

Caribbean Community

EDICT OF GOVERNMENT

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CRCP 8 (2010) (English): Inbound Tour
Operators



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CARICOM REGIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE

Inbound tour operators

CRCP 8: 2010



Caribbean Community



CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)

2nd Floor Nicholas House

29 & 30 Broad Street

Bridgetown, St Michael

Barbados

T: 246.622.7670 | F: 246.622.7678

Website: <http://www.crosq.org>

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ISBN 978-976-8234-17-9
ICS 03.220.01

AMENDMENTS ISSUED SINCE PUBLICATION

AMENDMENT NO.	DATE OF ISSUE	TYPE OF AMENDMENT	NO. OF TEXT AFFECTED	TEXT OF AMENDMENT

ATTACHMENT PAGE FOR CRS AMENDMENT SHEETS

Committee representation

This CARICOM Regional Standard was developed under the supervision of the Regional Technical Committee for Tourism Services (RTC 6) (hosted by the CARICOM Member States, St. Lucia and Barbados) which at the time comprised the following members:

Members

Ms. Deidre Shurland **(Chairperson)**

Ms. Yvonne Armour-Shillingford

Ms. Natalie DeCaires

Mr. Julius James

Ms. Bonita Morgan

Ms. Kim Osborne

Ms. Nadia Pacquette-Anselm

Ms. Camille Roopnarine

Ms. Geraldine Roy

Ms. Mareba Scott

Ms. Renate Sealy **(Technical Secretary)**

Representing

Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism

Caribbean Tourism Organization

Caribbean Hotel Association

St. Lucia Bureau of Standards

Caribbean Tourism Organization

Organisation of American States

Dominica Bureau of Standards

Caribbean Environmental Health Institute

Tourism Product Development Company

Caribbean Tourism Organization

Barbados National Standards Institution

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Foreword

This Code of Practice recommends guidelines for the establishment and maintenance of minimum acceptable levels of service for inbound tour operators. Users of this standard are encouraged to go beyond the requirements documented here.

This document was developed as a result of the:

- a) increasing importance of tourism to the economies of the states comprising the membership of CARICOM;
- b) increasing demand for tours from the various sectors of tourism;
- c) need to provide quality service keeping in mind factors such as enjoyment, information and safety of customers;
- d) need to promote care for the environment to ensure sustainability, as well as development of commodity resources used in tours; and
- e) social responsibility needed to provide and maintain a positive impact on the local community in which the tours occur.

It was also recognized that many aspects of the tourism sector are linked. Hence, it is recommended that the World Tourism Organization Global Code of Ethics for Tourism be referred to for information. This document can be found at <http://www.bmwi.de/BMWi/Redaktion/PDF/G/global-code-of-ethics-englisch,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>.

This Code of Practice was approved by the Thirtieth Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) on 3-4 May 2010.

In the development of this Code of Practice, assistance was derived from the following:

- a) World Tourism Organization, The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism ;
- b) Trinidad and Tobago Standard, TTS 580: 2001, Code of Practice for Tour Operators;
- c) Dominica Tourism Standard: 2004, Code of Practice for Tour Operators.

1 Scope

This Code of Practice specifies acceptable guidelines recommended for use as a quality tool by:

- a) inbound tour operators;
- b) tourism service providers;
- c) tour parties; and
- d) relevant authorities and agencies responsible for tourism within the CARICOM region.

This Code of Practice does not specify the criteria necessary to obtain registration as an inbound tour operator within the CARICOM Region as provided for in the laws of the states comprising the membership of CARICOM.

This Code of Practice does not apply to self-guided tours.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Practice the following terms and definitions should apply.

2.1

aircraft

any mechanically propelled device that is capable of flight and has been certified flight worthy by the relevant authority

EXAMPLE An aircraft may be a helicopter or an aeroplane.

