

# Travnews

**NATAS**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
TRAVEL AGENTS SINGAPORE

May-Jul 2016 • ISSUE 40

**NATAS**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
TRAVEL AGENTS SINGAPORE

## 37th Annual General Meeting

Thursday, 19 May 2016  
Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel



- + WELCOMING OUR NEW LEADERS  
AT THE 37TH AGM 2016
- + EXPLORING THE NATURAL  
WONDERS OF KAZAKHSTAN
- + HEALTH TIPS FOR THE ADVENTUROUS SOUL

**NATAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
2016/2018

**Mr Devinder Ohri**  
President

**Mr Steven Ler**  
Deputy President

**Mr Albert Hong**  
Secretary-General

**Mr Simon Er**  
Honorary Treasurer

**Mr Samson Tan**  
Chairman – Inbound

**Mr Clifford Neo**  
Chairman – Outbound

**Mr Albert Ho**  
Chairman – Air Transport

**Mr Micker Sia**  
Chairman – Surface Transport

**Mr Ang Eu Khoon**  
Chairman – Information Technology

**Ms Fiona Lim**  
Chairman – Manpower & Training

**Ms Ong Ling Lee**  
STB Representative

**Mr Yap Puay Beng**  
TMIS

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**Emperor International Travel Pte Ltd**  
147A Tyrwhitt Road Singapore 207561

**Meridian International Travel Pte Ltd**  
76 South Bridge Road #06-00 Singapore 058706

With effective from 1 May 2016, Tenet Sompoo Insurance Pte Ltd is known as **SOMPO Insurance Singapore Pte Ltd**

**SAY HELLO TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!**

**NATAS welcomes the following companies as new members.**

**Langman Holiday Pte Ltd**

Langman Holiday Pte Ltd is a Singapore based inbound travel agency, mainly focusing on tourists from mainland China. It is also specialised in serving mid to high-end customers from a fully customised travel itinerary to luxury travel experience.

**Meritus Hotels & Resorts**

Meritus Hotels & Resorts is a Singapore-based hotel management company, awarded with the Most Popular Heritage Brand at the Singapore Prestige Brand Award (SPBA), demonstrating its impact as a home-grown Singapore brand.

**Sino Elite Travel Services Pte Ltd**

Sino Elite Travel Services is renowned for developing private and fully personalized tour for travellers around the world, highly recognised by the Singapore Chinese customers and international tourism sector counterparts.

**Skyline Travel and Consulting Pte Ltd**

Skyline Travel & Consulting Pte Ltd is a full-fledged travel and tour agency that provides a broad range of travel services. It is honoured to receive the “Top 10 Travel Award for 2014 and 2015” from Resorts World Sentosa.

**APPROVED MEMBERSHIPS**

Company	Classification	Approval Date
Meritus Hotels & Resorts	Associate Member	March 2016
Sino Elite Travel Services Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	April 2016
Langman Holiday Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	April 2016
Skyline Travel & Consulting Pte Ltd	Ordinary Member	May 2016

The total number of NATAS members as at 20 May 2016  
Ordinary Members: 336  
Associate Members: 66  
Honorary Life Members: 5

**NATAS Vision** To be a world-class association leading and shaping the travel industry.

**Mission Statement** To strengthen and upgrade the professionalism and capabilities of the travel industry for sustainable growth and profitability.



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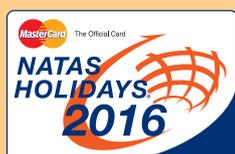
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# NATAS Holidays 2016

FREE Admission



**12 - 14 August 2016**  
**12pm - 9.30pm (12 August)**  
**10am - 9.30pm (13 & 14 August)**  
**Singapore Expo Hall 3**

www.natastravelfair.travel

# NATAS PRESIDENT RE-ELECTED FOR SECOND TERM



Welcoming news of his re-election, Mr Ohri was also encouraged by the competition raised. He viewed the contesting of four of the highest offices of the Association as a positive sign of progress and a step in the right direction for the committee.

The 37th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the National Association of Travel Agents Singapore (NATAS) concluded on 19 May 2016 by returning its current President Mr Devinder Ohri to a second term of office, along with six new faces in the NATAS Executive Committee.

