



NATAS Fair 2026: Lion Dances, Flying Acrobats, and the Booths Worth Hunting Down at Singapore's Biggest Travel Fair

Description

The NATAS (National Association of Travel Agents Singapore) team invited me down for the opening ceremony of NATAS Fair 2026 this morning, and I am glad I said yes before I'd even finished my coffee. NATAS Holidays 2026 runs from 21 to 23 August at Singapore EXPO, Halls 3B, 4 and 5, and this is the 64th edition of the fair. Nearly 100 exhibitors are on the floor this year, spread across roughly 25 percent more exhibition space than the previous edition, with 14 National Tourism Organisations taking part, 40 percent more than last year. The screen on stage put it plainly: Free Admission, Singapore's Largest Travel Fair. I am not going to argue with a screen that big.



• Free Admission, Singapore's Largest Travel Fair. • The screen said it, not me.

Loud, Colourful, and Definitely Not Cold

When I arrived, the Papua New Guinea contingent was already rehearsing at their booth, 3H02, ahead of the opening ceremony. Loud, colourful, and clearly enjoying themselves, in feathered headdresses and red raffia skirts. Their energy was contagious enough that I found my own feet edging into a shuffle. Almost. Give me a tribal dance costume right now.

They must have been feeling the cold though, because the expo's air conditioning was working overtime and I was shivering. Brrrr.



Booth 3H02. Warmest costumes, coldest hall.

The Ceremony: Lion Dance, a Guest of Honour, and a Very Big Ribbon

The opening ceremony began with a lion dance, two lions in full flight in front of the "A World Within Reach" screen, before the Guest of Honour was welcomed onto the stage: His Excellency Kapi Tau Maro, High Commissioner, Papua New Guinea High Commission in Singapore. Papua New Guinea is NATAS's Destination Partner for the second year running, which explains why their contingent got the loudest cheer of the morning.



Eyes that big, and still somehow not the loudest thing on stage.

NATAS President Mr Steven Ler then gave the welcome address before handing things over to a full morning of performances. During the sponsor appreciation segment, Ms Shirley Tan collected the recognition on behalf of Etiqa Insurance Singapore (Official Travel Insurer), and Mr Joel Keimelo did the same for the Papua New Guinea Tourism Authority (Destination Partner). Then came the part I always enjoy: the giant red ribbon, the confetti, and two very relieved-looking gentlemen cutting it open to officially start the fair.



Welcome Address, no notes needed apparently.

The Taiwan Acrobatic Troupe Nearly Gave Me a Heart Attack

I have seen acrobatic acts before. I have not seen one quite this close up, quite this early in the morning, on an empty stomach. The Taiwan Acrobatic Troupe, performing under the "Taiwan Waves Of" banner, opened with a segment where one performer was swung horizontally between two others like a human skipping rope. I still cannot describe it better than that. It got worse (better) from there, building up to a three-storey human pyramid that had half the audience holding their phones up and the other half holding their breath.

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They made this look easy. It is not easy.



Group photo, after theyâ??d stopped throwing each other around.

Papua New Guineaâ??s Dance and Drums, and a Word for the Stage Crew

The Papua New Guinea segment that followed was a thumping, full-bodied show of dance and drums (garamut slit-drums, if youâ??re wondering what those hollow log instruments are called), performed under a screen reading â??Papua New Guinea, A Million Different Journeysâ?•. It was powerful enough that I genuinely considered signing up for a tour and flying out that afternoon.

It also made me nervous for the stage. Some of the performers are, gently put, substantially built men, and they were putting real weight into every stomp. Somewhere around the fourth or fifth stomp I found myself glancing at the stage joints rather than the dancers. It held. Full marks to whichever crew bolted that rig down, because nobody claps for the stage crew and somebody should.

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A Million Different Journeys, and the stage survived every one of them.

The ceremony closed with a combined group photo of the dignitaries, the Papua New Guinea performers in full dress, and the Taiwan Acrobatic Troupe, all sharing the same stage. It's the kind of photo that sums up what 'A World Within Reach' is trying to say better than any tagline could.



The whole world, or at least a decent slice of it, on one stage.

Hunting for the Less Travelled Booths

Ceremony done, I went looking for the smaller booths, the ones tucked between the big package-tour counters, because that's usually where the more interesting destinations hide. I was not disappointed.