2.2

all-inclusive

agreed package of the tour including all agreed charges that may be incurred while on tour

2.3

carrying capacity

maximum number of people that can use the tourist attraction, without causing an unacceptable deterioration in the environment and without an unacceptable decline in the quality of the visitor's experience

2.4

floating craft

any propelled, passenger-bearing vessel that floats on water

2.5

inbound tour operator

company that arranges tours locally within a country. Their customers are usually anyone in the world who may have made their own way (either themselves or through another travel company) to that country and destination and purchases a local tour in that country. Some of the services provided include but are not limited to:

- a) coordinating and handling ad hoc or incentive groups;
- b) generating and handling multi -centre holiday packages;
- c) creating hotel and activity innovative packages for special interest groups as well as individual travellers;
- d) all types of transfer and transport arrangements;

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- e) airport, port and hotel agent representation; and
- f) local and pre-booking of excursions and tours

2.6

motor vehicle

any mechanically propelled vehicle intended or adapted for use on land

2.7

public liability insurance

insurance coverage given to a member of the public for loss of or damage to property or injury to self

2.8

quality

degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements

2.9

relevant authority

any agency or organization responsible for one or more of the following:

- a) tourism;
- b) licensing;
- c) regulation;
- d) registration;
- e) certification; and
- f) training

2.10

site and attraction

person, place, thing or event that is intended to attract people's interest, for such purposes as recreation, enjoyment, education, and may be flora and fauna, cultural activity, indigenous people, natural or scenic wonder, man-made theme park, cultural or historic exhibition, or wild life or ecological park

2.11

tour

any prearranged journey to one or more destinations led by a tour guide

2.12

tourism

activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than twelve consecutive months for leisure, business and other purposes.

2.13

tour guide

person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural, natural and man-made heritage of an area, and who normally possesses an area-specific qualification, usually issued and or recognized by the appropriate authority

2.14

tour itinerary

itemised aspects of the tour including the route and expected times of departure and return of the tour party

2.15

tour package

combination of several travel components provided by one or more suppliers which is sold to the consumer as a single product at a single price

2.16

tour party

individual or group of individuals who is a participant of a tour

2.17

tour representative or director

person associated with the inbound tour operator who oversees the general progress of the tour and monitors the satisfaction of the tour party with the tour package provided

2.18

travel agent

someone who makes travel arrangements for tourists or other travelers, as for transportation, hotels, and itineraries

3 Responsibilities of the inbound tour operator

3.1 The role of the inbound tour operator should be the primary link between the tour party and the local population, culture and environment, through the provision of a range of services for the international and or domestic market.

3.2 The behaviour and conduct of the inbound tour operator should reflect the responsibilities that are required of him or her as a representative of the country.

3.3 The major responsibilities of the inbound tour operator should be to:

- a) contribute to the promotion and preservation of the national, regional and international tourism sector;
- b) contribute to the promotion and preservation of local craft and culture;
- c) ensure the conservation of the environment in the areas in which they operate;
- d) provide for the safety of the tour party;
- e) report any abuse or infraction of the laws to the relevant authority;
- f) advise the tour organiser or planner of the tour party of the current charges for services or items that may be purchased;
- g) provide the tour party with accurate information about transportation, tourist services, social and economic conditions, accommodation and dining facilities and other matters of interest in the country;
- h) promote responsible client behaviour by advising the tour party on relevant laws of the country, acceptable modes of attire and behaviour, cultural and religious practices, and sensitive environmental issues, among others;

NOTE The report should include any abuse or infraction of the law.

- i) provide for the comfort, interest and enjoyment of the tour party;
- j) monitor and evaluate impacts (economic, social and environmental) of the tour party and the tour, with a view to improving performance;

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- k) establish and document procedures for the effective response to emergencies, accidents or contingencies;
- l) maintain complete and accurate records of activities conducted in the operation;
- m) adhere to the principle of best practice compatible with the type of operation;
- n) undertake all reasonable steps to accommodate clients with special needs; and
- o) establish and maintain a Policy Compliance Monitoring Procedure to document and evaluate fulfilment of the above responsibilities and necessary actions required for improvement.

