

Audit report

Experience Victoria

Audit date: **October 17-18, 2019**

Lead auditor: **Chi Lo**

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1. Auditing context

Introduction

Travelife is the premier worldwide certification and performance improvement program developed specifically for the travel and tourism industry. Travelife assists organizations to improve their economic, social and environmental sustainability while being rewarded and recognized for it.

Travelife provides travel companies with a framework to conduct a comprehensive assessment of their environmental and social sustainability performance, through which they can monitor improvements and achieve certification.

The Travelife Certified standard for tour operators and travel agents has integrated the EMAS III environmental management and tourism sector specific requirements, the ISO 26000 Social Responsibility guidance and themes, The Global Reporting Initiative tour operator sector supplement and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The Travelife Certified standard has been Recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council as fully reflecting the GSTC Industry standard.

Purpose of the audit

The purpose of this audit is designed to determine if Experience Victoria has achieved the requirements of the Travelife Certified standard.

The Travelife Certified Standard includes more than 150 mandatory core criteria supported by over 200 compliance indicators. To be fully certified under the Travelife Certified standard, Experience Victoria must comply with each of the 150+ mandatory criteria. Additional details of the Travelife Certified standard are contained within the Travelife online management and reporting system.

Minor non compliances (remarks) are indicated in this report and dates for corrective actions are indicated. By signing this report the Experience Victoria commits itself to these corrective actions within the given dates.

The signed audit report will be reviewed by the certifier for a final certification decision. The certifier may set additional conditions for certification.

Audit process

During the audit, information relevant to the audit objectives, scope and criteria, including information relating to interfaces between functions, activities and processes was collected and recorded by appropriate sampling. Only information that is verifiable has been used as audit evidence. The audit evidence is based on samples of the available information and oral information from staff members. Therefore there is an element of uncertainty in auditing, and those acting upon the audit conclusions should be aware of this uncertainty.

All objective evidence is contained in the completed online reporting and audit system. The audit has been performed in two phases. During the first step (digital verification), all documentation and documented proof such as procedures, policies, contracts, statistics, etc. have been checked in the online self assessment.

The auditors have visited the office(s) of Experience Victoria. Management and employees have been interviewed to check that the implementation is well supported by the staff, and several areas have been fully inspected. The information provided by Experience Victoria within the online Travelife reporting system was controlled to confirm: effectiveness of the sustainability management system, consistency in the implementation of policies and procedures, compliance to the minimum required by the Travelife Certified standard.

Confidentiality

Unless required by law, the audit team and those responsible for managing the audit program will not disclose the contents of documents, any other information obtained during the audit, or the audit report, to any other party without the explicit approval of the audit client. If disclosure of the contents of an audit document is required, the audit client will be informed as soon as possible.

2. Audit details

General

Name company	Experience Victoria
Lead auditor name	Chi Lo
Additional auditors	-
Date(s) onsite audit	October 17-18, 2019
Scope of the certification	Experience Victoria Tours, Inc. ("Experience Victoria") operations
Scope of the audit	Experience Victoria operations, activities and offices

Locations visited

Name	Location	Date
Experience Victoria Office	Ogden Point Pier, Victoria, BC, Canada	17-10-2019
Experience Victoria CEO Home Office	Oak Bay, Victoria, BC, Canada	18-10-2019
Craigdarroch Castle	Victoria, BC, Canada	18-10-2019
Imagine Studio Cafe	Victoria, BC, Canada	17-10-2019
Fisherman's Wharf	Victoria, BC, Canada	17-10-2019

Persons met / consulted

Name	Position	Date
Sandi Doran	Pier Manager/Sustainability Coordinator, Experience Victoria	17-10-2019
Steve Earnshaw	CEO, Experience Victoria	17-10-2019
Janet Mount	Pier Coordinator, Experience Victoria	17-10-2019
Kal Sanghera	Owner, Regent Limousine	17-10-2019

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Emily Henchey	Owner, Hidden Victoria Tours	17-10-2019
John Hughes	Executive Director, Craighdarroch Castle	18-10-2019
Tom Walker	Owner, Victoria Horsedrawn Carriage Tours	18-10-2019
Andrew Capeau	Owner, Victoria Pedicab Company	18-10-2019

3. Assessment overview

Theme	Actions	Achievements
0. Company characteristics	26	22 (Green) 4 (Orange)
1. Sustainability management & legal compliance	34	16 (Green) 17 (Orange) 1 (Grey)
2. Internal management: social policy & human rights	28	20 (Green) 8 (Orange)
3. Internal management: environment and community relations	66	51 (Green) 15 (Orange)
4. Inbound partner agencies	16	16 (Orange)
5. Transport	9	9 (Orange)
6. Accommodations	16	16 (Orange)
7. Activities	15	5 (Green) 10 (Orange)
8. Tour leaders, local representatives, and guides	10	3 (Green) 7 (Orange)
9. Destinations	10	5 (Green) 5 (Orange)
10. Customer communication and protection	30	15 (Green) 15 (Orange)

4. Remarks & non compliances

The Travelife audit reviews as well obligatory as well as non obligatory criteria.