A total of 173 Ordinary Members, 7 Associate Members and 1 Honorary Life Member gave their support to the event, held at Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel.



Executive Committee Members for the term 2014-2016



The newly elected Executive Committee Members for the term 2016-2018 are:

**PRESIDENT**

**Mr Devinder Ohri**  
Director  
G C NANDA & SONS PTE LTD

**DEPUTY PRESIDENT**

**Mr Steven Ler**  
Executive Director  
UOB TRAVEL PLANNERS PTE LTD

**SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**Mr Albert Hong**  
Head, Corporate Travel Services  
CHANGI TRAVEL SERVICES PTE LTD

**HONORARY TREASURER**

**Mr Simon Er**  
General Manager, Business Events  
SCENIC TRAVEL PTE LTD

**CHAIRMAN - INBOUND**

**Mr Samson Tan**  
Chief Executive Officer  
GTMC TRAVEL PTE LTD

**CHAIRMAN - OUTBOUND**

**Mr Clifford Neo**  
Managing Director / COO  
DYNASTY TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL  
PTE LTD

**CHAIRMAN - AIR TRANSPORT**

**Mr Albert Ho**  
Executive Director  
CITYSTATE TRAVEL PTE LTD

**CHAIRMAN - SURFACE TRANSPORT**

**Mr Micker Sia**  
Managing Director  
WTS TRAVEL & TOURS PTE LTD

**CHAIRMAN - MANPOWER & TRAINING**

**Ms Fiona Lim**  
Director, Business Development  
CONCEPTS GOLF MANAGEMENT  
PTE LTD

**CHAIRMAN - INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY**

**Mr Ang Eu Khoon**  
Director  
SAN'S TOURS & CAR RENTALS

**STB REPRESENTATIVE**

**Ms Ong Ling Lee**  
Director  
SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD



call the future faces of NATAS... The fact that we were able to win a clean sweep of all four positions being contested with an average margin of 66 per cent of the valid votes cast is clear indication and re-affirmation that the majority of our general membership is supportive of our performance and changes being made," he added.

"Healthy competition in free and fairly contested elections is good for any democratic association because it ensures renewal as we mature and move forward," Mr Ohri said. "I am most heartened and encouraged with the results because our Executive Committee's talent acquisition and renewal process is now well underway with significant key positions being filled by what I



# Exploring New Zealand at the New Zealand Tourism Seminar 2016

It was an exciting day as more than 40 NATAS members from various local travel agencies gathered at M Hotel Singapore on 30 March 2016 for the New Zealand Tourism Seminar. Jointly organised by Tourism New Zealand and NATAS, the event showcased New Zealand's unique mix of natural landscapes and vibrant cosmopolitan centres.

Participants heard from invited guest speakers from international car rental company Hertz and Air New Zealand,



as well as Tourism New Zealand's friendly staff, as they shared interesting information on the country. They also picked up useful practical tips to enhance travellers' experiences for self-drive holidays. With these insights, travel agencies can better promote New Zealand as a prominent travel destination among Singaporeans.

Ending the informative seminar on a high note, attendees played a mini game, working together to spot and

guess various New Zealand geographical locations as quickly as possible. Several lucky participants walked away with attractive prizes that ranged from locally produced Manuka honey to miniature Air New Zealand aircraft. To round up the day's proceedings, attendees were treated to a sumptuous lunch at The Buffet at M Hotel.

If you've missed out on this event, do stay tuned for further updates!



## NATAS to Spearhead Training to Tackle Manpower Shortage & Upgrade Professionalism in Singapore's Travel Industry

The National Association of Travel Agents Singapore (NATAS) is adding to its training courses for personnel in the travel industry. The courses conducted through its wholly-owned subsidiary, Tourism Management Institute of Singapore (TMIS) will be available from June 2016, and aim to upgrade the skills of travel agents and increase productivity for travel agencies.

The following month, NATAS will launch its enhanced Accreditation Programme, a three-tiered accreditation framework that recognises the skills competencies and work experience of travel professionals and is aligned to the Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ)

Tourism Framework to ensure skillset relevance and consistency with national standards. NATAS Accredited travel agents are recognised as travel professionals that possess the right service mind set, skills and knowledge to sell travel.