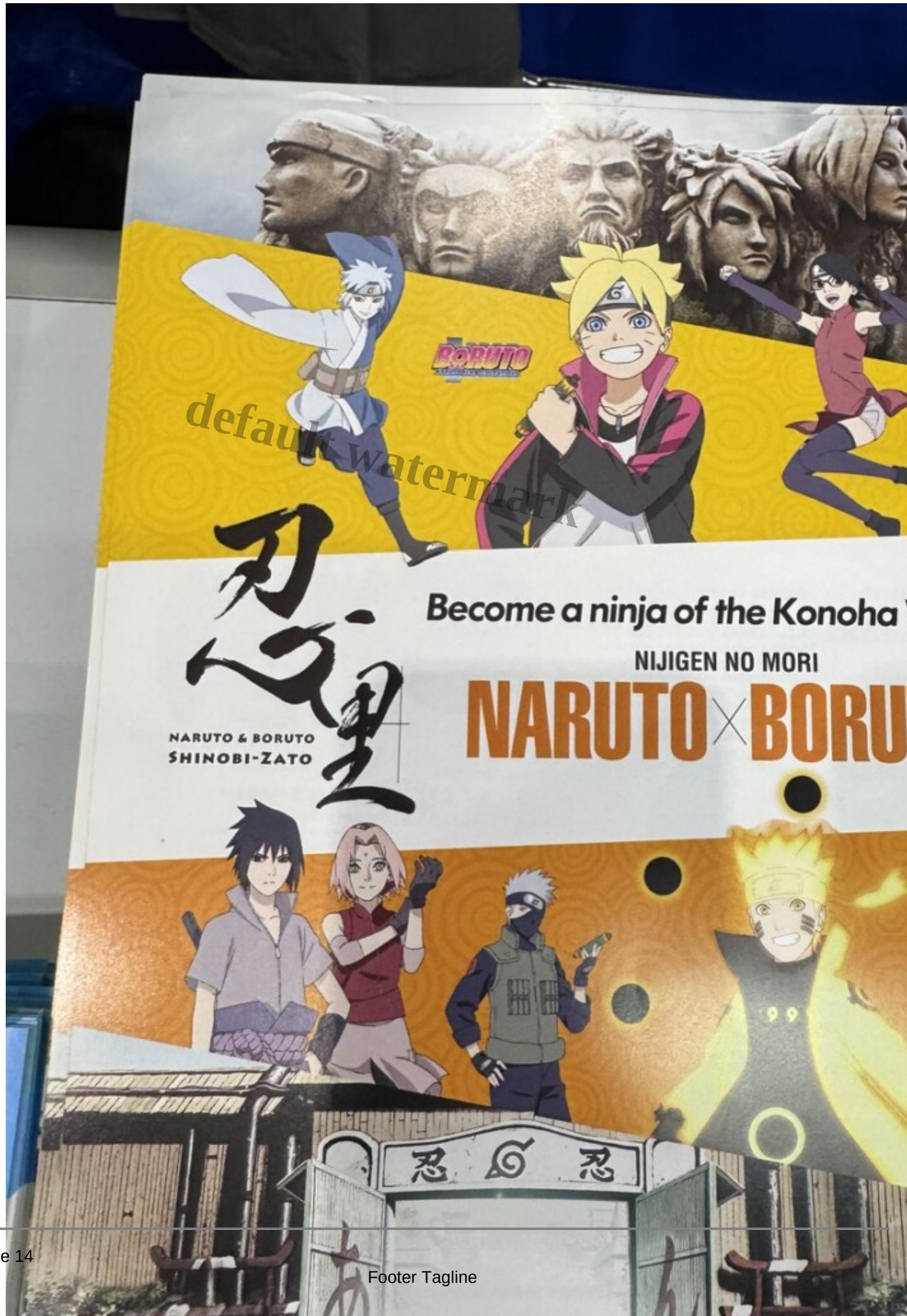
Mie, Japan. A National Tourism Organisation booth was flying the flag for Mie Prefecture, home to Suzuka Circuit's Circuit Challenger, where visitors can drive electric karts on the actual Formula One Japanese Grand Prix track, and to Iga, birthplace of the Iga-ryu ninja clan, whose techniques were passed down through generations at what is now the Ninja Museum of Igaryu. I picked up a glossy brochure, took a photo of it for reference, and then still somehow left the physical copy behind at the office. Ask my colleagues who is the neatest fella in office.



Photographed the brochure. Still lost the brochure. Some things never change.

Awaji Island, Japan. A short drive, reportedly around 30 to 60 minutes from Osaka across the Akashi Kaikyo Bridge, and youâ??re on an island about the size of Singapore. Awaji is home to Nijigen no Mori, where the Naruto x Boruto Shinobi-Zato lets you â??become a ninja of Konoha Villageâ?•, alongside attractions built around Godzilla and a separate Hello Kitty Smile park nearby. Bridge, characters, island the size of home. Worth a hall-of-fame spot on anyoneâ??s Instagram.

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Become a ninja of Konoha Village. Or just take the photo and leave.

Korea, by bicycle. Everyone knows Korea as a shopping and skincare destination, but one booth was showing something different: cross-country cycling routes with fully supported, customisable packages, bring your own bicycle or theirs. One route runs Incheon to Seoul to Busan, another traces the eastern coast from Busan up towards the DMZ (Demilitarised Zone). It sounds like the perfect sufferfest for anyone who actually enjoys hills.



