



Guidance on Sampling of Tours for the GSTC Tour Operator Certification

May, 2024

Guidance on Sampling of Tours for the GSTC Tour Operator

Document History

Version	Date of Approval	Description of Amendment	Affected Section/Page
1.0	6 May 2024	New Document	N/A

Document Control

This is version 1.0 of the Guidance of Sampling of Tours for the GSTC Tour Operator, 2024.

© The Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2024, All Rights Reserved

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

www.gstcouncil.org

Table of Contents

1. Purpose and Scope	4
2. Normative Reference	4
3. Sampling for Tour Operators	4
4. Calculation of the Minimum Audit Days	5
5. Sampling Guidelines	6
6. Sample Selection	7
7. Auditing Tailored Tours	8

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. This document aims to explain how Certification Bodies (CBs) sample the tours of a tour operator(TO).
- 1.2. This procedure guides CBs in planning the sampling for the tour operator certification.
 - 1.2.1. Sampling approaches shall be justified by CBs if their sample number or audit duration differs from the suggested approach in this document.

2. Normative Reference

- 2.1. The latest version of the GSTC Accreditation Manual for Certification of Hotel/Accommodation and Tour Operator.

3. Sampling for Tour Operators

- 3.1. CBs shall adhere to the following procedure for tour sampling to audit a tour operator.
- 3.2. CBs shall analyze the tour operator type following the Accreditation Manual for Certification of Hotel/Accommodation & Tour Operator, Section 16.
 - Outbound Tour Operator
 - Inbound Tour Operator
 - Domestic Tour Operator
 - Destination Management Company (DMC)
 - A mix of the above businesses
- 3.3. The formula for calculating the required number of samples shall follow Section 4.

4. Calculation of the Minimum Audit Days

4.1. CBs shall use the following formulas described in 4.4 and 4.5 to calculate the minimum audit days for the initial certification of a TO.

4.2. Calculation of 't' based on the type of business

Type of TO	Value (t)
Outbound Tour Operator	0.1
Domestic TO, Inbound TO, and DMC	0.4

Note. The certification process for Outbound Tour Operators is currently suspended. (Since 8 April, 2024)

4.3. Calculation of 's' based on the business size

Number of full-time employees	Business Scale	Value (s)
1 - 4	Micro TO	0
5 - 19	Small TO	0
20 - 49	Medium TO	0.1
50 - 199	Large TO	0.2
200+	Mega TO	0.3

4.4. For Multi-day Tour Product: The sample number equals the square root of the number of multi-day tours (mp) multiplied by the sum of calculations for type and scale of business.

- **Sample number= $(\sqrt{mp}) \times (t+s)$**
- *For example, the number of sample tours for a DMC having 120 employees and providing 25 multi-day packages is calculated as follows:*
- $(\sqrt{25}) \times (0.4 + 0.2) = 3$
- *As a result, a CB shall sample 3 mp following Section 5 to 7. Subsequently, TO shall create a tailored tour from the sample of the mp. TO and CB shall agree on the man-days and the tailored tour for the sampling process.*

4.5. For excursions (Day Tour Product): The sample number equals the square root of the number of excursions (ex) multiplied by the sum of calculations for the type and scale of business.

- **Sample number= $(\sqrt{\text{ex}}) \times (\text{t+s})$**
- *For example, the number of sample tours for a DMC having 120 employees and providing 100 packages of excursions is calculated as follows:*
- $(\sqrt{100}) \times (0.4 + 0.2) = 6$
- *As a result, a CB shall choose 6 excursions from the TO's list and conduct the sampling following Section 5 to 7. Subsequently, the TO shall create a tailored tour based on the sample of excursions. The TO and the CB shall agree on the man-days and the tailored tour for the sampling process.*

4.6. If a TO provides both multi-day tours and excursions, the total sample number equals the sum of the multi-day and excursion sample numbers

- **Sample number (total)= $(\sqrt{\text{mp}}) \times (\text{t+s}) + (\sqrt{\text{ex}}) \times (\text{t+s})$**

5. Sampling Guidelines

5.1. The maximum number of samples for a TO that only provides one scope of multi-day tours or excursions is up to ten (10) tours with a recommended audit duration of around 5 days.

5.1.1. If a TO provides both multi-day tours and excursions, the maximum number of samples for each scope is up to seven (7) (7 multi-day tours and 7 excursions), totaling 14 sample tours. Additionally, audit durations are recommended to be limited to 7 days for multi-day tours and 5 days for excursions.

- 5.2. The CB and the TO shall agree on tailored tours, and the CB shall provide justification if the sampling exceeds the recommended sample numbers described in Clause 5.1.
- 5.3. The surveillance sample will be the same number as the initial certification, and then the number will be allocated per year by the CB. However, the sampled tours shall be different from the initial audited tours.
- 5.4. High-risk tours shall be prioritized in the sampling procedure.

Note. CBs shall rotate the tours at each certification stage to ensure that different types of tours are sampled and covered.

6. Sample Selection

- 6.1. CBs shall sample from fixed tours complying with the following requirements:
 - 6.1.1. The sampling is mixed with random (25%) and intentional sampling (75%) by considering the most frequently used suppliers and the most sold products;
 - 6.1.2. The sampling also shall include suppliers under investigation (internal or external), e.g., due to complaints.
 - 6.1.3. The suppliers certified to GSTC Criteria (e.g., Hotel, TO, Attraction, MICE, etc.) may be sampled by the CB. However, CB may limit its evaluation.

7. Auditing Tailored Tours

- 7.1. The TO may optimize the itinerary by arranging the sampled tours to reduce duplicate visits and travel time. This can be done by grouping the same or nearby sites, attractions, hotels, transport, restaurants, and other tour elements.;

7.2. If the TO finds that the location of the supplier is unreachable, the TO shall inform the CB regarding the situation;

7.2.1. If the CB still needs the information of the supplier, the CB could conduct an online interview in the case they are not in a high-risk category and do not require onsite confirmation;

7.2.2. Alternatively, the CB could choose the supplier from another tour.

As a note, following the Accreditation Manual for certification of Hotel/Accommodation and Tour Operator Clause 16.18, the sampling of contracted services does not constitute certification of the suppliers or their products. The Tour Operator's external communications shall not state or imply that suppliers or products are certified (unless the products are awarded stand-alone certification as per Section 17-Tour Product Certification).