

# LaoSafe

## TOUR GUIDE STANDARD



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# FOREWORD

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Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was growing rapidly in Lao PDR. In 2019, international tourist arrivals increased by 14.4%, reaching an all-time peak of 4.79 million. International tourism receipts totalled \$934 million. Between 2010–2019, international tourist receipts increased faster than international arrivals, suggesting an increasing value addition from the sector. Recent reports estimate that tourism directly contributes 4.6% to GDP.

Although Lao PDR has thus far avoided severe health impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, the on-going (inter)national measures taken for containment of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in tourism and hospitality being one of the most hard-hit economic sectors. Tourism has, however, shown a strong capacity to recover from adversity, return to being a source of revenue for public and private stakeholders, and a source of jobs, particularly for young people, women, and rural communities. This makes it imperative that the sector is supported appropriately during this time of crisis and as we enter the recovery phase.

In light of the increasing significance of hygiene and safety in the sector due to COVID-19, and in preparation for the re-opening of activities in the country and the opening of international borders, the LaoSafe programme has been prepared with the objective of raising hygiene standards as well as to help create a safe “travel bubble” that will bring greater safety and protection for both tourists and hospitality workers in Lao PDR.

The Tourism and Hospitality sub-sectors covered under the LaoSafe programme include: Accommodation, F&B, Tour Guides, Drivers, Tourist Sites and Airlines. To support a more comprehensive intervention and implementation plan, the implementation of these standards will be supported by training, assessment, and certification. A task force has been put together for this programme.

These standards have taken reference and incorporated good practices from international health organisations, EU Guides, ASEAN countries with national COVID-19 safe measurement programmes, Lao PDR national health and safety guides, industry best practices as well as from workshops and discussion sessions held with local industry associations and leaders.

We look forward to a successful implementation of the LaoSafe programme for the Tourism and Hospitality sector and preparing Lao PDR to be a safer place for when international tourists return.

Name

Title

Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism





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# INTRODUCTION



This guide has been developed to provide practical implementation support for businesses to implement the Tour Guide Standard under the LaoSafe Programme and, as per the Standard, covers five key areas:

- 1 **Personal grooming and hygiene standards**
- 2 **Environment hygiene**
- 3 **Staff safety**
- 4 **Tourist safety**
- 5 **Risk management**

By adhering to these Standards, businesses are actively demonstrating that they are taking proactive actions to address risks related to COVID-19 to help create a safer environment.

Tour guides seeking to be certified under this hygiene programme should use this Guide to help prepare for assessment and certification.

## **Note**

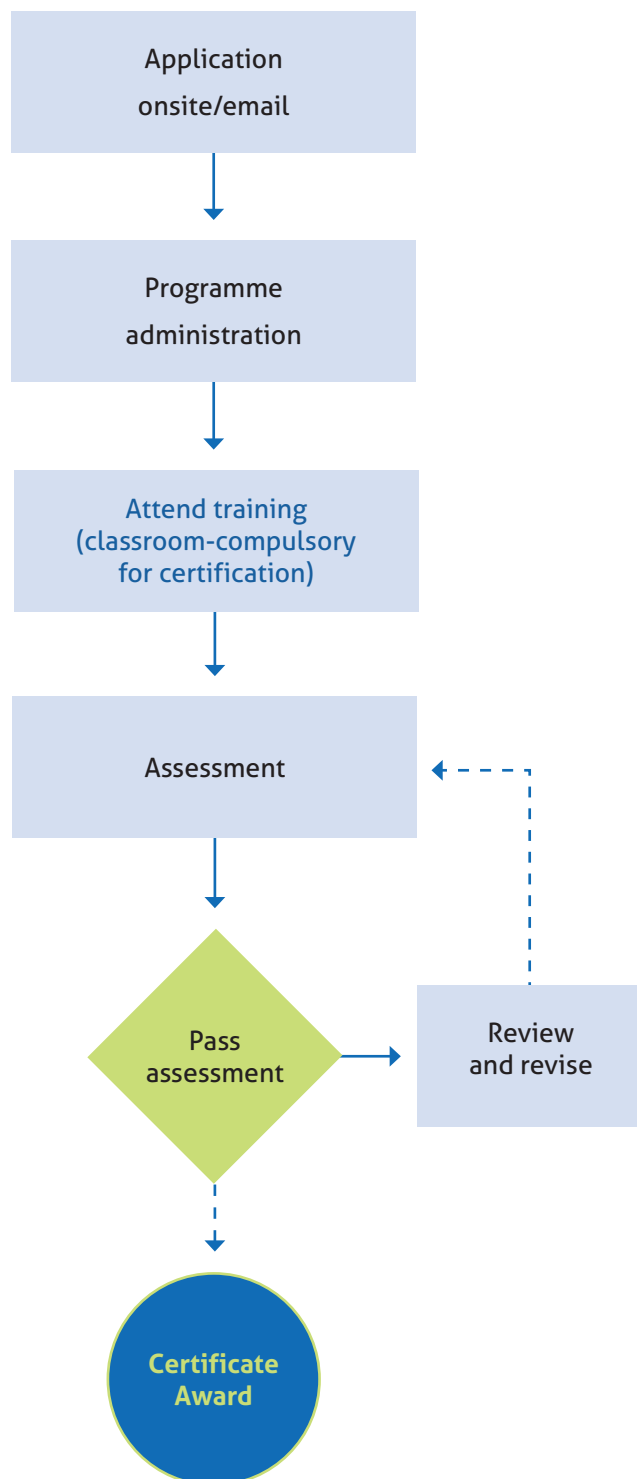
The information contained in this set of material is developed for the purpose of raising hygiene standards and supporting the implementation of preventive measures for Covid-19 for the Tourism and Hospitality sector. The information contained may change following its release, pending local policies, international guidelines and the development of the pandemic situation. This material is made available for public use, without any representation or warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied.

