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Kraków**

## **SeeKrakow in the 'Wide open for sustainable meetings' initiative**

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**SeeKrakow is one of the largest organisers of local tours for foreign tourists in Krakow. In addition to activities in the field of incoming tourism, SeeKrakow's 100+ agent strong team also offers comprehensive organisation of school trips, as well as transport services under the '4transfer' brand.**

SeeKrakow's employees proudly describe themselves as locals, paying attention to community development with respect for local traditions and culture. By pursuing a strategy of sustainable development, they engage in activities that benefit society and the environment. They are also the first company in Krakow to be awarded the Travelife Partner status. In an exclusive interview, Julia Korczyńska, General Manager of SeeKrakow, discusses the company's policy and the details of the certification process.

**Congratulations on such an important and pioneering achievement. What does the Travelife certificate give you? And why did SeeKrakow choose this particular type of certificate?**

Thank you very much for your congratulations! This is indeed an important achievement for us.

It all started with an invitation we received from the City Council to attend a training course on sustainable tourism. The training lasted three months and really motivated us to achieve the Travelife Partner status. During the course, I realised how much we were already doing in the field of sustainable tourism and that we should not only take pride in these activities and the way we run our company, but also gain confirmation of our sustainable practices. We chose this certification on the recommendation of our coach, Anula Galewska, who also provided us with substantive support during the certification process, for which I am very grateful. What does the Travelife Partner status give us? It confirms that we are moving in the right direction in sustainable business management, it motivates us to do more, and it guarantees our customers that they are making the right choice.

**Businesses, especially smaller ones, are often afraid that the certification process will be time-consuming and require the preparation of numerous documents, policies and strategies. How did you find it? Is it a job for one dedicated employee or rather a whole team?**

Indeed, the process is definitely more time-consuming than we expected, due to the fact that every aspect of the process needs to be proven, with appropriate documentation and photographic evidence, so just gathering the necessary information takes a considerable amount of time. Further ideas also emerged in practice, which we wanted to implement as part of the certification process, requiring additional time, both to implement the ideas and to document them. In any case, we should bear in mind that our activities do not end with obtaining the status, which is actually only a kind of new beginning.

I personally managed the certification process, largely due to the fact that having taken part in the



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full training course, I had the best understanding of the subject. The whole team was involved in the preparation of the documentation, with each person assigned a task and given a portion of knowledge to complete. Everyone contributed ideas and continues to do so on a daily basis, inspiring others from their team or teams they cooperate with. Running a sustainable business engages everyone in the company, which is both important and uplifting.

### **What does the process itself look like? What surprised you most about it?**

As I mentioned earlier, and what is most surprising, every point required by Travelife had to be confirmed in the form of documents and photographs. Although it now seems obvious to me, at the time the number of documents to be prepared seemed considerable. For example, aspects concerning compliance with the labour law in Poland are regulated by the Labour Code, so it seemed obvious to me that companies operating legally are subject to the law. However, in the process of obtaining the status, I had to list the relevant paragraphs from the Labour Code that oblige employers in Poland to treat employees appropriately, and, at the same time, present additional documents confirming compliance with selected provisions of the Code.

As part of the certification process, you also have to undergo additional Travelife training and pass an exam on sustainable tourism. While everything is done online, it is an additional time-consuming aspect that should not be forgotten.

### **Do customers expect your company to provide sustainable solutions or be certified?**

It is worth mentioning here that we have achieved the Travelife Partner status for all of our three brands, each addressing a unique customer group and providing different, although related, services

The answer to the question is therefore yes, more and more customers are paying attention to sustainable activities and the certifications that companies hold, but I also want to point out that we are also doing our bit to highlight sustainable choices to our customers. A growing number of corporate customers are paying attention to environmentally friendly transport operations, while from our side we additionally emphasise this aspect on our website [wyjazdyszkolne.pl](http://wyjazdyszkolne.pl), which specialises in school trips.

