie Manicure with purchase of a Signature Pedicure

Three Hair Salon

10% off ala carte hair services

FOOD & BEVERAGES



& why...

- 10% off total bill
- Enjoy a free desert of your choice on your birthday with min spending of \$50

Azur (Crowne Plaza Changi Airport)

25% off regular buffet (excluding beverages)

Bar 75 (Crowne Plaza Changi Airport)

25% off ala-carte (excluding beverages)

Big Street & Kampong Café @ BM

- 10% discount on published prices
- 20% discount on published prices on member's birthday

Cali

- 30% discount off total bill
- Spend \$100 in a single receipt to enjoy a complimentary bottle of red/white wine

I am...

10% off total bill

Killiney Café

5% discount

KPO Café Bar & Nassim Hill Bakery Bistro Bar

15% off regular priced items only

Lobby Lounge (Crowne Plaza Changi Airport)

25% off ala-carte menu (excluding beverages)

Paulaner Brauhaus Singapore

15% off total F&B bill (dine-in only, on level 1 & 2)

Sky22 (Courtyard by Marriott Singapore Novena)

20% off total bill

Summerlong

15% discount off total bill

The Horse's Mouth

15% off total bill

The Malayan Council

One (1) slice of cake free with a minimum spend of \$20 nett

True Blue Cuisine & True Blue Space

10% discount on Main Course dishes (excludes promotional items, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages)

Uma Uma Ramen

10% off total bill

Urbana Rooftop Bar (Courtyard by Marriott Singapore Novena)

20% off total bill

HOTELS & ATTRACTIONS



AdvenTOUR

- Kayaking to Kelong (1 pax free for every 6 pax booking)
- Yacht Charter (1 additional hour free for every 3 hours)

Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa

Special Rates for Deluxe Room, Courtyard Suite and Couple Suite

Banyan Tree Bintan / Angsana Bintan / Cassia Bintan

- 15% off Best Available Rate
- 20% off Spa & Gallery at the resort

Courtyard by Marriott Singapore Novena

20% off Best Available Rate

Gardens by the Bay (Flower dome and Cloud Forest Only)

15% off Published Singapore Resident Admission Rates to One or Two Conservatories

Let em Play

Free all-in play climbing session for every sign-up of Robotics Class

Majestic Fast Ferry

Special price of SGD38 per ticket for 2-way trip between Singapore and Batam

Montigo Resorts (Nongsa, Batam)

50% off BAR from S\$223++ per Hillside Villa per night for 2 persons

National Gallery Singapore

- 25% discount off for NATAS Ordinary Members
- 10% discount off for NATAS Associate Members

Sentosa Merlion

20% off Sentosa Merlion

Singapore Cable Car

20% off Cable Car Sky Pass (Round Trip)

Valencia Yacht

10% off Charter Pricing for Weekdays

Wild Wild Wet

20% off Wild Wild Wet Day Pass

Wings of Time

20% off Wings of Time (Standard Seat)

ZOVB Singapore

Land ZOVB + Laser Clay Shooting Combo (4 pax for the price of 3)

RETAIL, SPORTS & LEISURE



Angelflorist

10% discount for all purchases via www.angelflorist.com with minimum purchase of \$85.60

Collaboration Tea

- \$5 off promo code with no minimum subtotal for 1st time purchase
- 10% off subsequent purchase with minimum order of \$50

Equip Fitness

Special rates for class packages and gym

GNC

15% off regular-priced health supplements

Haf Box

10% off store-wide via www.hafbox.com

Independent Market

10% off store-wide

Lemongrass House

10% discount

Nodspark

15% off Nodspark Nail Polish Wraps

Outdoor Life

- 10% off storewide
- Free 1-year Outdoor Life membership for purchases above \$500

Teaforte

20% discount

The Imprint Singapore

15% off total order



Site Visit to **Village Hotel and The Outpost Hotel**

31 JANUARY 2019



the adjacent Events Centre, which offers over 800m² of flexible meeting spaces for corporate retreats, meetings and social events. The Outpost Hotel and Village Hotel will be opening their doors from 1 April 2019.