Ms Fiona Lim, Chairman for Manpower and Training, NATAS, said: "We have over 1,000 travel agents in Singapore playing the important role of making Singapore a choice destination for visitors and ensuring Singapore residents enjoy the most from their vacations. On the other hand, consumers are growing to be more sophisticated and have higher expectations of what they want in a vacation. We therefore need

to train the staff of travel agencies to be knowledgeable in handling these customers and be able to sell travel experiences professionally."

"The current travel landscape is increasingly disrupted by changing consumer habits on travel research and booking," added Ms Ong Ling Lee, Director, Travel Agents and Tourist Guides, Singapore Tourism Board. "Within Singapore, manpower constraints also call for travel agents to remodel their business and operations to increase productivity. Thus, it is important to invest in people development to ensure our travel agent workforce has the right set of skills to transform the industry."



St. Peter and Paul's Church

# LITHUANIA

## Destination Presentation

Lithuania is a land of history, architecture, and unspoiled natural beauty. From the beautiful architecture of the historic old town, to the banks of the Neris River, Lithuania is fast becoming recognised as one of Europe's gems. The capital, Vilnius, is an enchanting artists' enclave, with its timeworn courtyards, cobbled streets and baroque churches. And of course Lithuania's excellent and unique beer culture deserves special mention!



The Palanga Amber Museum

So began an engaging and highly informative presentation by Mrs Jurgita Kazlauskienė, the Director of the Lithuanian Department of Tourism to a roomful of NATAS members. The event was hosted by Ms Galina Meiluniene, wife of the Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania and Mr Karolis Dumbrovas, Project Manager for Enterprise Lithuania.



Mr Karolis Dumbrovas and Mrs Jurgita Kazlauskienė

For those who missed out on this event, here is a snapshot of what we learned about Lithuania:

Lithuania, also known officially as the Republic of Lithuania, is a country in Northern Europe. One of the three Baltic States, it is located east of Sweden and Denmark and is bordered by Latvia to the north, Belarus to the east and Poland to the south. Lithuania has an estimated population of 2.9 million people as of 2015 and its capital and largest city is Vilnius. Languages spoken are the official language of Lithuanian as well as Latvian.



Ms Galina Meiluniene having a discussion with NATAS members

Lithuania is a popular tourist destination in North Europe. Besides gothic and baroque churches, medieval streets, museums, etc., one can also find modern leisure activities within the capital city of Vilnius itself.

Vilnius has many inexpensive attractions and a lively nightlife. At its centre is the majestic Cathedral Square. To the



NATAS members enjoying a networking session after the presentation

south lies the Old Town, which boasts an impressive concentration of baroque architecture.

Every city in Lithuania is divided into the Old Town known as "Senamiestis" and the New Town "Naujamiestis". Senamiestis were built pre-1795 while Naujamiestis were created during the 19th century industrial revolution. Both old and new are usually referred as "Centras" or downtown. There are many shops and restaurants located in the downtown area.

Besides churches, historical cities and towns, Lithuania offers tourists national parks such as the Curonian Spit National Park, Dzūkija National Park and Druskininkai, a 19th century spring resort with an indoor alpine skiing area and a water entertainment park.

Some other places of notable interest include Trakai Castles, Šiauliai Hill of Crosses, Gediminas Tower and the KGB Museum.

*Do you know...*

# about altitude illness

Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), also known as Altitude Illness or High Altitude Pulmonary Edema, is commonly seen in mountain climbers. Mountains are typically measured as being “above sea level”. Today, there are at least 100 mountains that are over 7,200 metres (23,622 feet) above sea level, and all of them are located in Central and South Asia. At 8,848 metres (29,029 feet), Mount Everest is the highest mountain on earth.



## 1. Do you know... altitude illness can be fatal?

- AMS begins with mild symptoms such as headaches and nausea and can become worse as you ascend to higher altitudes.
- If you develop cough and shortness of breath, this can mean that there is fluid in your lungs, or High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE).
- Vomiting, confusion or an unsteady gait can all be signs of swelling in the brain, or High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE). Both HAPE and HACE can cause death within 24 hours.

