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GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

NO. 6107 **4 April 2025**

INVITATION TO DOMESTIC TOUR OPERATORS TO SUBMIT AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN PHASE TWO OF THE TRUSTED TOUR OPERATOR SCHEME OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

BACKGROUND

1. In a critical step to reform the visa system and position the Department of Home Affairs as an economic enabler by enhancing job creation in the tourism sector in South Africa, the Department is inviting tour operators in China, India and South Africa to submit an Expression of Interest for admission to the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme ("TTOS"), subject to the qualifying criteria.

2. With an initial focus on the burgeoning tourist markets of China and India, the TTOS will remove some of the key obstacles standing in the way of South Africa becoming a favoured tourism destination for the second and fifth largest economies in the world.

3. Through the TTOS, the Department aims to put in place a visa regime that will attract and promote tourism on the basis of simplified procedures and objective,

predictable and reasonable requirements and criteria, and without consuming excessive administrative capacity.

4. The TTOS will, subject to risk profile, allow group tourist visa applications to be submitted by an accredited Trusted Tour Operator (the "Tour Operator") as per the Memorandum of Agreement concluded with the Tour Operator, which will regulate and prescribe reduced supporting documents.

5. To qualify for membership to the TTOS, a domestic tour operator, business or organization needs to demonstrate that it adheres to the regulatory requirements in the tourism sector, that it has relevant experience in facilitating tour groups, and that it has sufficient insurance to cover all the travellers to South Africa, including the provision of continuous support and aftercare services should it be required.

6. The second Phase of the TTOS is aimed at increasing the number of Tour Operators for the Chinese and Indian tourist markets.

SELECTION CRITERIA

In order to ensure that the selection process of companies is fair, ethical and transparent, the Department of Home Affairs will make use of the following score card system:

Pathway 1: Tour companies operating out of China:

ITEM NO.	FACTOR	POINTS
1	**LEGAL COMPLIANCE**: Tour Operators registered with the Chinese government for Approved Destination Status (ADS).	50
2	**OPERATING EXPERIENCE**: Relevant experience in operating as a tour operator and in arranging outbound and inbound tours from and to China. • 3 years and more – 30 points • Between 2 and 3 years – 20 points	30

3	**OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE**: Number of tourists brought to South Africa from China over the previous 12 months (cumulative not a single group). • More than 300 tourists – 30 points • Between 150 and 300 tourists – 20 points	30
4	**COLLABORATION**: Partnering with a South African tour operator affiliated with a recognised tourist industry body and based in South Africa.	20
TOTAL		**130**

NB: A Tour Operator from China must meet the mandatory legal requirements (registered with Chinese Government for ADS in item 1 above) and must obtain a minimum threshold of 110 points for selection into the TTOS.

Pathway 2: Tour companies operating out of India:

ITEM NO.	FACTOR	POINTS
1	**LEGAL COMPLIANCE**: Proof of offices and legal registration in either South Africa or India.	50
2	**EVIDENCE OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY**: Proof of business registration as well as registration with the appropriate tourism authority (legal permission to act as a tour operator).	50
3	**OPERATING EXPERIENCE**: Relevant experience in operating as a tour operator and in arranging outbound and inbound tours from and to India. • 3 years and more – 30 points • Between 2 and 3 years – 20 points	30
4	**OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE**: Number of outbound tourists facilitated to other countries, over the previous 12 months (cumulative not a single group). • More than 300 tourists – 30 points • Between 150 and 300 tourists – 20 points	30

5	**COLLABORATION**: Partnering with a South African tour operator affiliated with a recognised tourist industry body and based in South Africa.	20
TOTAL		**180**

NB: A Tour Operator from India must meet the mandatory legal requirements (legal requirements in item 1, as well as the evidence of business activity in item 2 above) and must obtain a minimum threshold of 160 points for selection into the TTOS.

Pathway 3: For South African-based Tour Operators:

ITEM NO.	FACTOR	POINTS
1	**LEGAL COMPLIANCE**: Proof of offices and legal registration in South Africa.	50
2	**EVIDENCE OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY**: Proof of business registration as well as registration with the appropriate tourism authority (legal permission to act as a tour operator).	50
3	**OPERATING EXPERIENCE**: Relevant experience in operating as a tour operator and in arranging outbound and inbound tours to and from South Africa. • 3 years and more – 30 points • Between 2 and 3 years – 20 points	30
4	**OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE**: Number of tourists brought to South Africa from China and India over the previous 12 months (cumulative not a single group). • More than 300 tourists – 30 points • Between 150 and 300 tourists – 20 points	30
5	**COLLABORATION**: Partnering with a recognised tour operator from China or India.	20
TOTAL		**180**

NB: A Tour Operator from South Africa must meet the mandatory Legal requirements (legal compliance in item 1 as well as the evidence of business activity in item 2 above) and must obtain a minimum threshold of 160 points for selection into the TTOS.

For more information on the application process, the qualification criteria and the determination, as well as the awarding, of points, kindly visit the Department's website at www.dha.gov.za.

SELECTION PROCESS

1. Tour companies operating in China, India and South Africa, that have been operational in the tourism sector for at least 12 months prior to the publication of this *Gazette and* who are interested to be considered for admission to the TTOS, should submit their Expression of Interest Form and supporting documents using the TTOS' link on the Department's website at www.dha.gov.za or at https://touroperator.dha.gov.za:8443

2. Applications must be submitted in English and must contain all information specified in the selection criteria set out above, supported with a portfolio of evidence, as well as the documents mentioned in the TTOS' Application Form.

3. Applications will be considered inclusively in order to achieve the goal of growing group tourism from China and India, however tour operators must meet the mandatory legal and other requirements stipulated in this notice.

4. The scored results will be assessed and validated by the TTOS Inter-Departmental Committee, comprising of one or more technical officials from, but not limited to, the Department of Home Affairs, Department of Tourism, Department of Transport and any other Government Department. The TTOS Inter-Departmental Committee will, after assessing and validating that application, make recommendation to the Minister of Home Affairs for ratification.

5. The Department of Home Affairs will communicate the final decision, on the application, to the applicant. Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their applications **within 30 working days** from the closing date of this Notice.

6. The Department of Home Affairs reserves the right to grant or not to grant a TTOS status to any Tour Operator.

7. The closing date will be **30 calendar days** from the date of publication of this Notice. Any application received after the closing date of this Notice will not be considered.

8. Applicants are advised to note that the Department of Home Affairs is undergoing a process of digital transformation and reserves the right to amend TTOS as part of this ongoing process.



DR. L.A. SCHREIBER, MP
MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS
DATE: 04/04/25

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