

TRAVEL & TOURISM  
DIPLOMA AT NHI

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After providing hotel management, hospitality, food safety, beauty and leisure courses, the National Hospitality Institute in Muscat is now introducing a diploma course in travel and tourism - a subject relevant to Oman's development in many aspects. "The interest in the travel and tourism business in Oman is growing rapidly and with that there is an urgent need for trained people to deal with the needs of tourists. There are thousands of tourist destinations around the world and Oman has to compete with them in terms of service and facilities. Tourism is very much a people industry and it needs people to make it happen," said Robert MacLean, principal of NHL.

The course is a two-year diploma, the first year covering course modules such as worldwide travel and tourism destinations, support services, introduction to the cruise industry, business travel planning and mandatory units such as interpersonal skills and principles of customer service in hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism. It is a full time, five-day week course with a two month internship. Students can choose from four different options in the second year. These include airline office/travel agency, cargo opera-

tions, airline/airport operations, or tour guide operations and is part time. "This particular course is unique as it will be a mix of theory and hands-on training. We have linked up with some reputable tourism providers to ensure our students receive a great experience and a true opportunity to understand the needs of international tourists coming to Oman. We hope to provide the confidence that the students need to deal with real life scenarios."

PEOPLE  
INDUSTRY

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The course, although internationally certified, is focused on the particular needs of the region within an international context. Robert added that while some needs are generic, others are specific and that the institute would ensure the students understood the difference. "Oman has the resources to offer different types of tourism - in particular adventure tourism through its moun-

tains, wadis and sea coast. We will be ensuring that the students understand this."

Students on this programme will be serving a period of time as internees in reputable companies where they can learn firsthand the needs of the international tourist and how they can satisfy that need in Oman. The institute has the proactive support of tourist companies understanding the need for people to work in their business.

Class strength is limited to 15 at a time to allow time for students to learn and have the attention of the teacher. "It is also a more practical number when we are carrying out practical classes," Robert said. There are no quotas in particular and the course is open to all nationalities. He added that Omanis were encouraged to come forward considering the opportunities available in the tourism sector over the next few years. "In terms of tour-guiding specifically, we will want to promote Omanis as tourists prefer to be shown around sites by people from the country."

The course will be taught by NHI's own team along with some new specialists who have been hired for this programme. Students will also have the opportunity to work with local tourism providers as they have day-to-day practical skills in dealing with the needs of tourists.