4 Activities of the inbound tour operator

The inbound tour operator should:

- a) plan and document the tour itinerary;
- b) advertise and market the tour;
- c) make bookings for the tour;
- d) verify that the necessary equipment is available and in sufficient quantity and dimensions relative to the size of the tour party;
- e) ensure that the equipment to be used is in safe working order and has met all inspection and licensing requirements in the country of operation;
- f) ensure that tour guides and staff employed by the inbound tour operator are courteous, certified and adequately qualified to perform their duties;
- g) ensure an effective means of communication between the tour representative and the base of operation or other appropriate contact in order to cater for emergency situations;
- h) inform a responsible third party or relevant authority of the tour itinerary depending on the tour;
- i) liaise with all necessary local suppliers;
- j) establish a ratio of tour guides to the tour party relevant to the type of tour in an effort to ensure delivery of quality service;
- k) ensure that all legal requirements are met;

EXAMPLE Registration of the business with an authorising agency

- l) ensure the availability of evaluation forms for the services provided to the tour party;
- m) ensure that staff attend all training or refresher courses approved and recommended by the relevant authorizing agencies;
- n) verify that contracted parties are suitably trained for the services they are required to provide;
- o) not traffic or use prohibited drugs or narcotics;
- p) inform the tour party as to activities that may cause adverse cultural and environmental impacts;
- q) inform the tour party of products that are illegal; and

- r) coordinate all bookings and costs with the tour organiser or planner.

5 Hiring practices

5.1 The inbound tour operator should recruit, hire or contract trained tour guides and drivers. The inbound tour operator is responsible and accountable for the performance and actions of the staff including all relevant training prior to them providing services.

5.2 The inbound tour operator should hire tour guides and drivers who are competent to perform the tour and who satisfy any requirements specified in the advertising of the tour. In addition, inbound tour operators should verify that drivers are holders of valid driver's licenses, certified under the relevant statute and should ensure that their vehicles meet all the necessary requirements for safety and security.

5.3 The inbound tour operator should conduct the necessary training and monitoring programs to ensure that all staff under its operations (contractual or regular) are informed about and comply with all applicable national traffic, vehicle safety driving laws and regulations.

5.4 Subcontractors should meet the same standards of training and licensing as the inbound tour operator.

5.5 Tour buses should comply with the roadworthiness regulations of the relevant authority with responsibility for transport licensing.

6 Appearance

Staff of inbound tour operators should:

- a) be attired in accordance with the policy of the inbound tour operator while on duty;
- b) provide that good personal hygiene practices are observed while on duty;
- c) be medically and physically able to perform any strenuous activity required by the type of tour being offered;
- d) be clearly identified as such and should wear a badge, pin or uniform;
- e) have broad knowledge of the tourism product(s) of the relevant CARICOM member states; and

EXAMPLE Examples of tourism products include but are not limited to the relevant country's history and culture, geography, flora and fauna, wildlife, heritage sites

- f) have good interpersonal and communication skills.

7 Conduct

7.1 Legality

Inbound tour operators should conduct their business lawfully and in full compliance with all legislation and regulations pertinent to the type of operations.

7.2 Ethics

7.2.1 Inbound tour operators should trade fairly and responsibly, conducting their business with honesty, integrity and transparency.

7.2.2 Proper accounting practices and procedures should be established and maintained.

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7.2.3 Inbound tour operators should attempt to ensure that suppliers and contractors and all other persons with whom they have commercial relationships, operate in a similar manner.

7.3 Advertising

7.3.1 All services advertised by the inbound tour operator should be authentic and accurate and should be provided as advertised to clients.

7.3.2 Advertisements should:

- a) describe fairly and accurately, the services provided;
- b) clearly state the exact goods and services that are included in the tour for the price quoted, which includes service charges, taxes and other surcharges under the terms and conditions of the tour;
- c) specify the language in which the tour will be conducted;
- d) indicate the level of physical activity required to participate in the tour; and
- e) indicate approximate duration of the tour.

