

ANNEX B

Citations for Top Awards recipients of the Singapore Tourism Awards 2026

Top Awards

Lifetime Achievement for Outstanding Contribution to Tourism: Hakodate Singapore Society and the late Mr Masaru Yanagisawa



The late Mr Masaru Yanagisawa (left) with the late former President S. R. Nathan and former STB Chairman Mr Edmund Cheng (right) at The Istana in 2001

Hakodate City in Japan and Singapore have shared a close relationship since 1992, following the establishment of the Hakodate Singapore Society (HSS).

For more than three decades, Hakodate Singapore Society has contributed to strengthening ties between Singapore and Hakodate. The friendship dates back to the period when the Singapore Tourism Board was known as the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board, during which a sister-organisation relationship was established with the Hakodate International Tourism & Convention Association (HITCA). This collaboration was formed to promote two-way tourism and facilitate

goodwill exchanges between the two cities, including the organisation of 30 study trips for past Singapore Tourism Awards' Customer Service Excellence (now known as Tourism Star) recipients.

The late Mr. Masaru Yanagisawa, Founder of HSS, served as Singapore Tourism Board's Honorary Tourism Consul from 1993 until his passing in 2007. During his tenure, he supported initiatives to deepen tourism cooperation and enhance awareness of Singapore in Hakodate, including the establishment of a life-size Merlion statue in the city, as well as people-to-people exchanges between Singapore and Hakodate, contributing to the ongoing work of HSS.

During the SARS crisis in Singapore in 2003, he led a chartered Singapore Airlines flight of 200 HSS members to visit Singapore to encourage and support our tourism industry. The Special Recognition award was conferred upon him during the Tourism Awards 2004 by the late President S.R Nathan.

The last re-appointment ceremony was held in Singapore in 2007; the occasion also doubled as a 15th anniversary celebration of Singapore's relationship with Hakodate. Regrettably, Mr. Masaru Yanagisawa passed away right after he arrived back in Hakodate from Singapore.

Outstanding Tourism Entrepreneur:

Suen Tat Yam, Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, and Byron Jevan Koh, Chief Operating Officer and Co-founder, Woopa Group



Suen Tat Yam (left) and Byron Jevan Koh (right)

Mr Suen Tat Yam and Mr Byron Jevan Koh transformed Woopa Group from a start-up into one of Singapore's leading experience-based tourism operators, growing the business regionally while scaling revenue and talent.

Under their leadership, Woopa Group expanded from a boutique operation to a diversified tour-services group with four business entities serving a wide range of visitors. Their manifold growth over 10 years represents a paradigm shift for the tours industry.

Tat Yam and Byron are early adopters of technology-driven innovations, introducing Singapore's first digitally gamified tour and championing the use of AI, immersive storytelling and differentiated content to elevate visitor experiences. They advocate for talent development across the tourism sector, empowering high-achieving peers and contributing to broader industry initiatives such as the Future of Guiding 2.0 taskforce. Through these efforts, both founders have shifted perceptions of tour operators from traditional service providers to experience innovators who inspire visitors through compelling storytelling, contributing towards a vibrant tourism ecosystem in Singapore.

**Special Recognition:
ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands**



ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands

Celebrating its 15th anniversary this year, ArtScience Museum has played a pivotal role in strengthening Singapore's cultural and experiential landscape. Over the years, it has evolved into a leading institution at the intersection of art, science, technology and culture. Through a dynamic slate of world-class exhibitions spanning global IP showcases to socially relevant themes, the Museum engaged diverse audiences while advancing meaningful conversations on contemporary issues.

Its permanent exhibition, teamLab Future World, has attracted close to five million visitors since 2016, underscoring the Museum's ability to engage audiences through immersive and cutting-edge experiences. Newer presentations such as Iris Van Herpen: Sculpting the Senses, The World of Studio Ghibli and SingaPop! further reflect ArtScience Museum's continued evolution in thoughtful, multidisciplinary storytelling, while also supporting local and regional talent across the arts and sciences. In 2025, the launch of ArtScience Laboratory marked another milestone with the introduction of hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM)-driven programmes designed to spark curiosity and innovation among students, educators and families. Over the years, ArtScience Museum has reimagined what a museum can be – emerging as an active

agent of community engagement and social impact, while enhancing Singapore’s destination appeal as a vibrant global hub for culture, creativity and ideas.

**Outstanding Employer:
Mandai Wildlife Group**



Mandai Wildlife Group

Mandai Wildlife Group (MWG), which manages world-renowned wildlife parks and nature-themed attractions, including Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, Bird Paradise and its newest additions – Rainforest Wild Adventure and Exploria, is recognised for its significant contributions to Singapore’s tourism sector.

The Group employs over 1,000 employees and is a leading player in the industry for manpower practices. Through progressive workforce practices including a competency-based pay programme that establish clear career pathways, investments in staff learning and development, and initiatives such as cross departmental workgroups to spearhead solutions to enhance productivity, the Group has cultivated an employee-centric workplace that balances professional development, operational excellence, and meaningful career progression.

**Best Business Event Champion:
Richard Ireland, President, Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers (SACEOS)**



Mr Richard Ireland is a champion of Singapore’s MICE industry, driving industry transformation through strong leadership, sustainability advocacy and talent development.

He has driven membership growth for Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers (SACEOS) since October 2021, addressed workforce challenges through comprehensive talent initiatives such as launching the Singapore MICE Development (SMD) as part of the Singapore MICE Forum 2025; and played a pivotal role in launching the Singapore MICE Sustainability Roadmap and Singapore MICE Sustainability Certification, the first framework achieving Global Sustainable Tourism Council recognition. His initiation of mentorship programmes has created robust talent pipelines that strengthens workforce sustainability.

Richard actively advances Singapore’s global MICE standing through thought leadership, international partnerships and platforms that position Singapore as a leading hub for business events.