



Jimmy Quek, Singapore's top tour guide

He won't take you to the Singapore Zoo or the Singapore Flyer. Tour guide Jimmy Quek believes the heart of Singapore is in its heartlands

By Elaine Ee 17 October, 2011

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Try a little kindness, and a little home style thinking, that's tour guide Jimmy Quek's secrets to showing people around Singapore.

It's not every day you get invited to a wedding. And it's even more rare to be invited to the wedding of someone you hardly know.

But that's what happened to freelance tour guide Jimmy Quek (+65 9783 6033; ajimmy@gmail.com), when he went out of his way to help a tourist.

"An Indonesian customer of mine was in Singapore on holiday with her fiancé," said Quek. "She sprained her ankle one evening and I took her to the hospital, waited for her to be treated and then returned her to her hotel. The next day, she told me her ankle was still swollen, so I took her to a Chinese physician near my home."

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"That evening she went back to Indonesia. A few months later, she sent me a wedding invitation together with a ticket to Jakarta. She also paid for my hotel room during my stay."

Rewards like this come to 67-year-old Jimmy Quek for good reason.

The winner of the tour guiding category of this year's Singapore Experience Awards for Best Customer Service -- the Singapore Tourism Board's awards that recognize compelling experiences in tourism -- Quek has been

introducing guests to Singapore for the past seven years.

"As a tour guide, having good problem-solving skills and people skills is the most important," said Quek. "No matter how difficult or challenging a situation can be, you must put the customer first and avoid inconveniencing them."

"Customers can be very demanding at times, but tour guides must learn how to deal with them."

Faced regularly with different groups of people comprising individuals who may be practical strangers and who may not even speak the same language, Quek has learned how to "engage all types of personalities" and can liven up even the most reticent atmosphere.

He is definitely a guy you want to have at your party.

And while he is a walking encyclopedia, it is the everyday Singapore experience that he enjoys showing to visitors.

"I would bring them to the heartlands or satellite towns to show them how Singaporeans live, work and play together -- in our multicultural communities," said Quek, when asked what he would do if he only had one day to show someone around.

"I would also have them try our local food and desserts at a food court. This is what Singapore is really like."

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If anyone knows how to enjoy buzzing around Singapore, it's Quek. So we asked him for his advice for getting the most out of visiting the Lion City.

Do bring with you:

- an open mind, to really 'see' what's around you
- a listening ear to absorb information and instructions
- good spirits so you have fun
- a bottle of water to beat the heat and humidity
- your wallet because there's always lots of things to buy

And leave any lethargy in your hotel room, along with your passport.

The Singapore Experience Awards come to a close on October 18, go to www.singaporeexperience.com to find out who came out tops.

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