## 2. Do you know... altitude illness can start from as low as 3,000 metres (10,000 feet)?

- At 3,000 metres, the air you breathe contains only 69 per cent of the amount of oxygen you breathe at sea level. These oxygen levels continue to drop as the altitude increases.
- How badly the oxygen shortage (hypoxia) affects you depends on the altitude you are at, the speed of your ascent, and how long you have remained at a particular altitude.

ess?



**3. Do you know... safe travel at high altitudes begins well before a trip?**

- Understand your itinerary and the altitude you will be sleeping at every day.
- A slower ascent is safer and can make your journey more comfortable.
- Medications such as acetazolamide\* (Diamox) can help prevent AMS and speed up acclimatisation to higher altitudes.

**\*Precautions:** Individuals with history of severe allergies to sulfa (anaphylaxis) should not consume acetazolamide (Diamox) as it is related to sulfonamide medication.

**4. Do you know... what are some of the high-altitude destinations you should be aware of before booking your trip?**

Some Popular Destinations	Altitude (Metres)	Altitude (Feet)
Cuzco, Peru	3,300	11,000
Lhasa, Tibet	3,650	12,100
Everest Base Camp, Nepal	5,400	17,700

**5. Do you know... going down to a lower altitude can save your life?**

- Be aware of the symptoms and danger signs. If your symptoms get worse, listen to your body.
- Be willing to stop your trip and descend to a lower altitude if necessary.
- Have dexamethasone (a strong steroid) on hand in case of HAPE/HACE.

With this handy guide on AMS, you'll be better equipped to plan your next mountaineering holiday. As an added precaution, do speak to your doctor and ask them how to prevent and survive AMS.

*This article was contributed by:  
Associate Professor Lim Poh Lian  
Head of Travellers' Health and Vaccination Clinic and Department of Infectious Diseases  
Senior Consultant, Tan Tock Seng Hospital*



# Soaring towards greater growth in Singapore's outbound markets



## Singapore's travel market surged in the opening quarter of 2016 and is set to perform well in second and third quarters

Since our last report in 2015, we continue to see an upward trend of outbound departures made by Singaporeans. According to GfK's Travelscan data for March 2016, Singapore's outbound travel market grew 6.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2016 when compared with the same period for last year. As the numbers continue to rise, we must understand the travel patterns and mindset of the Singaporean traveller – from their top destination spots to their booking preferences. With this in mind, we have highlighted some key findings from the GfK Travelscan report.





### The draw of Southeast Asia

When it comes to outbound travel, Singaporean holidaymakers prefer to stick close to home and jet set within Asia. So it comes as no surprise that China and Thailand remain the top two destinations for outbound travellers in 2016, with China showing a seven per cent growth.

Besides convenience, current affairs and general safety are also key considerations for Singaporean travellers. A case in point is Indonesia, which dropped out of third place to be replaced by Hong Kong. This appears to be the impact of recent terrorist attacks in central Jakarta taking a toll on travel bookings, which saw a decrease of nine per cent compared to last year. Taiwan also reported a 17 per cent drop in Singaporean travellers after its recent presidential elections.

On the flip side, Japan, Hong Kong and Vietnam reported a double-digit growth in overseas visitors, with Japan showing the highest growth within developed markets and an impressive 68 per cent increase in Singaporean travellers. This is probably a result of the currency exchange effects against the Singapore dollar, which has made the country more attractive for Singaporean travellers in terms of spending power. The aggressive marketing activities of local travel agencies have also undoubtedly helped to increase Japan's appeal.

Meanwhile, Southeast Asia remains the most travelled region for Singaporean travellers, who still prefer to take shorter and more frequent trips that require lesser planning time.

