

Mass consumption travel no longer wanted

Travel agents stay relevant with the rise of customised travel

By Natalie Chen / January 6, 2016



With rising affluence, Singaporeans are seeking more unique travel experiences with customised packages. Photo Credit: Butsaya/iStock

Travel agents in Singapore are counting on the increasing demand for customised travel as a means to stay relevant.

"Even as more Singaporeans book online, travel agencies can still provide expert advice on things like routings and recommendations for hotels, home stays and farm stays and in places like Taiwan and Japan," said Alicia Seah, director, marketing communications, Dynasty Travel.

"For Europe, we provide recommendations for connecting flights and rail passes, hotels and or castle stays. Our normal group tours do benefit from economies of scale, so customised travel is definitely more expensive - sometimes by as much as 40 to 60 per cent more, but we need to cater to customers who prefer to have private time.

"With rising affluence, Singaporeans are seeking more unique travel experiences with customised packages. They are not content with economically-packaged tours that the masses used to enjoy. Singaporeans seek experiences that they can showcase to friends.

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"The demand for customised travel is increasing by 15 to 20 per cent annually as affluence sets in, and customers who are repeat travellers want more. They seek leisurely-paced itineraries, private transport, and interest-based activities and sightseeing such as historic monuments or DIY cooking lessons," said Seah.

Said Crystal Sim, CEO, Albatross Travel and Tours, "We serve markets with rising affluence. For example, we are active in China, the Asian capitals, Australia and New Zealand.

"People with more money in their pockets are generally fussier and are no longer satisfied with travel in large groups to mass consumption destinations. Now, they want to go to specific destinations for specific activities," added Sim.

According to Seah, customised travel started about three years ago when more Singaporeans were revisiting destinations such as Taiwan, Japan, Europe and China and now wanted to see these destinations in a different way.

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