In the case of **obligatory criteria** compliance is expected. There are three possible outcomes. *Approved* means that the company is in full compliance with the requirements. *Approved with remarks* means that the company is in partial compliance. Improvements are required and a deadline for these improvements is provided. The company can still be certified under the condition that these deadlines are met. In case of *non compliance* the company can not obtain the Travelife Certified certificate as all obligatory criteria have to be met.

✓ Approved ✓_R Approved with remark ✗ Non compliance

In the case of **non-obligatory** criteria the criteria will also be *approved* or *approved with remark* or will be considered as *not approved*. In the case of not approved the criterion is still in compliance with the requirements. As these are non-obligatory criteria.

— Approved — Approved with remark — Not approved

1. Sustainability management & legal compliance		
Engagement of company		
1.4. Mission statement	✓ _R	Because the company works exclusively with cruiselines, the website is not intended to be consumer facing, so the absence of a sustainability mission statement is passable; however, please ensure that a sustainability mission statement is defined and published on the website when it is updated to include the sustainability policy (1.13/14), and share the direct link to the website noting the company's sustainability comittment in future reporting.
1.6. Trained key staff	—	Experience Victoria and its staff have demonstrated that they live an eco-conscious lifestyle, which is very much the norm in Victoria. It is recommended that staff/CEO also complete the Travelife training over the next 2 years. (Add to the action plan.)
1.7. Additional training management	—	As above (1.6), consider further sustainability trainings (e.g. GSTC STTP course: https://www.gstcouncil.org/sustainable-tourism-training/)
Social cooperation		

1.8. Collaboration	✓	Experience Victoria is clearly an active member of the cruise tourism industry in Victoria and is abreast of the local issues impacting sustainability in the industry. Furthermore, the company is doing a great job in being an advocate for sustainability in the wider industry, and to and for its partners/suppliers.
1.9. Exchange of experiences	—	Sharing the experience of the certification process with local stakeholders and industry peers will be an excellent way for Experience Vicotira to fulfill this criterion over the next 2 years. (And add to action plan).
Policy		
1.13. Sustainability policy	✓ _R	The company's sustainability policy is missing - please re-upload.
1.14. Communication	✓ _R	Please include details regarding sustainability communication in the action plan (e.g. how and to whom principles & policy will be communicated with, and in what timeframe)
Action plan		
1.15. Action plan	✓ _R	<p>GSTC industry criteria A1 Sustainability Management System: The organization has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its size and scope, addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, human rights, health, safety, risk and crisis management issues and drives continuous improvement. Thus, a crucial component of the management system is the plan, which reflects areas for continuous improvement. While the company has shown during its audit that there are many ideas and ways to improve, the action plan is a valuable tool that must be thoughtfully developed to show targets, actions, measures, responsibilities and time planning of the ways the company aims to improve over the next 2 years. Moving forward, the company can include other items mentioned throughout this report on in the action plan (e.g. 1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 1.14, etc.).</p> <p><i>Deadline for completion: 24 January, 2020</i></p>
Monitoring and evaluation		

1.20. Staff Communication		During the interviews, it became clear that EVT hires staff who are already predisposed to environmental practices and in general aligned with EVT's business practices. Sustainability is a normal way of life in Victoria.
2. Internal management: social policy & human rights		
Social policy and human rights		
2.4. HR Manual		From the audit, it became clear that EVT follows local regulations, which looks after the human rights and wellbeing of workers and employees.
Training and education		
2.27. Personal development		During the audit interviews, the CEO & Pier Manager/Sustainability Coordinator shared that team building activities are offered to staff. It is recommended to Experience Victoria to also offer Travelife online sustainability learning opportunities (trainings) to staff.
3. Internal management: environment and community relations		
Procurement		
3.3. Office paper: type		EVT showed that the company uses very little office paper (less than 1 ream per cruise season), which is printed on PFEC paper (https://www.pefc.org/standards-implementation)
3.12. Other purchasing practices		EVT really does not have much need to purchase much in terms of office supplies. The company's operations are very efficient.
Energy		
3.18. Energy audit		Office occupies 1/4 of a recycled double decker bus that is only about 5 months of the year. Very minimal energy is required - operations are during daylight hours, therefore not requiring much light usage, and during summer months, therefore not requiring heat. The only energy used is for computer/printer.
3.21. Energy efficient lighting		During the home office visit portion of the audit, the CEO shared that his home utilises LED lighting. The bus has one fluorescent light; however, during interviews, the sustainability