Continuous improvements and updates to this standard guide may be made in response to changes as the pandemic situation evolves. Edits to this guide will be carried out under the directives of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MICT) and the Ministry of Health (MoH), and the oversight Taskforce.





# CERTIFICATION PROCESS





# LAOSAFE TOUR GUIDE STANDARDS



Tour guides need to be familiar with these standards and to be able to implement them during their guided tours to pass the assessment and become certified.

No.	Outcomes to achieve	Standard
<b>1. PERSONAL GROOMING AND HYGIENE STANDARDS</b>		
Reduce transmission risk		<b>1.1 Personal grooming standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep attire and uniform clean.</li> <li>• Keep fingernails short and clean.</li> <li>• Keep hair neat and tidy. Long hair should be tied up using hair restraints.</li> </ul>
Reduce transmission risk		<b>1.2 Personal hygiene standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear masks/face shields.</li> <li>• Practice proper handwashing.</li> <li>• Use hand sanitisers or alcohol-based hand rubs.</li> <li>• Things not to do to prevent spread and contamination: Spit, pick nose and ears, wipe off perspiration with bare hands.</li> </ul>
<b>2. ENVIRONMENT HYGIENE</b>		
Reduce surface transmission		<b>2.1 Pre-tour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour guides need to wear masks / face shields.</li> <li>• The lead tour guide needs to conduct temperature checks and screenings for respiratory symptoms daily, at the start of each tour. Keep the records for 21 days.</li> <li>• Provision of hand sanitisers.</li> <li>• Minimise physical contact, greet with the “nop” instead of a handshake.</li> <li>• Ensure safe distancing (1-metre) is practiced throughout the tour.</li> <li>• Pre-check-in with hotel by providing tour group information before arrival to help facilitate contactless check-in.</li> <li>• Conduct pre-tour briefing on safety and hygiene preventive measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cleanliness and hygiene practices;</li> <li>- Safety protocols;</li> <li>- Safe distancing;</li> <li>- Hygiene programme awareness.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Reduce capacity and intermingling Reduce physical interactions Cleaning and disinfection measures		<b>2.2 During Tour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure safe distancing is practiced.</li> <li>• Monitor temperatures and the onset of respiratory symptoms.</li> <li>• Tours with conveyance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep to same seats. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Where practicable, have members of one household or friends sit in clusters. Ensure there is spacing (seat/row) amongst the groups.</li> <li>▪ Provide hand sanitising options before boarding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- For bigger vehicles: Board and disembark in an orderly manner to minimise close interaction.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Encourage participants to stay within tour itinerary.</li> </ul>