It was a fun and relaxing afternoon for NATAS inbound members as they embarked on a site visit to the new Village Hotel and The Outpost Hotel in Sentosa. Housing a total of 606 and 193 guestrooms respectively and surrounded by retail and dining options, the two hotels are great for those looking for a luxurious staycation. Companies seeking an island getaway will be delighted with



Ushering in the Year of the Pig with a **CNY APPRECIATION LUNCHEON**

19 FEBRUARY 2019

To show their appreciation to committee members serving in the various NATAS Sub-Committees, the NATAS EXCO organised a special Chinese New Year Appreciation Lunch on 19 February 2019. Held at Ban Heng @ HarbourFront, the luncheon saw more than 30 committee members coming together to usher in the Year of the Pig.



Forging Connections at the SG Leader Tourism Forum

6 MARCH 2019



NATAS president Steven Ler shared his views on the matter, saying: "Associations should play the role to create that catalyst, to bring things together, identify common motivations and get that going."



With rising business costs and manpower issues, the need for collaboration within the travel industry is greater than ever. That was the theme at the inaugural SG Tourism Leaders Forum organised by the PATA Singapore Chapter. Bringing together association heads and members from the hospitality and tourism industry, the event served as a platform for industry members to share, learn and work collaboratively to achieve the 'Power of One'.



Enjoying a Taste of Greece at the Greek Wine & Gastronomy Festival: **EPIRUS 2019**

28 MARCH 2019



Held at The Regent Singapore, the festival showcased over 20 Greek producers and wineries from the Epirus region (North Greece). Besides wine tastings and food samplings, guests were treated to an authentic Mediterranean lunch prepared by Greek chefs.



It was a day of fine wines and delicious Greek cuisine at the inaugural Greek Wine & Gastronomy Festival. Organised by the Embassy of Greece in Singapore, the event aimed to promote local Greek delicacies and wine through a series of epicurean adventures.



Also present at the event were the Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic in Singapore Madam Costantina Koliou and the Governor of the Prefecture of Epirus Mr Alexandros Kachrimanis.

2ND NATAS GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

7 MARCH 2019



With the aim of providing our members with the latest updates within the trade, NATAS held our second General Membership Meeting on 7 March 2019. The second instalment of this successful event, the meeting saw participants from different membership categories coming together to learn, network and showcase their business capabilities.

Held at The Working Capitol at Keong Saik, the event welcomed speakers from the Singapore Tourism Board, WorkForce Singapore, Jewel Paymentech and LOT Polish Airlines. Members were introduced



to the Business Transformation Through-Train Programme (BT TTP) and MyCareersFuture job portal as well as learning about fraud risks and how to mitigate payments fraud. Also in the lineup was a product update by LOT Polish Airlines on its latest flight networks.



In all, it was an insightful and fruitful afternoon for our members.



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Administered by the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF), P-Max will help you :

- Recruit, train, manage and retain your newly-hired PMETs,
- Encourage the adoption of progressive HR practices within your organisation,
- Place job-seeking PMETs into suitable job roles in your organisation.

To sign up, you may write to Mr Shaun Hou (SNEF) at shaun_hou@snef.org.sg or NATAS at ia@natas.travel

Helping Travel Companies Adapt to PDPA 2019

By Glen Chee, DWF Compliance
LL. B (Hons), Dip (AML)



Every Singapore entity, including companies, partnerships, associations and clubs, collecting and processing personal data must comply with the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA). In line with the act, each organisation must ensure the appointment of a DATA Protection Officer and update their PDPA policies and procedures. The sunset period of implementing the PDPA framework has expired and several organisations have been reprimanded with increasing monetary fines. Travel companies are directly affected by the incoming PDPA changes for 2019 due to the huge amounts of personal data collected daily.

Handling of NRIC Collection

The Personal Data Protection Commission (Commission) has issued guidelines providing comprehensive advice on the collection, use and disclosure of National Registration Identification Card (NRIC) numbers and imposed stricter controls over their usage. Other national identification numbers (e.g. birth certificate numbers, foreign identification numbers and work permit numbers) and passport

numbers will also be accorded the same treatment as NRIC numbers under the Guidelines. An organisation is generally prohibited from collecting, using or disclosing an individual's NRIC number or a copy of the NRIC unless required by law.

