

Introduction to Tour and Travel Operations

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(A concise, easy-to-read guide for students and industry newcomers)

1. What Is “Tour and Travel Operations”?

Aspect	Definition
Tour Operations	Planning, packaging, and selling pre-designed travel experiences (e.g., escorted tours, day trips, cruise itineraries).
Travel Operations	Managing the logistics that allow travelers to move from point A to point B (air, rail, road, sea) and providing related services (accommodation, visas, insurance).
Combined Role	A tour/travel operator coordinates both the product (the tour) and the delivery (transport, lodging, support) to create a seamless customer experience.

2. Core Functions of a Tour & Travel Operator

Function	Key Activities	Typical Tools
Product Development	Market research ? itinerary design ? pricing ? supplier selection	Destination analysis software, cost model spreadsheets
Supplier Management	Negotiate contracts with airlines, hotels, local guides, attractions	CRM, supplier portals, contract management systems
Reservation & Booking	Accept bookings, issue tickets/vouchers, manage inventory	GDS (Amadeus, Sabre, Travelport), booking engines, channel managers
Customer Service	Pre-travel advice, on-trip support, post-trip follow-up	Call center, live chat, mobile app, FAQ database
Financial Management	Collect payments, process refunds, manage commissions, cash flow	Accounting software, payment gateways, ERP
Marketing & Sales	Promote tours, manage distribution channels (online, OTAs, agents)	CMS, email marketing, SEO/SEM, social media tools
Risk & Compliance	Travel insurance, visas, health & safety protocols, data protection	Insurance partners, visa verification tools, GDPR compliance checklists

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3. Typical Organizational Structure

CEO / Managing Director

?

?? Operations Director

? ?? Tour Planning & Product Team

? ?? Supplier Relations Team

? ?? Logistics & Transportation Team

?

?? Sales & Marketing Director

? ?? Digital Marketing Unit

? ?? B2B Agency Relations

? ?? Retail Sales (call centre, storefront)

?

?? Customer Experience Director

? ?? Pre-travel Support

? ?? On-trip Assistance

? ?? Post-trip Feedback

?

?? Finance & Administration Director

?? Accounting & Billing

?? Legal & Compliance

?? HR & IT

Size varies: Small boutique operators may combine several roles; large multinational companies have distinct departments for each function.

4. The Tour?Travel Process Flow (Step?by?Step)

1. **Market Research** – Identify trends, target segments, competitor offerings.
2. **Concept Development** – Create theme, duration, destination mix, price point.
3. **Supplier Sourcing** – Negotiate rates with hotels, airlines, local operators.
4. **Costing & Pricing** – Build a cost model, add margin, set final price.
5. **Product Launch** – Upload itinerary to website/OTAs, issue marketing collateral.
6. **Reservation** – Customer books ? system reserves inventory ? issue tickets/vouchers.
7. **Pre-Travel Service** – Send confirmations, travel documents, advice (visa, health).
8. **Travel Execution** – Manage transport, accommodation, guide services, on-site support.