Cleaning and disinfection measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaning regime: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow cleaning guidelines for "Hygiene and disinfection to prevent and control the new Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)" by MOH-DHHP.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure there is sufficient cleaning equipment on board for tours that last more than a day</li> </ul> <p><b>2.3 Post Tour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure drivers clean and disinfect vehicles and any tour equipment after every tour run or at the end of the day.</li> <li>• Ensure all garbage is cleared and disposed of in a sealed bag.</li> <li>• All disposable masks must be disposed of in a sealed garbage bag daily. All textile masks should be washed and changed daily.</li> </ul>
<b>3. TOUR GUIDE SAFETY</b>	
Reduce transmission risk	<p><b>3.1 Temperature checks and screenings for respiratory symptoms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour guides are to conduct temperature checks on themselves and perform self-screenings at least once a day.</li> <li>• Tour guide are also to perform checks on drivers.</li> <li>• If unwell, with a temperature of 37.5°C or higher, staff must not be allowed to work.</li> <li>• Those under quarantine or stay-home order must not report to work.</li> </ul> <p><b>3.2 Tour Guides must maintain a safe distance of at least 1-metre during interactions with tourists and suppliers, where practicable.</b></p> <p><b>3.3 Tour Guides must maintain good handwashing practices or use hand sanitisers, especially when transiting from one destination to another.</b></p>
<b>4. TOURIST SAFETY</b>	
Reduce transmission risk  Reduce physical interactions	<p><b>4.1 Suppliers and hygiene protocols</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check that suppliers have in place safe hygiene</li> <li>• protocols pertaining to the wearing of masks / face shields, conduct of temperature checks and provision of hand sanitisers and handwashing areas.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 Provide hand sanitisers for tourists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When boarding and disembarking from conveyance.</li> <li>• When entering and exiting premises and sites.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3 Safe distancing for tourists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure safe distancing is practiced (1-metre).</li> <li>• Ensure participants keep to the same seats.</li> <li>• Ensure tourists board and disembark in an orderly manner to minimise close interaction.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.4 Mask availability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that face masks are available to all tour members upon request.</li> </ul>





5. RISK MANAGEMENT	
Risk management measures and disinfection measures	<b>5.1 Suspected case</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call the 166 or 165 hotlines, which are providing assistance in the event of a suspected case. Separate suspected case to rear of vehicle and facilitate nearest safe drop-off.</li> </ul>
	<b>5.2 Provide contact tracing information to assist the authorities where necessary.</b>
	<b>5.3 Cleaning regime</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the cleaning guidelines for “hygiene and disinfection to prevent and control the new Coronavirus disease (COVID 19)” by MOH-DHHP.</li> </ul>



# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES



## 1. GROOMING AND HYGIENE STANDARDS

### 1.1 Personal grooming standards

Tour Guides must practice industry-specific personal hygiene. Good personal grooming practices to adopt include the following:

- Attire and uniforms
  - Tour Guides should wear clean, proper and tidy attire when at work. The attire should be changed daily, or when they are soiled.
- Fingernails
  - Keep fingernails short and clean. Bacteria found under fingernails can contaminate food when fingernails come into contact with food.
- Hair
  - Keep hair neat and tidy.

### 1.2 Personal hygiene standards

Tour guides must ensure that the following personal hygiene practices are followed during the tour:

- Wear masks / face shields
  - Tour guides are to wear masks / face shields at all times, except when eating and drinking.
  - Masks and face coverings help provide some protection against the transmission of COVID-19 by capturing droplets released in the air through breathing, coughing, sneezing and talking. Masks / face shields used together with safe distancing and other hygiene measures help to reduce COVID-19 transmission risks.
- Handwashing
  - Effective handwashing is important to prevent harmful bacteria from spreading. Hands and exposed portions of arms must be washed thoroughly with soap and water for 20 to 40 seconds (preferably hot water).

#### Handwashing Steps

The following are the steps for effective handwashing:

- Wet hands with clean, running water and apply soap. Rub palms together to make lather.
- Scrub in between the fingers.
- Scrub the back of your hands.
- Scrub your thumbs.
- Scrub your palms.
- Scrub your nails and fingertips
- Scrub your wrists.
- Rinse and dry your hands with a paper towel.



### Drying hands

While hands may be clean after washing them with soap and water, Tour Guides will also have to take the following precautions when drying them:

- Avoid using towels or non-disposable cleaning cloths to wipe your hands unless you clean them daily and dry them regularly. Germs thrive on moist surfaces.
  - Do not use a common hand towel. Always use disposable towels or hand dryers in public washrooms.
- Hand sanitisers or alcohol-based hand rubs
    - Hand sanitisers or alcohol-based hand rubs that are suitable for safe and effective use against COVID-19 should be provided to tour groups to disinfect their hands regularly. It should consist of at least 70% alcohol (often listed as ethanol, ethyl alcohol, isopropanol, or 2-propanol).
    - Soiled hands need to be cleaned with soap and water before using a hand sanitiser.
    - Refer to the Guidelines for Hygiene and Disinfection to Prevent and Control the new Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) by MOH-DHHP.
  - Prevent spreading and contamination
    - To prevent the contamination and spreading of germs, Tour Guides should not do any of the following when at work and performing service:
      - Smoke.
      - Spit.
      - Pick nose or ears.
      - Wipe hands on a dirty cloth.
      - Comb or touch hair.
      - Wipe off perspiration with bare hands.
    - If unwell, report to the Tour Operator, see a doctor and stay away from work.