8 Facilities

8.1 The inbound tour operator should have well maintained facilities with established means of communication with potential customers and staff.

8.2 The inbound tour operator should have facilities for financial transactions. In cases where virtual services are provided care should be taken to ensure secure financial transactions between the operator and clients.

NOTE Facilities for financial transactions may include means for the customer to pay for a tour such as cash box, debit card or credit card facilities.

8.3 Where the inbound tour operator has a public office, the inbound tour operator should provide access at the office to:

- a) clean washrooms;
- b) sheltered seating; and
- c) a reception area adequately staffed to handle enquiries.

8.4 Where the inbound tour operator has a public office, the inbound tour operator should, as far as possible, provide facilities for the use of persons with special needs.

NOTE Facilities may include a wheelchair ramp, sign language interpretation, audio description or other accommodation deemed necessary for the particular tour.

8.5 The inbound tour operator who operates a virtual office, that is web-based services, should secure appropriate facilities to meet the needs of clients.

9 Equipment

9.1 General

9.1.1 All equipment, provided on the tour, should be well maintained, clean and in safe working condition at the time of the tour.

9.1.2 All equipment should be properly calibrated, where necessary. The inbound tour operator should keep records of maintenance and calibration checks.

9.1.3 The inbound tour operator should verify that all users of equipment are properly trained and certified, where relevant, to operate their equipment competently and safely and are able to conduct emergency repairs. Additionally, the basic tools needed for such repairs should be provided to the users.

NOTE Emergency repairs may include changing a flat tyre and restarting a stalled engine.

9.1.4 Where relevant, the inbound tour operator should provide a checklist to be signed by the tour party indicating that the equipment was received in good working order.

9.1.5 Where necessary, the inbound tour operator should provide a guide for the use of equipment and ensure that the tour party fully understands how to operate the equipment safely.

9.2 Motor vehicles, floating craft, aircraft

9.2.1 All of the equipment as captioned should satisfy legal and regulatory requirements including those relating to registration, insurance, safety equipment and roadworthiness, seaworthiness or airworthiness status based on inspections conducted by, or on behalf of the relevant authority.

9.2.2 Where applicable, any motor vehicle, floating craft or aircraft used for the transport of tour parties should offer the option of air conditioning and a public address system.

9.3 Safety equipment

9.3.1 All safety equipment provided on tours should undergo checks based on a fixed inspection and maintenance schedule and in accordance with national regulations, where applicable.

9.3.2 All equipment should be thoroughly examined prior to use on a tour for apparent defects.

9.3.3 The quantities of the safety equipment should be adequate in relation to the size of the tour party.

NOTE Safety equipment may include seat belts, life vests, ropes, harnesses, helmets, protective clothing, portable radios, flares, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, flashlights and toolboxes.

9.4 Other equipment

All other equipment provided on tours by the inbound tour operator should meet the guidelines stated in 9.1 and the regulations of the relevant authority, where applicable.

EXAMPLE Examples of other equipment include hot air balloons, boats, public address systems, binoculars, snorkelling and scuba diving equipment.

10 Insurance

All inbound tour operators should have adequate public liability insurance that sufficiently covers the entire scope of operations of the tour.

11 Bookings

11.1 The inbound tour operator should have facilities and documented procedures to handle all bookings.

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11.2 The following information on the tour should be provided:

- a) the type of tour;
- b) tour costs;
- c) tour dates;
- d) accepted size of tour parties;
- e) transportation;
- f) equipment; and
- g) recommended attire.

11.3 The members of the tour party should be informed of:

- a) the level of physical activity required;
- b) duration of the tour; and
- c) conditions and general climatic conditions expected for the tour.

11.4 Where the tour is particularly rigorous, it is recommended that each member of the tour party sign an agreement as to their fitness and willingness to partake in the tour.

11.5 Information on payment, cancellation and refund policies of the inbound tour operator should be separately stated on the tour brochure.