### Bitten by the travel bug

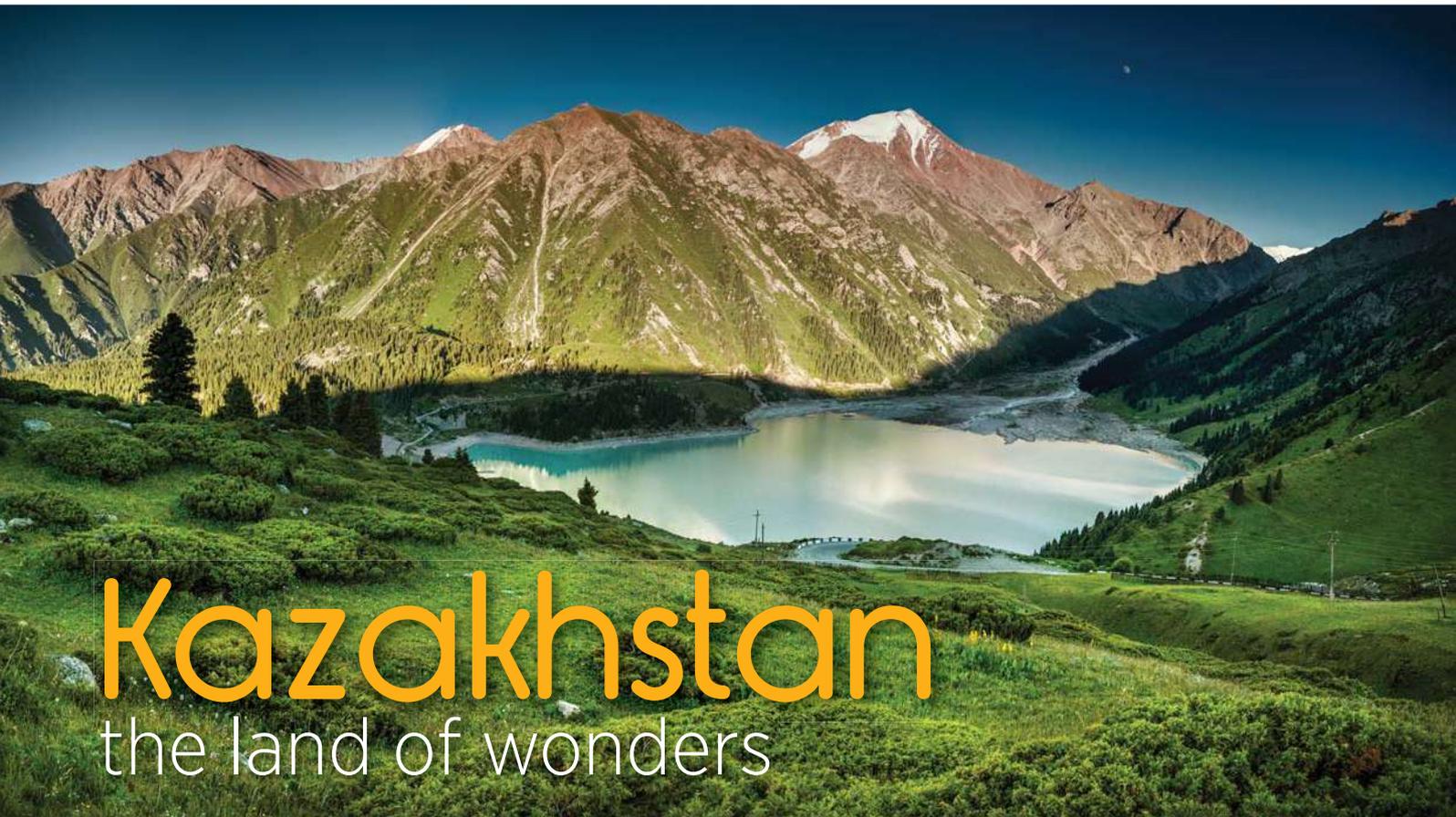
Over the past year, seasonal trends remained intact except for the months of January, February and October, where reports showed a variance of over 10 per cent in travel bookings.

As compared to 2015, forward bookings for the next six months of 2016 (March to September) grew 13 per cent and reflected a strong surge between April to June. Meanwhile, the first quarter of 2016 saw an increase of six per cent while the second quarter has already reported a jump of 14.2 per cent to date as compared to last year.