The Commission will enforce the Guidelines from 1 September 2019. Organisations will have to take immediate steps to review their practices and make the necessary changes to ensure that any existing or proposed collection or use of the NRIC is either permitted under the law or is otherwise justified.

Mandatory data breach notification

Another key proposal is the adoption of a data breach notification framework in Singapore. The organisation must apply the risk of impact or harm test to the affected individuals when making a decision with regards to notifying the affected individuals and notifying the Commission.

Relaxation of the Consent Principle: Consent not required where the individual has been notified of purpose

The general requirement for deemed/express consent to collect, use and

disclose personal data will be relaxed if notifying the individuals of the purpose of data handling can be an appropriate basis for an organisation to collect, use and disclose personal data – i.e. consent is not required if the collection, use or disclosure of personal data is not expected to have any adverse impact on the individuals.

Data Protection Trust Mark

In line with the updated PDPA act, the Commission has announced that the PDPA will launch a Data Protection Trust Mark Certification scheme in 2019. The "DP Trustmark" will be a visible indicator that a business adopts sound practices and keeps its processes updated regularly.

How we can help

DWF helps clients to review, update their practices, policies and processes to include the proposed PDPA changes. We offer a full suite of PDPA compliance services, including training and assessments, to help organisations comply with PDPA requirements.

For more information, please contact DWF at Glen.chee@dwfcompliance.com or visit their website at www.dwfcompliance.com



Authorized
Training Center

Programmes :

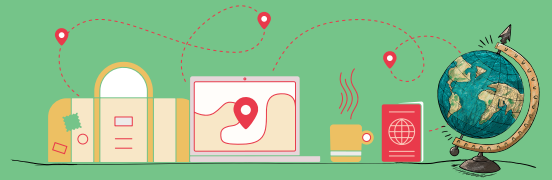
IATA Foundation in Travel and Tourism Diploma (July Intake)

Learners learn how to provide the most suitable routing, transportation, air fare and tour products that meet the client's travel needs. Grasp world geography and best practices in delivery exceptional customer services.



IATA Managing the Travel Business Diploma (July Intake)

This course will improve skills to supervise and manage a team, initiate change and make business decisions based on sound negotiating strategies and to gain a competitive business strategy by developing new products and marketing it effectively. Students also gain insight on agency accounting procedures to build business plans that ensure good financial health.



I have worked in the travel industry for more than 20 years now. Back then, I started out as a travel executive in the 1990s, and 12 years later, I decided to start my own business. The SkillsFuture Study Award was definitely a great gift for me; it helped me reach further for a diploma course that taught me many skills I couldn't have learned myself. Now, I plan to hire more people and apply these learnings to grow my company.



Madam Radheka was awarded the SkillsFuture Study Award (Travel Agent Sector) and successfully completed the IATA Managing the Travel Business Diploma with TMiS in March 2018.

www.tmis.edu.sg

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www.facebook.com

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(Mandarin : Mar/May/July Intake)

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I noticed the professionalism of teachers; they are focused in many aspects such as class training and tour conducts. Their sharing in workplace experiences have also given me tremendous insight about tourism. I'm glad I'm able to complete the course in TMIS.

Wong Shi Wei, Tourist Guide Programme (Mandarin)



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POLAND

A Land of Striking Beauty

Located in Central Europe, and surrounded by Germany, Czech Republic and Ukraine, Poland links the forested lands of northwestern Europe with the sea lanes of the Atlantic Ocean.

Boasting 14 UNESCO World Heritage sites, this fascinating country promises to enchant every type of traveller with her evolving culture, breathtaking natural landscapes, stunning architecture, beautiful beaches, magnificent skyscrapers and extraordinary historical sites. With picturesque and vibrant cities like Gdansk, Krakow and Warsaw, which many claim to be the pulsating heart of Poland, it's no wonder that many are adding this country to their travel list.

