

What is a Certified Travel Counsellor?

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Molly Johnson, a senior citizen has saved her money for a few years and now it is time for her to book her dream vacation but she has no idea where to go on her limited budget. In the neighbourhood travel agency, Molly is waiting for the travel counsellor to finish speaking with some newlyweds, and she hears words and phrases such as "excitement", "beach activities", "dining and dancing", "para-sailing", "jet boats" and then she hears "Acapulco". When the travel counsellor wishes the newlyweds a happy vacation and turns to Molly, she declares that she wants to spend her three week holiday in Acapulco. The travel counsellor asks her why and Molly repeats much of what she overheard the newlyweds saying. Then the travel counsellor asks what Molly would ideally like to do on her vacation. She says she would like to follow a daily routine of sleeping in late, enjoying a leisurely breakfast, meeting other seniors and playing Bridge in the afternoon, relaxing with a good book in the shade, having an early dinner (she does not like spicy foods) and then going to sleep by 8:00 pm. After speaking with the travel counsellor, Molly Johnson is not heading off to Acapulco, but to Sarasota, Florida. She later wrote that this was the best vacation of her life.

A certified travel counsellor, 'counsels' people about all the travel options available to them. And there are so many options to consider. Some travellers call it information overload while others suffer from what has become known as 'analysis paralysis', when there is just so much information out there--in books, magazines, television, newspapers and the internet--that the average traveller needs someone professional--and expert--to sort through everything and give them good, sound advice.

A certified travel counsellor's experience and expertise is based on the fact that this is their job--they do it every day and they understand where to access information. Moreover, a certified travel counsellor knows the key questions to ask the traveller to determine what best suits their needs. This is known as 'qualifying' the client. From our example above, we know that Molly would not have been too happy in Acapulco--which is a dynamic city and beach resort with 24/7 partying. The certified travel counsellor heard her needs, including her budget, and suggested a more appropriate holiday for Molly. Obviously it was the right choice.

Why are some travel counsellors certified? They have decided, on their own volition, to achieve the highest designation the industry offers. They have taken courses, collected education credits, passed the industry standards exam, and now are able to post CTC (Certified Travel Counsellor) or CTM (Certified Travel Manager) after their name. These are the experts that traveller should turn to for counsel and advice. There is no extra cost involved, so why not seek advice from the best the travel industry has to offer?

Travellers travel for many reasons but the bottom line is that they have a vision of the perfect trip in their mind: a dream to be fulfilled. Travel counsellors know this too well. Their business depends on dream management, client satisfaction and retention--and word-of-mouth endorsement. Whether a trip involves a flight across the country, a package safari to Africa, an Alaska Cruise, an elephant ride in Thailand or a discovery tour of Prince Edward Island, a certified travel counsellor will save the traveller **money** (by checking all the relevant prices), **time** (by presenting options to the client and explaining differences amongst all the available options), **worry** (by double checking arrangements and giving advice on travel documentation, medical requirements, travel insurance and travel safety) and allow the traveller to fulfill that cherished dream.

A full listing of Canada's Certified Travel Professionals can be found at www.citc.ca/en/directory or by contacting CITC at info@citc.ca; 1-800-589-5776; 416-484-4450.

Incorporated in 1968, the vision of the **Canadian Institute of Travel Counsellors** is to lead the Canadian travel industry to be the most skilled and professional work force in the world, and to ensure that the CTC / CTM designations are recognized, accepted and valued by the travel industry and consumers as the ultimate achievement in professionalism. Information on membership, certification, educational programs and publications is available at www.citc.ca

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