
**Tourist information offices — Tourist
information and reception services —
Requirements**

*Offices de tourisme — Services d'accueil et d'informations aux
touristes — Exigences*



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information

The committee responsible for this document is Technical Committee ISO/TC 228, *Tourism and related services*.

Introduction

Many tourist information offices (TIO) are run by public administrations. There are also TIOs that are operated privately, and these ideally work in partnership with the relevant tourist authorities. The administrations that control TIO units can apply for implementation for all units or some of them.

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Tourist information offices — Tourist information and reception services — Requirements

1 Scope

This International Standard establishes minimum quality requirements for services provided by tourist information offices (TIO) of any type and size, whether publicly or privately operated, in order to satisfy visitors' expectations.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1

tourist information office

TIO

organization responsible for welcoming, advising visitor and promoting tourism-related activities

Note 1 to entry: Tourist information offices are also known as tourism information centres (TIC).

Note 2 to entry: This definition is also applicable to tourist information offices operated abroad or in other destination in the same country.

Note 3 to entry: Promotion can be done through brochures, leaflets and electronic supports.

2.2

visitor

customer who contacts (in person or by other means) a tourist information office

3 Service provision

3.1 Reception of visitors

3.1.1 Location and access

The most appropriate location of facilities and types of service shall be established according to the characteristics of the destination and visitor requirements.

The TIO shall be located where there is the most important flow of tourists.

NOTE Suitable locations include the town centre, tourist sites, transport arrival terminals and main access roads into the destination.

The TIO shall be easy to find, regardless of the means of transport used.

Access should be provided for people with disabilities.

Access to the TIO should be free of charge.

The TIO shall be sign-posted. Sign-posting shall be consistent in style and should comply with ISO 7001.

The TIO shall be visible by means of an "i" sign placed on or in front of the building, in accordance with local regulations (e.g. a sign or a banner). There shall be sign-posting to direct motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.

Maps and brochures published by the TIO shall indicate the TIO location.

Parking areas or nearby parking facilities shall be indicated (if available).

3.1.2 Opening times

The TIO shall define and document its opening timetable according to the number of visitors, tourist activities and seasons.

The TIO shall indicate its opening times at the entrance, as well as on notice boards, location maps, answering machines, destination websites (where available) and/or any other media.

Outside normal working hours, information shall be provided by destination websites.

Emergency contacts shall be indicated, clearly visible from the outside to visitors.

A local map shall be visible from the outside.

A list of accommodation with telephone numbers should be visible from the outside, as well as an indication of where this list can be obtained, if possible.

An answer phone message, in at least two languages, shall inform visitors about the opening hours and the website address (see [3.1.3](#)).

3.1.3 Contact

The TIO shall establish, document and communicate to staff the expectations with respect to behaviour etiquette and crowd management.

Staff shall look professional and provide an efficient service, and shall show they are available and welcoming by:

- a) initiating conversation with a greeting;
- b) being patient;
- c) being polite and friendly;
- d) giving priority to visitors over administration work or any other task;
- e) clarifying visitors' enquiries in order to provide a satisfactory response;
- f) taking leave with a greeting.

Staff shall be easily identifiable, by means of their clothing or appropriate badges, etc.

The TIO shall choose and justify the languages understood and spoken at the reception desk, as well as on answering machines and websites. This choice shall correspond to the expected profile of international visitors and shall include at least one international language.

NOTE Staff are expected to communicate with visitors in the language chosen by the visitor, if possible.

The TIO shall establish a tool to enable visitors to identify the languages spoken by each person of the staff.

3.1.4 Call and mail handling

All visitors shall receive the same treatment, whether they visit the TIO in person or not.

TIO contact information shall be widely promoted using the available means of communication.

The TIO shall establish a telephone calls handling procedure. This procedure shall define the time limit between the first ring and the transfer of the call to a member of staff. If the defined time limit is

exceeded, a message shall explain how to contact the TIO (via the web, by e-mail) or shall give visitors the option of leaving a contact number.

NOTE 1 If possible, calls are answered before the fourth ring and calls are transferred to a staff member within 40 s.

NOTE 2 It is not advisable to put a caller on hold with music for too long. If possible, priority is given to visitors in person, especially when there is only one employee.

If a caller leaves a contact number on the answering machine, a call back should be made within 30 min during opening hours. If the caller is put on hold, regular contact shall be maintained to enable him/her to either wait, call back or be called back (at the caller's request).

Recorded messages shall be processed and answered every working day. Letters shall be processed and answered within three working days. E-mails shall be processed and answered within two working days.

3.2 Provision of information

3.2.1 Information for visitors

Information shall be accurate and regularly updated. The TIO shall consider only tourist providers meeting appropriate legal and regulatory requirements.