## 2. ENVIRONMENT HYGIENE

### 2.1 Pre-tour

- Wearing of masks / face shields for guides and tourists.
  - Tour guides are to wear masks or face shields. They need to know how to properly wear a mask and ensure that masks are easily made available to tourists.
- Temperature checks and screenings for respiratory symptoms
  - The Lead Tour Guide needs to conduct temperature checks and screenings for respiratory symptoms daily for all tour participants and drivers at the start of each tour.
  - Tour Guides must know how to conduct temperature checks and keep temperature logs. Tour Guides must also know how to conduct screenings for respiratory symptoms, such as coughing, sneezing, breathlessness, or a runny nose (self-check).
  - Tourists and all supporting staff must not have a temperature of more than 37.5°C. Anyone failing checks must not be allowed to join the tour.
  - Records are to be kept for of the past 21 days at a minimum.





- Provision of hand sanitisers
  - Ensure that disinfecting agents such as hand sanitisers or alcohol-based hand rubs, disinfectant sprays, paper towels and wipes are available to tour participants and staff throughout the tour.
  - Tour guides are to work with operators and suppliers to ensure there is sufficient stock of hand sanitisers on vans / coaches as well as adequate handheld thermometers and masks.
- Minimise physical contact
  - To reduce physical contact, Tour Guides must avoid handshakes but greet tour participants and suppliers with the traditional Lao “nop.”
- Safe distancing
  - Ensure safe distancing is practiced throughout the tour. Follow government regulations on permissible tour group sizes.
- Pre-check-in with the hotel
  - Provide hotels with tour group information before their arrival to facilitate contactless check-in, where possible. Avoid overcrowding in the lobby area.
- Pre-tour briefing on preventive safety and hygiene measures
  - Tour Guides are to conduct a pre-tour briefing on preventive safety and hygiene measures to tourists before the start of a tour. The following content should be covered:
    - Cleanliness and hygiene practices
      - Encouragement to wear masks at all times, except during meals and when taking photos.
      - Hand sanitising protocol, embarking and disembarking from the vehicle, entering new premises and tour sites.
      - Reduce touching of surfaces.
      - Practice contactless protocols as much as possible.
    - Safety protocols
      - Inform tour participants about safety protocols that are in place. The following topics and protocols should be mentioned:
        - Temperature taking during the tour.
        - Contact tracing and risk management policies under the LaoSafe programme.
        - Safety protocol for entering tourist sites, hotels and restaurant premises.
        - Risk management protocols that are to be carried out in the event of a suspected case.
    - Safe distancing
      - Brief tour groups on safe distancing practices during visits to sites, places and for seating arrangements.
    - Encourage tourists to use certified providers of the LaoSafe Programme.
      - Inform tourists about the LaoSafe programme to help create a “safe bubble” environment for tourists.



## 2.2 During tour

- Safe distancing
  - During tours, ensure that safe distancing is always practiced. That includes conscious distancing between the Tour Guides and the tour participants. Maintain 1-metre of space between the Tour Guides, support staff and the tour participants, where possible. Try to ensure there is no intermingling amongst different groups.
- Temperature monitoring and respiratory screening
  - Keep a temperature monitoring log throughout the tour. Keep a lookout for tour group participants for respiratory symptoms.
- Tours with transportation
  - For tours with transportation, Tour Guides are to explain at the start of the tour and continue to remind tourists to keep to the same seats throughout the journey, which includes travel between destinations.
  - Where practicable, groups, whether members of one households or friends should be encouraged to sit together in clusters. Try to ensure there is spacing between these clusters (1-metre or 1 seat / row).
  - Ensure that hand sanitisers are available each time before boarding vans / buses and encourage tour participants to use them.
  - For bigger vehicles or coaches, have the tour participants board and disembark from the conveyance in rows, in an orderly manner that minimises close interaction.
- Tour participants to stay with the itinerary
  - Inform / encourage participants to follow the tour itinerary and discourage them from leaving the group.
- Cleaning regime in-between tours
  - Ensure drivers clean and disinfect the vehicles regularly, particularly high touch elements such as tour equipment, seats, seat belts and handles. These high-touch areas should at least be cleaned twice per day during tours that last a day or more.
  - For guides on disinfectant choices and further guides on hygiene and disinfection, refer to 'Guidelines for Hygiene and Disinfection to Prevent and Control the new Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) by MOH-DHHP'.
- For tours that last more than a day, ensure that drivers have sufficient cleaning equipment (e.g., detergent, waste buckets) on board and that they do not reuse cleaning solution mixtures between tour runs.