A TRAGIC PAST

A nation known for its storied history, Poland was the first country invaded by the Nazis in the Second World War and housed one of the largest Nazi concentration camps. Today, Auschwitz, also known as Auschwitz-Birkenau, stands as a symbol of the Holocaust and a grim reminder of the atrocities suffered by many. Comprising of three camps – Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II and Auschwitz III – Auschwitz provides travellers with a glimpse of the terrible conditions prisoners of war were subject to.



Explore the camp barracks where thousands of prisoners were housed and experience the abysmal living conditions of those who were confined within. Walk under the infamous sign “Arbeit

Mach Frei” (Work will set you free) and imagine the despair of the countless men, women and children who lost their lives in these death camps. Learn about the history of Auschwitz and see pictures of the prisoners and their meagre belongings at the camp museums. Those with a stronger heart can visit the gas chambers where thousands were led to their death under the pretense of taking a shower.

With so much to discover, it's little wonder history buffs list Auschwitz as the highlight of their itinerary in Poland.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Beyond its tragic past, Poland is also a land known for its amazing natural beauty. A must visit for every nature lover is the Tatra Mountains located in the town of Zakopane. Considered as one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in Europe, the Tatras lies along Poland's border with Slovakia and forms the highest range of the Carpathians. With its magnificent views, dramatic vistas, crystal lakes and waterfalls, the Tatras offers all sorts of activities during both winter and summer. Hikers can look forward to beautiful hiking trails

that weave through the wondrous landscape. During winter, ski enthusiasts will delight in the various ski slopes the Polish alpine has to offer. Day trips are also popular among tourists; and for those who wish to spend more than a day in Zakopane, there are many hotels and ski resorts scattered around the lovely town.



Another must see in Poland is the Białowieża Forest. A UNESCO World Heritage site bordered between Poland and Belarus, this ancient woodland is home to the endangered European bison. Although this great mammal is fiercely protected by the Białowieża National Park, there are guided tours into the protected areas, either by bike, horse-drawn carriages or on foot, where visitors can view the majestic beasts in their natural habitat.



ARCHITECTURAL WONDER

The tumultuous history of Poland is displayed in its incredible architecture. And the transition of the country through the ages is evident from the harmonious blend of tradition with modernism that can be widely seen throughout its cities; from its shimmering skyscrapers to the cobbled streets in the Old Town, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Marvel at the Gothic architecture of St. Mary's Basilica, the world's largest brick church where masterpieces of Baroque, Gothic and Renaissance paintings adorn the walls. For a unique view of the city, climb the 400 steps of the bell tower. Don't forget to soak in the opulence of the Golden House with its

richly decorated façade. Surmounted by statues of Cleopatra, Oedipus, Achilles and Antigone, this is a popular photo-taking spot among tourists.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD!

Besides taking in the many sights, visitors to Poland should not miss out on the local cuisine. A popular traditional dish is the pierogi, which is essentially a dumpling filled with meat, potato, cheese, onions and mushrooms, and is typically served with sour cream. There are also sweet variations of the pierogi that are stuffed with fruit and cream.



Bigos, otherwise known as hunter's stew, is another local favourite. This hearty dish features various meats, cabbage and mushrooms and when served in a bread bowl, will satisfy even the biggest of appetites. Like their German counterparts, the Polish are also huge fans of the pork knuckle or golonka, as it is called in Poland. In fact, they love it so much, it's their national dish! This pork delicacy is generally boiled, braised or roasted and served with horseradish.

Those with a sweet tooth should definitely try sernik, Poland's version of a traditional cheesecake. A perfect blend of sweet and sour, the cheese is made from curdling soured milk that is mixed with mashed potatoes. Another famous Polish dessert is the paczki, which are like doughnuts but flatter and typically filled with jam or custard.

Despite being almost destroyed during the Second World War, Poland is now known for its colourful town squares, medieval castles, impressive architecture, dynamic history and contemporary art scene. A nation where every city is as beautiful as the next, it's a destination that promises to win the heart of every traveller. So start planning your trip and come discover the magic of Poland.

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