For the fun of it, anyone keen? Comment below and we may go cycling together



These guys must be hot, and its only the morning of the 1st day.

Russia, Mongolia, and Northern China, by rail. This is the one that left the biggest impression. Travel Apps Pte Ltd (ä°æ, å•æ??) had a booth showing an 11 day, 9 night winter journey along the Trans-Siberian Railway, from S\$5,288, covering Russia and Lake Baikal, plus a longer 14 or 18 day â??Grand Trans-Siberian Railroadâ?• summer journey billed as the longest railway in the world. The route map ran through Moscow, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude, across into Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and down through Erlian into Northern China. Eleven days of frozen lakes and birch forests sliding past a train window sounds like exactly the kind of trip you plan for and then talk about for the next decade.

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云游假期
TRAVEL APPS PTE LTD

纵横欧亚 铁路传奇

Across Eurasia
A Legendary
Railway Journey

线路6,266KM
穿越西伯利亚
6,266 KM ACROSS
SIBERIA

Fr S\$5,288

WINTER JOURNEY 冬季之旅
11D9N RUSSIA LAKE BAIKAL + TRAIN
11天9晚 俄罗斯贝加尔湖蓝冰之旅 + 火车

西伯利亚大铁路 Siberian Railway
The Longest Railway in the World
总计6,266KM·从蒙古草原，驶入西伯利亚，直达莫斯科
穿越广袤的西伯利亚，感受世界最长铁路的壮丽景观，沿途邂逅绝美自然与独特人文风情。

- 专列旅游列车 伊尔库茨克 彼得大帝号
- 穿越西伯利亚 满洲里、海拉尔、额尔古纳、满洲里、海拉尔、额尔古纳
- 沿途经典城市 莫斯科、伊尔库茨克、海拉尔、满洲里、额尔古纳
- 全程贴心服务 专业领队、导游、乘务员、贴心服务

SUMMER JOURNEY 夏季之旅
14/18D GRANS TRANS - SIBERIAN RAILROAD JOURNEYS
14/18天 俄罗斯西伯利亚大铁路旅游专列 + 圣彼得堡

Eleven days, nine nights, one very long railway.

Disney, for the kids (and letâ??s be honest, the adults too). WTS Travelâ??s Disney corner had branded suitcases going for as little as \$3.90 with a qualifying travel package purchase, up to \$99.90 for a full-sized case, all under a PWP (Purchase With Purchase) scheme, alongside a Disney Cruise Line counter. The Disney Cruise itself looks like a genuinely exciting option for young families, and judging by the queue of parents, I was not the only one who thought so.



PWP prices from \$3.90 to \$99.90. Minnie approves.

Cosplay Energy on the Show Floor

For a moment, I genuinely wondered if I had wandered into a cosplay event. Costumed staff from multiple booths were handing out pamphlets, and it was clear every team was trying to out-dress the one next to them. A treat for the neutral bystander, if nothing else.

The best of the lot were four young staff from Nam Ho Travel (in business since 1957), holding “Star Tour Highlight” brochures with red directional arrows lit up behind them, pointing visitors towards the booth. They told me, cheerfully, that they call themselves the “a-pointed” pamphlet handlers. Not bad, finding fun in your work.

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The a-pointed team, appointed and pointed, both at once.

Don't Lose the Information Board

One practical tip before you go: there's a large General Information Board with the full floor plan and exhibitor list near the entrance of the halls. You will, without question, double back on your own path at some point, whether to compare two similar packages or to find that one booth you walked past too quickly. After a few too many left and right turns of my own, I was very glad that board existed. Find it early, remember roughly where it is, and your feet will thank you later.

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Find this board. You will need it again.

Worth the Morning?

Yes, without hesitation. Between the scale (nearly 100 exhibitors, three halls, 14 National Tourism Organisations), the ceremony (lion dance, acrobats, drums, and a very sturdy stage), and the smaller booths doing genuinely interesting things (Suzuka Circuit karting, a Godzilla and Naruto theme park the size of Singapore, cross-country cycling in Korea, an 11 day railway journey into Siberia), there was

more here worth your time than a single morning could properly cover.

My thanks to Judy and the whole NATAS team for the invitation, and for putting together a fair that keeps getting bigger without losing the small, strange, wonderful booths that make it worth the walk. Travel safe and have fun, everyone.

Official Details

NATAS Holidays 2026

Venue: Singapore EXPO, Halls 3B, 4 and 5, 1 Expo Drive, Singapore 486150

Dates: 21 to 23 August 2026 (Friday to Sunday)

Hours: 10am to 9.30pm daily

Admission: Free

Website: [NATAS Travel Fairs](#)

Have you been down to NATAS Fair 2026, or is there a booth I should have spent more time at? Let me know in the comments.

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