## 2.3 Post Tour

- Ensure that drivers clean and disinfect the vehicles and any tour equipment after every tour run or at the end of the day.



- Ensure that disposable masks and any other disposable toiletries such as tissues, napkins and paper towels are all properly cleared and disposed of in a sealed garbage bag.
- All disposable masks must be disposed of in a sealed garbage bag daily. All textile masks must be washed and changed daily.

### 3. TOUR GUIDE SAFETY

#### 3.1 Temperature checks and screenings for respiratory symptoms

- When conducting tours, Tour Guides must conduct their own temperature checks and perform screening for respiratory symptoms such as coughing and breathlessness at least once a day. Temperature records must be maintained for the past 21-days at a minimum.
- Tour Guides must also perform temperature checks on the drivers facilitating tour groups. Temperature records must be maintained for the past 21-days at a minimum.
- Tour Guides who are unwell, with a temperature exceeding 37.5°C and / or with respiratory symptoms must not be allowed to work. They must seek medical help immediately.
- Tour Guides who are under quarantine / Stay-Home order must not report to work.

#### 3.2 Minimise socialising and practice safe distancing

- Tour Guides must maintain a safe distance of at least 1-metre during interactions with tourists and suppliers, where practicable.

#### 3.3 Maintain good handwashing practice or use hand sanitisers

- Tour Guides must maintain good handwashing practices or use hand sanitisers, especially when transiting from one destination to another.

### 4. TOURIST SAFETY

#### 4.1 Suppliers and hygiene protocols

- Tour Guides should observe and check if suppliers have in place safe hygiene protocols. Tour Guides must report to the Tour Operator, if suppliers do not practice preventive hygiene measures with regards to:
  - Wearing of masks / face shields.
  - Conducting temperature checks.
  - Providing hand sanitisers and / or handwashing areas and materials that are easily accessible to tourists and other customers. Provision of hand sanitisers or alcohol-based hand rubs

#### 4.2 Provision of hand sanitisers

- Tour Guides must ensure that hand sanitisers are provided to tourists when:
  - Boarding or disembarking from the transport.
  - Entering and exiting premises and tour sites.

#### 4.3 Safe distancing for tourists

- Safe distancing at premises and tour sites
  - Tour Guides must help to facilitate, limit and control the number of visitors allowed to enter premises and tour sites to ensure safe distancing can be observed at all times (1-metre).





- Transport
  - Tour Guides must ensure that the transport vehicle's maximum seating capacity is being observed.
  - For tours with conveyance, Tour Guides must remind participants to keep to the same seats throughout the journey, including when travelling between destinations, as well as to board and disembark from the conveyance in an orderly manner that minimises close interaction.

#### 4.4 Mask availability

- Ensure that face masks are available to all tour members upon request.

### 5. RISK MANAGEMENT

#### 5.1 Suspected case

Tour Guides must immediately inform the Tour Operator and the relevant authorities. Call the 166 or 165 hotlines, which are providing assistance in the event of a suspected case.

If a suspect case is discovered during the tour, Tour Guides must immediately:

- Isolate the suspected case.
- Provide the suspected case with a mask so as to give consideration to the well-being of the people around.
- Require and help make arrangements for the person to be safely transported to a medical facility or to follow the instructions received from the local authorities. To prevent potential spreading, the suspected customer must not be put on public transport.
- Require any individuals found during the tour to have developed fever or respiratory symptoms to immediately discontinue the tour and to seek medical check-up and advice.
- If the individual is not able to leave the tour to seek medical advice or treatment, isolate the individual from others, provide masks / face shields to all and ensure they are properly worn, maintain a safe distance from the suspected individual and arrange for them to receive medical attention as early as possible. Strenuous activities should be avoided if the mask is worn.
- Escort the unwell participant to the rear of the vehicle where applicable. Ensure that the unwell participant is isolated from the group and that the mask is properly worn. Maintain a safe distance from the unwell participant and stop at the nearest safe drop-off point to allow them to seek medical attention.

#### 5.2 Provide contact tracing information for confirmed cases

- Provide information to the authorities to assist with contact tracing, where necessary.
- Only release information to the relevant authorities. Do not disclose information about cases unnecessarily.

#### 5.3 Cleaning regime

- For guides on disinfectant choices and further guides on hygiene and disinfection, refer to 'Guidelines for Hygiene and Disinfection to Prevent and Control the new Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) by MOH-DHHP'.



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