### Two sides of the coin

On the whole, sentiments for outbound travel bookings over the first quarter of the year have been impressive. The outlook for the period of April to September also remains positive based on forward travel bookings. However, in light of recent financial turmoil and rising global oil prices adding pressure on aviation companies, increased travel costs may slow down growth traction in earlier parts of the year and paint a different picture as we move further into 2016.





# Kazakhstan

the land of wonders

Located in the centre of Eurasia, Kazakhstan reflects the unique beauty of the different landscapes of both continents. In addition, the history of the Kazakhstanis and the constant interaction of a nomadic lifestyle with the settled people in South Kazakhstan's ancient cities have contributed to the country's unique and authentic culture.

Kazakhstan's peculiarities have contributed to its diverse, one-of-a-kind travel industry. Its activities and attractions are endless, and includes authentic cultural tourism, ecotourism, birdwatching in national parks and protected areas, mountain skiing or trekking, water sports, and sunbathing and swimming in lakes and rivers.



### A nature wonderland

The diversity of Kazakhstan's natural areas has contributed to its rich flora and fauna, with the country being home to 122 mammal species, 500 bird species, 107 fish species and over 6,000 plant species. Nature lovers will delight in knowing that the country has recently established a network of national parks and nature reserves to preserve its wildlife while making them accessible to visitors.

Topping the list is the Aksu Zhabagly Nature Reserve, home to the snow leopard and other rare animals. Known as a kingdom of tulips, it is believed to be the place where tulips first originated long before they were introduced in the Netherlands. The Burabai region, also known as the Switzerland of Kazakhstan, is not to be missed for its breathtaking landscapes of natural beauty. Meanwhile, Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve is popular among bird-watchers for its pink flamingos and other rare wildlife species, while Altyn Emel National Park promises to intrigue with its mysterious Singing Dunes. You also wouldn't want to miss the marals (red deer) and unossified antlers at Katon-Karagay National Park.





**Sun, sea, snow**

If you're hoping for some snow, you'll be glad to know that Kazakhstan's beautiful mountain ranges, such as Tien Shan, Altay, Ulytau and Kazygurt, attract tourists from all over the world and are ideal for winter sports. Shymbulak Ski Resort, host to the Alpine Skiing events at the 2011 Asian Winter Games, is located in the upper part of the Medeu Valley in the Zailiisky Alatau mountain range, and offers superior winter sports facilities. Ice skating enthusiasts must drop by Medeu, a unique sports complex that features the world's highest skating rink at 1,691 metres above sea level.



Kazakhstan is also known for its rivers and lakes, with the Caspian Sea right at the top of the list. As the largest closed reservoir in the world, its coast is perfect for sunbathing, swimming and fishing. The Zhetysu or "Seven Rivers", which are concentrated in south-eastern Kazakhstan and originate from the popular Lake Balkhash, are also highly popular. If you crave more excitement, why not try white-water rafting down mountain rivers or boating and sailing in lakes?



**Live like a local**

In a country filled with rich and unique traditions, rituals, art and culture, why not experience life as a Kazakhstani? Immerse yourself in the Kazakhs' traditional lifestyles, sample national dishes, visit museum complexes, historical sites and ethno-villages, and even interact with locals in the Shabanbay Central Kazakhstan. History buffs will relish exploring South Kazakhstan's ancient cities and historical monuments, which are located along the famous Silk Road.



The Mausoleum of Khawaja Ahmed Yasawi, an unfinished mausoleum in the city of Turkestan in southern Kazakhstan, is a must for history buffs and lovers of architecture. Despite its incomplete state, the structure has come to represent the Kazakh national identity and has been protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2003.

**Food, glorious food**

You can't leave Kazakhstan without sampling it's local delights. Start with traditional drinks such as *kumys*, which is made from fermented mare's milk, or *shubat*, which is made from camel's milk. Tuck into some local Kazakh fare such as *boursaks*, *samsa*, *kausyrma*, *kurt* and, of course, sheep's head. Central Asian and Russian cuisines, as well as Italian, Turkish and Korean food, are



also popular in Kazakhstan. And with restaurants generally using organic and naturally grown ingredients to prepare their meals, you can expect to savour delicious dishes with exceptionally rich tastes.