Information shall be available on a broad range of topics.

NOTE The topics can include accommodation, travel agencies, eating out, transport, cycle routes, shopping, local products and crafts, walks, cultural activities, holidays, heritage and sports activities and outdoor pursuits, banks, currency exchange, tax free conditions, chambers of commerce, local customs, religion and places of worship, libraries, medical services, police and post offices, real estate agencies, local and regional attractions, and weather forecasts.

The TIO shall have general and specific information about the destination and about tourist attractions, with the necessary details for the visit: location, description, features, conditions and opening hours.

The TIO shall have details of the day, time, place of performance and content for events and activities carried out at the destination (recreational, cultural, sporting or leisure).

Information shall take account of the interests of children and the needs of people with disabilities.

The TIO shall give information to visitors about health, safety and good practices to help them to enjoy the area.

For safety reasons, and in order to avoid risks to visitors, the TIO shall provide appropriate information about drinking water, high and low tides, the presence of poisonous plants, other local dangers that might be encountered, etc.

The TIO should provide a website and or other electronic support with such information.

The TIO shall give information to facilitate the visitors' choice (see [Annex A](#)).

The TIO should also provide tourism information at national level or indicate how to obtain it.

If commercial leaflets and brochures are displayed, they shall be separated from the TIO information.

If the TIO has unmanned information service points, they should provide the same items.

There shall be an indication of materials which shall be paid for as well as indication of the price.

The TIO shall give written information, either printing it on demand or making it possible to take notes. The TIO should offer information in several forms, trying to avoid unnecessary printing (see [Annex B](#)).

The TIO shall develop a visitors' rights and duties charter, and shall give advice about avoiding disrespectful attitudes towards local customs and beliefs (see [Annex C](#)).

The TIO shall establish a procedure for leaflets and written material supply according to TIO needs.

The TIO shall develop and put in place surveys to follow up and record visitors and their service satisfaction.

TIO information shall be available and suitable for use and shall be adequately protected.

3.2.2 Information for TIO staff

TIO staff shall be able to access the following information:

- a) phone directories of local and destination services and emergency contact information;
- b) transport routes, arrivals and departures and transportation timetables at the TIO destination;
- c) destination city maps;
- d) tourist guide contacts in the destination and surrounding areas;
- e) a table of distances and the time needed to travel;
- f) accommodation guides;
- g) destination newspapers and journals;
- h) updated tourist information guidebooks and websites;
- i) dictionaries of the most common languages used by visitors.

3.2.3 Sources of information

The TIO shall establish a regular dialogue with all the destination tourism service providers. The TIO shall keep a classified record of the tourism service providers from the public and private sectors and shall establish a procedure to collect and revise the information at least once a year and, for those TIOs open all year long, at least twice a year.

The TIO shall keep a calendar of events taking place at the destination and surrounding areas.

These databases shall be supported by available technologies.

3.3 Commercial activities

The TIO providing commercial activities shall establish a documented procedure complying with appropriate legal and statutory requirements for commercial transactions.

These may include, if applicable:

- a) booking and selling services;
- b) purchase of entertainment services;
- c) selling local products, handicrafts and souvenirs, food and drinks, publications or other requested products;
- d) the purchase and consumption of basic services, such as internet, currency exchange, transport tickets, public telephones, mail, SIM (subscriber identity module) cards, or others regularly requested;
- e) help with services such as legal or health matters;

- f) guided tours and bicycle rental.

Before providing any service, the TIO shall clarify which services have to be paid for, and when, inclusive of taxes (see [Annex A](#)).

3.4 Statistics and analysis

The TIO shall establish a system that builds a detailed knowledge of visitors' profiles and their requirements. This shall include at least the following data:

- a) the number of visitors;
- b) the origin of visitors and the reason for their visit;
- c) the type of information or service requested;
- d) visitors' satisfaction, input from suggestions and claims.

NOTE The guidelines given in ISO 10002 can be useful.

The TIO shall share conclusions based on surveys with staff, and consider them while providing the service.

The TIO shall produce an annual report based on the data collected, and should publish it.

3.5 Communication and promotion

The TIO shall have regular contact with the service providers of the destination and other stakeholders, in order to establish the strategies and communication programmes that shall be developed by the TIO.

A study of the visitor profile (see [3.4](#)) shall be developed in order to establish the best communication and promotion actions of the destination.

NOTE The TIO can organize chargeable or free events (e.g. cultural, sports, leisure, business) in the region, in order to promote the destination.

