Tourism
2025

Guided Tour Operations

Location: Nationwide – National Parks, Historical Sites, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Coastal Islands

Project description

Sierra Leone is rapidly becoming a premier tourism destination, offering diverse wildlife, historic landmarks, breathtaking landscapes, and pristine beaches. The Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Project (SLEDP), funded by the World Bank, is rehabilitating Leicester Peak, Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, and Bureh Beach, significantly improving tourism infrastructure and accessibility. This presents a unique investment opportunity for a guided tour business to capitalize on these developments and other attractions across the country.

Leicester Peak is being transformed into a premier viewpoint destination, Tacugama is receiving upgrades to enhance eco-tourism and conservation efforts, and Bureh Beach, a surfing hotspot, is undergoing major enhancements, including a boardwalk, market stalls, jetty, and improved visitor facilities. These investments will drive more tourist traffic, increasing demand for professional guided tour services.

Beyond these sites, Sierra Leone boasts Bunce Island, a key historical slave trade site, Turtle and Banana Islands for adventure and marine tourism, and Outamba Kilimi National Park for wildlife safaris. The country's rich cultural heritage and outdoor adventure potential make it ideal for curated, immersive tour experiences.

With international arrivals increasing by 47.4% over the last five years and growing interest in sustainable, experiential travel, this project is an ideal first-mover opportunity. The Government of Sierra Leone is supporting tourism sector investments with tax incentives and infrastructure improvements, making now the best time to enter the guided tour market and establish a leading brand in Sierra Leone's growing tourism sector

Figure 1. Leicester Peak View Point



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NATIONAL INVESTMENT BOARD
SIERRA LEONE

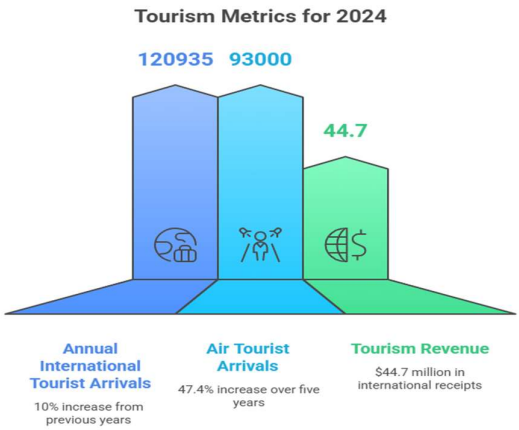
Key Project Components

- Cultural & Historical Tours: Exploring Bunce Island, Freetown's heritage sites, and local cultural experiences.
- Wildlife & Nature Safaris: Tours to Outamba Kilimi National Park, Gola Rainforest, and Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary.
- Beach & Water Adventure Experiences: Surfing, island hopping, boat safaris, and deep-sea fishing.
- Customized High-End Travel Packages: Luxury private tours for international visitors and corporate clients.
- Community & Conservation-Based Tourism: Local guide training, sustainable tourism, and environmental education.



Market Demand

- Annual International Tourist Arrivals (2024): 120,935 (10% increase from previous years).
- Air Tourist Arrivals (2024): 93,000 (47.4% increase over five years).



- Tourism Revenue (2024): $44.7 million in international receipts.
- High Demand for Experiential Travel: Increasing interest in eco-tourism, historical sites, and adventure travel.
- Job Creation & Economic Growth: Expanding employment in tour guiding, logistics, and hospitality services.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Enhancing road networks, visitor centers, and travel facilities through the **SLEDP project**

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Key Economic Indicators

Indicator	Value
Estimated Project Cost	$322,500 - $635,000
Annual Revenue Projection	$265,000 - $470,000
Project Economic IRR (EIRR)	15-20%
Tour Pricing	$50 - $150 per person
Estimated Tour Frequency	1-3 tours per day, 150 operational days per year

Investment proposition

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs invites investors to develop and operate a guided tour business through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) or joint ventures with local partners.

Investment Model Options

- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) – Establish a wholly owned guided tour operation or joint venture with a local partner.
- Franchise & Brand Partnership Model – Investors can partner with international guided tour operators to expand their brand in Sierra Leone.

Revenue Streams

- Tour Package Fees: Private and group tours priced at $50 - $150 per person.
- Custom Luxury Travel Experiences: Premium adventure and high-end safari packages.
- Corporate & Event-Based Tours: Specialized packages for business retreats, educational groups, and cultural tourism events.
- Sustainable Tourism & Conservation Support: Hosting researchers, eco-tourism enthusiasts, and conservation organizations.

Tax Incentives

1. Corporate Income Tax Exemptions
   - ✓ 5-Year Corporate Tax Holiday for new guided tour businesses.
     ✓ Reduced Tax Rates for eco-tourism and cultural tourism operators.
2. Import Duty & VAT Exemptions
   - ✓ Zero Import Duty on tour vehicles, boats, and operational equipment.
     ✓ VAT Waiver on guided tour services and international visitor packages.
3. Business Licensing & Land Lease Support
   - ✓ Fast-Tracked Licensing & Permits for guided tour operators.
     ✓ Government-Backed Land Leasing Agreements at subsidized rates.
4. Employment & Community Tourism Benefits
   - ✓ Tax Incentives for Hiring Local Guides & Hospitality Staff.

✓ Financial Support for Sustainable & Community-Based Tourism Initiatives

Risk Analysis & Mitigation Measures

Risk Factor	Mitigation Strategy
Limited Infrastructure in Remote Areas	Invest in 4x4 vehicles and speedboats for seamless transport.
Seasonal Tourism Variability	Develop year-round tour offerings, including cultural and business tours.
Lack of Awareness & Marketing	Use targeted digital marketing and partnerships with global travel brands.
Regulatory & Licensing Challenges	Work closely with government agencies to ensure compliance and fast approvals.
Competition from Informal Operators	Establish a reputation for high-quality, safety, and premium experiences.