We educate parents and teachers on the importance of choosing the right means of transport for school trips to swimming pools, cinemas or theatres, looking not only at the price of the transport service, but also quality and the standard of the vehicle in which they will travel. Surprisingly, it is still common to use buses manufactured in the 1990s, whose engines do not meet any Euro standards, and which do not even have seat belts. To make matters worse, many parents and teachers do not verify the companies involved, which is crucial with regard to safety. We educate our children from an early age on how to separate waste, or save electricity and water, but when choosing a bus for a school trip we are happy to forget about clean air in order to save a little bit of money.

Under the SeeKrakow brand, we organise tours and entire stays for foreign clients visiting Krakow and the Malopolska region. We have observed that for foreign tourists sustainable practices are increasingly important, although the emphasis on this aspect of travel clearly depends on their country of origin, with tourists from Scandinavia continuously leading the way. We are in the process



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of developing our website to be able to recommend sustainable solutions to customers choosing our services.

Our activities should also be of value to the hotels that we work with, which recommend our tours to their customers. In the hotel industry, certification is becoming a necessity, so I think it should be beneficial for hoteliers to choose a tour operator that has the Travelife Partner status.

**Taking a broader look at your company policy, what measures in line with the sustainable development goals have been or will be implemented at SeeKrakow?**

First of all, we have implemented a green office policy. We segregate and minimise waste, we have swapped paper towels for hand dryers, and we drink tap water and collect coffee grounds for our backyard gardens. We also monitor our electricity, gas and water consumption, and have set long-term goals.

We strive to offer tourists advertising materials in electronic form wherever possible, for example in our vehicles customers can browse our offer by scanning a QR code.

Our website is being enhanced, and we are adding information on sustainable aspects of our tours so that customers can make an informed choice among our products.

We only work with reliable carriers who base their fleet on modern and safe vehicles, and only cooperate with licensed guides. We endeavour to always choose local subcontractors, and when planning the logistics of our tours we are mindful of minimising our carbon footprint.

For us, localism is of great importance. We are currently in the process of introducing unique local, hand-made souvenirs to our Information Point, and maybe even hand-made products made by our employees later on.

We are very pleased to have recently established cooperation with the Rainbow Association, with whom we are also in the process of preparing souvenirs partly made by those under their care. We are keen to establish this cooperation on a long-term basis.

We are delighted to be able support small, local communities and local artists, as well as the previously mentioned unique association whose mission is to support people with Down syndrome so that they can live independently and actively, and realise their full potential. On our website [wyjazdyszkolne.pl](http://wyjazdyszkolne.pl) you can already find an offer of workshops at the Społeczna Kaffka café (a company run alongside the association and employing mainly people with Down syndrome). I can wholeheartedly recommend this offer as part of a one-day school trip. My son's class was privileged to take part in the workshop before it was available commercially, and I have to say that it was my son's feedback, as well as the involvement of his class teacher (both in the association's activities and in developing empathy among the pupils) that inspired me to establish broader cooperation with the Rainbow Association.

In addition, for years we have been committed to being a transparent and honest company, both towards our customers and our employees. We therefore strive to ensure that our offers are



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transparent, without hidden costs or fine print, and that our contracts and working conditions are always clear and as predictable as possible.

**What trends in inbound tourism have you observed recently?**

Inbound tourism has been focusing on organising *experiences* rather than just standard sightseeing for some time now, with customers valuing not only the history of a place, but also the history of its people and their traditions and customs. The customers of today want to touch, taste and experience more than just basic sightseeing.

Mass tourism seems to be observing competition from this trend, with customers increasingly interested in something unique and not necessarily following the crowd. If this trend continues, it could be among the solutions to the issue of overtourism in many European capitals, although in addition to a sense of adventure, customers must also accept the higher prices of such experiences. The cost of a tailor-made programme, and presenting new and unique places in a sustainable way, is usually higher than that of regular tours to popular destinations. I hope inbound tourism is moving in the direction of more conscious, sustainable travel through local agencies, whose knowledge and experience visitors to Krakow are willing to trust.