**A hub for business tourism**



Besides the allure of its natural landscapes, culture and people, Kazakhstan is also fast emerging as a hub for international business and investment. Testament to this, Singapore recently confirmed its participation in the EXPO-2017 International Specialised Exhibition, which will take place in Astana next year. With a theme of Future Energy, the event is set to attract five million visitors from over 100 countries.

To further boost its attractiveness to international investors, the Kazakhstan government is also working towards several initiatives such as the launch of the National Plan 100 concrete steps and the establishment of an International Financial Centre in Astana in 2018. These will not only strengthen the country's economy and attract world-class international investment but also position Astana as the financial capital of Central Asia.

With a plethora of things to do and wondrous sights to witness, Kazakhstan offers an experience like no other. And with the country being a visa-free regime for Singaporeans and the Kazakhstan government working to provide direct flights between Kazakhstan and Singapore, it's definitely a location that deserves to be at the top of your bucket list.

# CAG UPDATES



Image credits: Changi Airport Group

As a leading aviation hub, Singapore Changi Airport is committed to constantly innovating and enhancing its offerings to serve its customers better. And the award-winning airport has achieved just that with its recent introduction of two new flights to San Francisco and Chongqing.

Starting 1 June 2016, travellers can look forward to shorter flight times to the USA as United Airlines launches its inaugural non-stop passenger service to and from San Francisco. Kicking off the service is a westbound flight departing from San Francisco on 1 June, with the corresponding return flight departing from Changi Airport on 3 June. The reduced total flight times will save travellers up to four hours each way as compared to the existing service, which has a layover in Tokyo Narita Airport.

To cater to the needs of business travellers, United Airlines has also specially timed its new flight schedule for an early morning arrival in San Francisco. This means more convenient connections to over 80 destinations in North, Central and South America as well as the Caribbean.



Image credits: United Airlines

With Singapore and the USA's strong business ties, United Airlines' new service brings greater convenience and connectivity for business travellers looking to connect to 26 major American cities via San Francisco. As Changi Airport Group (CAG) continues to promote Singapore and Changi Airport to American travellers, the service is set to boost tourism by potentially attracting more tourists from the USA to Singapore. Changi Airport also welcomed West Air to its list of airlines with the arrival of an inaugural international flight from Chongqing. The launch marks the beginning of a new thrice-weekly passenger service between Singapore and Chongqing.

With the addition of Chongqing-based West Air, Changi Airport now has a total of 12 airlines operating direct services to and from China. The new airline's arrival

strengthens Singapore's connectivity to Western China and opens up further opportunities for trade and leisure between both cities.

"For Changi Airport, Western China represents exciting untapped growth opportunities. Following the signing of the Memorandum of Strategic Cooperation, we are delighted to welcome the initial fruit of our collaboration through the commencement of West Air's operation to Changi Airport," said Mr Lim Ching Kiat, CAG's Senior Vice-President for Market Development.



Image credits: West Air

With fresh initiatives, strong collaborations and new upcoming developments on the horizon, Changi Airport looks set for another great year ahead!



## Building the next generation of Travel Professionals

### Diploma Programmes

WSQ Diploma in Tourism (Hospitality Management)

WSQ Diploma in Tour and Travel Services **NEW**

### Certificate Programmes

WSQ Certificate in Attractions

WSQ Certificate in Hotel Accommodation Services (Front Office)

WSQ Higher Certificate in Tour and Travel Services **NEW**

### Tourist Guide Programmes / PDC

WSQ Tourist Guide Course (English/Chinese) **NEW**

WSQ Provide Guide in Eco-Tourism and Nature Tourism **NEW**

WSQ Provide Guide in Celebrity Restaurants (Chinese) **NEW**

### Short Courses

WSQ NATAS Professional Tour Leading (English/Chinese)

WSQ Cruise Specialist **NEW**

WSQ Corporate Ticketing **NEW**

### Others (Not Applicable for SkillsFuture Credit)

Certificate of Proficiency in Travel Insurance

IATA Foundation in Travel & Tourism Diploma

 Tourism Management Institute of Singapore (TMIS)

 11 Eunos Road 8 #05-02 Lifelong Learning Institute Singapore 408601

 (65) 6238 8688

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