		coordinator shared that shifts are during daylight hours, and with large windows in the bus, lighting is not required in the bus.
Water		
3.29. Water sourcing	✓	The office uses minimal water; the bus itself is not hooked to any water. Employees work short shifts (2-3 hours), and bring their own drinking water with them. Employees use the toilets at the pier. Otherwise, CEO works out of home office, which is in a residential area.
Waste management		
3.39. Waste measurement and benchmark	✓ _R	It is recommended to begin measuring your waste (e.g. developing tool to measure and monitor waste such as paper waste) so that, as mentioned, you can highlight/share this best practice with the industry/Travelife. This is an item that can be included in the action plan. <i>Deadline for completion: 24 January, 2020</i>
3.43. Toner/ink	✓	During the audit, the company showed that they are not only using minimal ink because they are doing very little printing, waste is also minimised as the cartridge itself can be reused and refilled, thereby not requiring recycling.
Mobility		
3.50. Business travel emission	✓ _R	It is advised that the company may want to begin measuring its carbon footprint - as a way of showing how little they emit (since staff are encouraged to bike or walk to work).
3.53. Transport reduction	✓	During the audit it was shared that all staff are seasonal and the bus office is placed in storage after the season is over. CEO works from home office during the off-season.
Land use and community relations		
3.63. Community consultation	✓	EVT has shown leadership by participating in the local industry alliances, which has resulted in improvements in noise and crowding. For example, during the audit, EVT partners shared that the company has helped to encourage walking and cycling tours, it has reduced the number of buses required. EVT partner, Hidden Victoria Tours shared that the two companies worked together to develop tours that visit local

		restaurants, social enterprises, and share more of the local culture and heritage, as well as utilise local public transportation (e.g. water taxi)
5. Transport		
Selecting transport suppliers		
5.7. Bus / Coach safety	✓ _R	During audit interviews with partners, the partners shared that they consider newer vehicles and updated fleets, follow non-idling laws, driver trainings, etc.
7. Activities		
Activities		
7.2. Sustainable excursion policy	✓ _R	The company has included sustainable excursion criteria in its contracts and is actively sharing sustainability ideas with its partners/suppliers
7.3. Suppliers communication	✓ _R	During the on-site audit, all of EVT's key suppliers commended the company for being easy to work with, with some suppliers noting that they have known and worked with Experience Victoria's CEO for many years and appreciate his support.
7.6. Certified excursions	✓ _R	During the interviews with EVT's suppliers, it was shown that they are in general aware of sustainability practices; however, sustainable tour operator certification is indeed a new concept in the local industry.
Specific criteria		
7.14. Supporting local communities	✓	One of EVT's suppliers shared one of its most popular tours visit restaurants in the city, which feature local and indigenous cuisine, as well as an indigenous performance. On some days, guests are also taken to a local artisan market.
7.15. Supporting environmental and biodiversity protection	✓	One of EVT's suppliers shared that many of the tours are low impact (e.g. walking/biking), which help to minimise noise and air pollution in the local community. Use of local transportation (water taxi) is encouraged.
8. Tour leaders, local representatives, and guides		
Tour leaders, local representatives and guides		
8.7. Sustainability knowledge	—	Interviews with EVT staff and suppliers during

