

## **Accreditation of IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route**

### **I. About IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route**

This global call for mountain hiking tourism demonstration routes is based on the indicator system of the *International Mountain Hiking Tourism Guide* compiled by the International Mountain Tourism Alliance (IMTA). It's geared towards the design and development of hiking tourism products that are of benchmark significance, from a high starting point, with high standards, and in an internationalized manner. It is expected to drive the sound development of hiking tourism and provide a model and international standard for the industry.

IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route will be a brand name and a symbol of quality for hiking products in the future, providing technical support and help to hiking tourism operators and hiking enthusiasts. The brand image and market value of any tourism destination that has been accredited as an IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route will be enhanced. It will thus become a great promotion tool for the development of hiking tourism.

The criteria for accrediting an IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route will be a valuable code of practice or a source of specifications for the planning, creation, operation, and enhancement of hiking trails. Moreover, it can also be a model for regions that are interested in developing hiking tourism products, with a view to contributing to the systematic and standardized development of the hiking tourism industry.

### **II. Accreditation Procedures for IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route**

There are two phases in the procedure for accrediting an IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route:

1. The interested destination completes the application form and submits it to IMTA. IMTA will appoint experts to train the hiking product operating entity at the declaring destination so that it will have a detailed understanding of the procedures and conditions for

the accreditation, enabling the declaring entity to make the necessary preparations and responses, and to submit detailed declaration materials.

2. The declaring entity submits the declaration materials to IMTA, which will proceed with the evaluation and review. For a destination that meets the declaration requirements, the IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route accreditation will be granted for a period of three years.

IMTA will organize regular re-examinations and reviews of the demonstration route in accordance with the criteria. The destination may opt for an annual review of renewal or an all-encompassing review on a triennial basis. The destination may extend the certification for a further three years after the expiry of the three-year period. All destinations that have been accredited as demonstration routes must reapply after six years to ensure their fulfillment of the most up-to-date quality criteria. Any destination that fails to meet the criteria in the review or re-examination and does not rectify the situation within the time limit will be "de-licensed".

### **III. Accreditation Principles of IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route**

1. With premium mountain hiking tourism route resources, with hiking trails or with the conditions to develop hiking trails.

2. With acknowledgement and acceptance of the development of mountain hiking tourism trails, of the development of mountain hiking tourism products or of the upgrading of existing trails under the guidance of the *International Mountain Hiking Tourism Guide*.

3. With the agreement to complete the construction, adjustment, standardization and upgrading of mountain hiking tourism products in accordance with the *International Mountain Hiking Tourism Guide* within one year after receiving the license from the demonstration route.

### **IV. Criteria for IMTA International Mountain Hiking Tourism Demonstration Route (draft)**

The demonstration concerns all or parts of domestic/cross-border hiking routes, with a recommended length of 50 km and a daily hiking itinerary divided into at least three sections. The route shall be evaluated in each of the following two dimensions:

1. Consecutive sections of 4 kilometers in length (about an hour's walk each)

Each section shall be examined according to the following 23 optional criteria and then scored. 1 point for each criterion met. For a 50-kilometer route or more to receive the corresponding certification, all the related sections must score at least 11 points.

2. The evaluation shall be performed in accordance with the mandatory core criteria along the trail for the daily section and the entire route.

For example, a 200-kilometer route might receive the certification for its entire length, or only one or a few sections that are longer than or equal to 50 kilometers might be certified, or it might be unacceptable because the premium sections are too short and/or not consecutive

The evaluation system and criteria are listed below:

TABLE: The evaluation system and criteria

OPTIONAL CRITERIA -- FOR CONSECUTIVE 4-KM SECTIONS		
Trail Surface Format		Numeric Limit
1	<u>Natural trails:</u> Natural and non-engineered paths without artificial fortification, easy walking	At least 1,000m Double count if > 2,000m
2	<u>Fortified trails:</u> Paths with artificial non-sealed surfaces	Without limit
3	<u>Uneven but passable trails:</u> e.g., rough loose stone/boulder cover, heavily eroded paths	Maximum 300m
4	<u>Sealed surfaces:</u> Tarmac, concrete, pavement as tread way	Maximum 500m
5	<u>Paths:</u> Trail width less than 1m 5.1. <u>Natural paths: non-engineered paths</u> 5.2. <u>Safety secured path and historical stone paths</u>	At least 500m Double count if > 1,500m
6	<u>On busy roads:</u> Including unsecured crossings	Maximum 50m
7	<u>Alongside busy roads:</u> Up to a distance of one lane to the side of the road	Maximum 300m
Trail Routing System/Visitor Guiding		Limit value
8	<u>Marking Installed according to the <i>International Mountain Hiking Tourism Guide</i></u>	Complete, without gaps, correctly aligned and without errors <u>As per the Guide</u>
9	<u>Signposting: Installed according to the <i>International Mountain Hiking Tourism Guide</i></u>	As per the Guide
10	<u>Itinerary integrated with other walking trails</u>	As per the Guide
Nature & Landscape		Limit value
11	<u>Diversity</u> Distinctly different landscape formations	At least 3
12	<u>Natural quietness</u> No noises from machines or traffic	Separate parcel At least 1,000m

13	<u>Attractive natural landscapes</u> Special biotopes and geotopes, impressive forests, coastal landscapes, rock formations, parks, etc.	At least 1 (Double count if more than one)
14	<u>Natural water</u> E.g., natural wells, streams, rivers, lakes, bogs, etc.	At least 1 (Double count if more than one)
15	<u>Points of natural beauty</u> E.g., summits, gorges, ravines, rocks, caves, waterfalls, natural heritage sites, etc.	At least 1 (Double count if more than one)
16	<u>Impressive panoramas</u> Continuous free views (at least 3 years guaranteed) min. 45-degree openings and 2,000 m visibility	At least 1 (Double count if more than one)
<b>Culture</b>		<b>Limit value</b>
17	<u>Pleasing urban scenes</u> E.g., old town areas, representative buildings and squares, rural village scenes	At least 1 (Double count if more than one)
18	<u>Local attractions</u> Cultural and historical sites of local and/or regional importance	At least 2
19	<u>Surrounding attractions</u> E.g., cultural heritage, religious sites, former residences of celebrities, etc.	At least 1 (Double count if more than one)
<b>Civilization</b>		<b>Limit value</b>
20	Intensively developed environment Intensively built-up areas, industrial parks, water treatment plants, high voltage power lines	Maximum 300m
21	Service provision Gastronomy or shops for catering provisions open from midday	At least 1
22	Access points for public or feeder buses Regular service, at least a trip every 2 hours	At least 1
23	<u>Picnic grounds</u> E.g., Benches, chairs, huts, etc.	At least 2

CORE CRITERIA -- BY DAILY STAGES	
Core Criteria	Characteristic
<u>Safety</u>	Safety measures for each section must be consistent with current national regulations
<u>Difficulty indicators for each section of the itinerary</u>	As per the Guide
<u>Hiker-friendly entry</u> Walking portal, hikers' parking lot	Availability of information about the trail
<u>Mobility</u> Public transportation network (buses, trains, alternative: feeder buses for hikers) to all stops	At least two trips per day or access to public transportation via designated routes]
<u>Accommodation</u> Hotel, guesthouse, B&B, hostel, campsite, pick-up/drop-off	Accommodation or pick-up/drop-off shall be covered at the origin and destination of each section of the itinerary
<u>Luggage consignment</u>	Luggage consignment services available for pre-order through local service providers (innkeepers, cabs, tour operators)

CORE CRITERIA -- FOR THE COMPLETE ROUTE	
Core Criteria	Characteristic
<u>Natural trails</u>	At least 35% of the entire route
<u>Uneven but passable trails</u>	Max 5% of the entire route, max. 1,500m in a separate parcel
<u>Sealed surfaces</u>	Max 20% of the entire route, max. 3,000m in a separate parcel
<u>On busy roads</u>	Max 3% of the entire route, max. 300m in a separate parcel
<u>Alongside busy roads</u>	Max 10% of the entire route, max. 3,000m in a separate parcel
Marking	100% of the entire route
Diversity	At least 2 formation changes per 8 km
<u>Experience/adventure potential</u>	At least 4 points per 8 km as the optional criteria 13-19
Intensively developed environment	Max 7.5% of the entire route, Max. 3,000m in a separate parcel



<u>Hiker-friendly entry</u>	At least 1 headboard with information in more than 1 language (Native language plus official language such as English)
<u>Accessibility of origin/destination</u> <u>Public transportation available</u> <u>between origin and destination</u>	At least 2 services per day