



“Invaluable support” for European household name moving to Asia

The local knowledge and expertise of TMF Japan helped Merlin Entertainments focus on putting smiles on faces

About the client

Merlin Entertainments is one of the world’s largest entertainments companies, running more than 110 attractions in 23 countries across four continents. It aims to deliver unique and memorable experiences to millions of visitors across its growing estate. Merlin Entertainments is the home to such household brands as Madame Tussauds, LEGOLAND®, the Dungeons, The Eye, and SEA LIFE.

In their own words

“We were looking to enter Japan with our attractions around 2010, and realised we would need some assistance. More importantly, we needed advice from specialists who understood the challenges faced by foreign investors and who could give us practical solutions for day-to-day issues. When we met the TMF team, we thought, ‘here is a company that could really help us’. Ever since then TMF Group has done a lot of our company secretarial work not just in Japan but in other countries as well. They have also provided in the past, payroll, accounting and tax compliance services while we were getting up and running, but we are now big enough in Asia to take those in-house.”

How TMF Group helped us

“The big challenge in Japan is really around staffing. Everybody told us that finding staff who speak English is quite a challenge, as is the local legislation around overtime working. Also, in Japan you must pay the cost of your employees’ commuting which was a first for us. It was actually in an early meeting with the TMF team that we found out about that - we were talking about writing employee rules and they mentioned that the contract had to stipulate the employee should travel to work in the most economical way possible because the employer pays for commuting costs. That was a bit of a surprise!

“TMF Japan has also been very helpful for giving us an independent, objective view. It’s quite hard sometimes to know whether you’re getting a truly independent view in Japan because there’s a lot of connectivity with firms on different things. For us that’s one thing we appreciated from TMF: we knew they were giving us a truly independent view.

“These days in Japan we have three smaller attractions – two LEGOLAND® Discovery Centres and a Madame Tussauds - and we have now just broken ground on a LEGOLAND® park in Nagoya. In fact, we’re in the process of transferring our Japanese resident director to the new general manager who has just been appointed there. Since we set-up, TMF has provided a resident director and it has worked very well for us to have somebody on the ground who was able to look after the seal. Our company secretarial team feels very safe because in Japan the company seal gives you virtually unlimited rights, so we needed to be sure that the seal was kept in a very safe place and somebody we could be sure would only allow that to be affixed to documents once appropriately authorised. The authorisation process was very robust and our Group Legal Director was very happy in how they were looking after that. You see, TMF Group’s support has been invaluable, really.”

In the future

“We are always looking at new opportunities, in particular within China. We are not currently planning another theme park in Japan, but we do have some of our smaller brands that are not yet represented in Japan and we’re looking at new opportunities there and throughout Asia. It’s an area of expansion for us because it is in some ways an under-served market for quality visitor attractions. Our company secretarial team is definitely very happy with the partnership with TMF Group in Asia.”

“We were looking for somebody who was used to dealing with foreigners coming into Japan to give us a bit of a pointer as to the things we should watch out for. When we met the team, we thought, ‘here is a company that could really help us.’”

Christine Dure-Smith
Strategic Finance Director
MMM Merlin Entertainments

TMF Group provides the following services to Merlin Entertainments in Asia:

- Domiciliary
- Directorship
- Corporate secretarial

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