		the audit showed that sustainability principles are a way of life in Victoria, and that many of its residents have a strong understanding of sustainability and practice it in their daily lives (e.g. walking and biking, using electric vehicles, sorting waste, minimising use of plastic, etc.)
8.8. Destination knowledge	✓ _R	EVT suppliers shared their own sets of "dos and don'ts" during the interviews, and also shared their own practices. All suppliers noted that their guides receive relevant trainings and scripts, and are encouraged to do their own further research regarding the destination, and relevant sustainability aspects (e.g. animal welfare for horse-drawn carriage tours)
9. Destinations		
Selection of destinations		
9.2. Sustainable destinations	✓ _R	During the audit, it was observed that EVT offers walking and bike tours. The walking routes are clearly marked from the pier.
Local projects and initiatives		
9.8. Policy influencing	✓ _R	EVT demonstrated that it is aware of local political climate and policy impacting the cruise tourism industry in Victoria, and shared that it will be working with local stakeholder groups to influence sustainable destination management. EVT's engagement with the local committees is commendable.
10. Customer communication and protection		
After booking and during holidays		
10.17. Destination dos and don'ts	✓	In speaking with EVT suppliers, guides do share dos & don'ts in terms of safety and cultural norms. Guides also provide interpretation regarding cultural heritage and environmental practices. All EVT partners were very proud of their guides, and how knowledgeable and conscientious they are.
10.25. Sustainable transport options	✓	EVT's suppliers shared that they encourage the use of sustainable transport options including: walking, cycling, pedi-cab, and local transportation. Other options include electric double decker bus (which only runs when it's at

capacity), or horse-drawn carriage.

5. Auditor recommendations and conclusions

Overall impression

Experience Victoria Tours (EVT) is emerging as a leader in sustainable shore excursions in Victoria, Canada. Based on the online and on-site audit, it is clear that EVT operates efficiently and professionally as a tour operator. Based on the sustainability report and on-site audit, EVT has demonstrated a commitment to sustainability, which are at the heart of the company.

Interviews with the CEO and staff during the audit process showed that sustainable and responsible business practices were advocated for and clearly demonstrated by the CEO, by staff, something that partners also corroborated.

Key takeaways from this audit include:

- Sustainability at EVT though led by the CEO who practices environmentalism in daily life, is well-engrained in employees who also have a keen understanding of related-issues such as energy, waste, paper, and water.
- The company's footprint is incredibly small - by occupying such a small space on a recycled bus, which is only used for less than half the year, and by working out of a home office (where the CEO also implements sustainability practices at home), it is a unique setup, but something that is difficult to convey without seeing the office(s) in person.
- Beyond the EVT staff, various partners who were interviewed during the audit willingly shared their own practices on sustainability, demonstrating an understanding of both the people & planet aspects of sustainability.
- The industry leadership shown by EVT is to be commended - by playing a role within various local and industry organisations, EVT is well-positioned to be an advocate for sustainable tourism within the destination.

The overall strategy to improve sustainability across the supply chain is comprehensively taking shape and it will be rewarding to observe the implementation of this over the next few years.

Victoria is poised to become a recognised sustainable destination, and it will be exciting to see EVT as a pioneer and advocate of sustainable tourism.

Additional remarks

Being a Victoria-based company, the sustainable lifestyle is already well-engrained, so many sustainability practices and principles are already in place -- EVT needs to only provide more evidence to support its sustainability story in the eyes of outsiders. Moving forward, sustainability reporting should include more images, more examples, etc., which demonstrate all that EVT is doing in this space.

It was agreed with the CEO and Sustainability Coordinator that the company will focus on the implementation of their action plan over the next 2 years. Emphasis ought to be placed on identifying and implementing monitoring exercises, so as that the company can visibly identify the changes their sustainability movement is making.

Improvement requirements summary

Criterion	Improvement	Status	Deadline
1.15. Action plan	<p>GSTC industry criteria A1 Sustainability Management System: The organization has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its size and scope, addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, human rights, health, safety, risk and crisis management issues and drives continuous improvement. Thus, a crucial component of the management system is the plan, which reflects areas for continuous improvement.</p> <p>While the company has shown during its audit that there are many ideas and ways to improve, the action plan is a valuable tool that must be thoughtfully</p>	✓ _R	24 January, 2020

	<p>developed to show targets, actions, measures, responsibilities and time planning of the ways the company aims to improve over the next 2 years. Moving forward, the company can include other items mentioned throughout this report on in the action plan (e.g. 1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 1.14, etc.).</p>		
<p>3.39. Waste measurement and benchmark</p>	<p>It is recommended to begin measuring your waste (e.g. developing tool to measure and monitor waste such as paper waste) so that, as mentioned, you can highlight/share this best practice with the industry/Travelife. This is an item that can be included in the action plan.</p>	<p>✓_R</p>	<p>24 January, 2020</p>

Auditor recommendation

Experience Victoria Tours, Inc. is recommended to be approved for Travelife Certification.

6. Signature

The report was electronically signed within the Travelife online system.

Jade Lake, Sustainability coordinator, signed on 23 October, 2019

Chi Lo, Travelife auditor, signed on 22 October, 2019