11.6 The inbound tour operator should also inform the tour party of any policy pertaining to lateness with respect to organized tours.

11.7 The inbound tour operator should inform the tour party if the tour fee is “all-inclusive” or if the tour party will incur miscellaneous fees or taxes while on or after the tour.

11.8 The inbound tour operator should document contact information for members of the tour party, in order to provide relevant information with respect to the proposed tour or itinerary.

11.9 The inbound tour operator should indicate the meeting point and time for the tour party.

11.10 The inbound tour operator should have the relevant emergency contact information for all members of the tour party.

12 Reception for tour party

The inbound tour operator should either meet the tour party or arrange for a representative to do so. The tour party should be directed to a strategic point where formal introduction to the tour representative may take place and a pre-tour briefing should be given. During the pre-tour briefing the operator should, among other things:

- a) provide the tour party with relevant information and guidance on:
 - 1) responsible client behaviour as in 3 h); and
 - 2) the agreed tour itinerary so as to enable clients to develop realistic expectations for their interest, safety and enjoyment during the tour; and

- b) help the tour party make adjustments that may be necessary for the tour, paying particular attention to the different needs of the members of the tour party.

13 Difficult situations

13.1 The inbound tour operator should have a documented system to address situations which include but are not limited to the following:

- a) lost items;
- b) disruptive or undesirable behaviour from one or more members of the tour party;
- c) sickness and injury;
- d) missing or lost members of the tour party;
- e) mechanical failures;
- f) adverse weather conditions or natural disasters; and
- g) any other situation that can be considered hazardous or life threatening.

13.2 The inbound tour operator should establish and document a contingency plan and ensure that this plan is communicated to all staff and subcontractors of their operations.

13.3 The inbound tour operator should provide emergency numbers to all staff and subcontractors.

14 Post-tour evaluation

The inbound tour operator should maintain a post-tour evaluation system which includes feedback about the tour for improvement of services. Electronic or manual post-tour evaluation forms should be made available, where employed.

15 Complaints

Systems should be implemented for dealing with customer complaints. When faced with a complaint, the inbound tour operator or representative should:

- a) determine the nature of the complaint;
- b) investigate the complaint;
- c) address the complaint in a timely manner;
- d) select and implement an appropriate solution aimed at addressing the complaint or rectifying the relevant procedure or process;
- e) follow up as required;
- f) document the complaint and solution for future guidance;
- g) monitor the action taken to avoid repetition of the complaint; and
- h) direct the persons involved to the relevant authorities to lodge their complaints in cases where complaints cannot be rectified between inbound tour operator and tour party member,

16 Record keeping

16.1 The inbound tour operator should establish and maintain records, to provide evidence of conformity to this Code of Practice.

16.2 Records should be legible, readily identifiable and retrievable.

End of document



CARICOM REGIONAL ORGANISATION FOR STANDARDS AND QUALITY

The CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) was created as an Inter-Governmental Organisation by the signing of an agreement among fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CROSQ is the regional centre for promoting efficiency and competitive production in goods and services, through the process of standardization and the verification of quality. It is the successor to the Caribbean Common Market Standards Council (CCMSC), and supports the CARICOM mandate in the expansion of intra-regional and extra-regional trade in goods and services.

CROSQ is mandated to represent the interest of the region in international and hemispheric standards work, to promote the harmonization of metrology systems and standards, and to increase the pace of development of regional standards for the sustainable production of goods and services in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), and the enhancement of social and economic development.

CROSQ VISION:

The premier CARICOM organisation for the development and promotion of an Internationally Recognised Regional Quality Infrastructure; and for international and regional harmonized CARICOM Metrology, Standards, Inspection, Testing and Quality Infrastructure

CROSQ MISSION:

The promotion and development of standards and standards related activities to facilitate international competitiveness and the sustainable production of goods and services within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) for the enhancement of social and economic development



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ISBN 978-976-8234-17-9
ICS 03.220.01