4 Resources

4.1 Human resources

The TIO shall:

- a) determine and ensure the necessary competence of staff, based on education, training, skills and experience;
- b) where applicable, provide training or take other actions to achieve the necessary competence;
- c) set out all basic instructions required to provide standard and appropriate work methods, including ways of treating and dealing with visitors, face to face or by using appropriate technologies for information and communication.

At least one person providing information shall speak two languages, depending on visitor requirements.

NOTE 1 Training includes employees and seasonal staff maintaining an appropriate level of service provision.

Training should include aspects such as:

- customer service satisfaction;
- tourist information processes, treatment and storage of the tourist information, databases, information resources, electronic publications;

- knowledge of the destination and its products, art history and geography of the destination;
- telephone requests handling;
- techniques for correctly undertaking functions: planning, tourist marketing, communication techniques, IT, administrative techniques;
- dealing with emergency situations;
- the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) code of ethics, accessibility principles, environmental awareness (see [Annex B](#)) and best practices, first aid, safety measures, etc.;
- languages.

The TIO shall set out the training programme periods and minimum content. The TIO shall record these training activities and evaluate the effectiveness of the training or actions taken.

NOTE 2 Familiarization tours for TIO staff, visiting of tourist and service provider sites, visiting other TIOs, tutoring can be useful.

4.2 Infrastructure, facilities and equipment

The TIO shall comply with appropriate legal and statutory requirements in accessibility and safety.

The TIO shall know the accessibility limits of its own facilities and shall inform visitors about them (see [Annex D](#)).

NOTE Using the public information symbols specified in ISO 7001 can be useful.

TIO facilities shall meet all requirements set out in current legislation on emergency systems and fire precautions.

The TIO shall maintain records from emergency systems and fire precaution inspections. The TIO shall keep inspection certificates as records.

The equipment and facilities shall be adapted to the needs of visitors and staff.

TIO premises, equipment and associated facilities shall be kept clean and serviced according to a defined schedule (see [Annex B](#)).

The TIO should have air conditioning/heating.

The TIO shall keep maintenance records in order to register and follow up failures and repairing times.

The TIO shall have a periodic maintenance plan relating to the IT equipment and programmes, including updating and renewals.

4.3 Communications technologies

The TIO shall have exclusive use of IT equipment that enables telephone communications and (where feasible) internet and e-mail access.

The TIO shall have access to technologies that allow services such as waiting calls, immediate reception of written documents, compilation and portability of documents, autonomous information systems, and contents compatible with mobile applications.

NOTE Such technologies include fax, DVD, CD, USB, touch screens, QR code or BIDI code.

Annex A **(informative)**

Consumers' rights

Regarding the provision of information (see [3.2](#)) and commercial activities (see [3.3](#)), the TIO should provide the following information about consumers' rights upon request:

- a) contact details for making a complaint, including the telephone number and e-mail or postal address of the government agencies that provide law enforcement actions to protect the consumers;
- b) how to get advice on consumer problems or complaints;
- c) general terms and conditions.

The TIO should not necessarily pursue the visitors' complaint on their behalf.

Additionally, for commercial activities (see [3.3](#)), the TIO should ensure that visitors are informed about:

- the business name, legal status, address and any e-mail address or telephone number;
- the main features of the service and the price;
- the date agreed for the service provision, or within a reasonable time if a specific date has not been agreed;
- costs agreed beforehand, or a reasonable cost if it has not been previously agreed;
- whether there are any after-sales guarantees.

Annex B **(informative)**

Environmental awareness

The TIO should be managed according to the principles of environmental awareness criteria.

The TIO should define its environmental management objectives (priorities/requirements) which integrate elements relating to resources management (energy, paper, water, etc.); waste management; management of communication aids/media (recycled paper, print-run management).

The TIO should heighten the awareness of, and/or involve, all of the stakeholders (staff, administrators, visitors, partners and providers).

The TIO should set an example of good practice and should encourage minimal effect on the environment procedures for visitors.

Actions aimed at protecting the environment should be planned and undertaken.

EXAMPLE Low energy and water consumption, waste recycling, use of recycled paper, protection of local habitat.

The TIO should give information about service providers that respect health and safety, and that are accessible and environmental friendly.

The TIO should:

- take actions to increase the level of awareness about environmental care, including advising visitors about low impact practices, such as water and energy preservation, waste treatment, soil contamination, polluting the sea, emissions into the air, noise control, and the promotion of alternative energy sources;
- help spread environmental awareness and green best practices to tourists;
- incorporate environmental decision, considering:
 - cleaning products that are less harmful to the environment, that are biodegradable, and that do not cause water nor soil contamination;
 - the substitution of aggressive products with natural products of similar effects;
 - the reduction of printed material and the choice of recycled or ecological paper and other material;
- respect the environment, incorporating the minimum visual impact possible of new equipment.