Strengthening Sierra Leone's tourism sector

INVEST SALONE

UK International Development
Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

From reconnecting Sierra Leone with international tourism markets to strengthening the evidence, businesses and investment case for sustainable growth

14 November 2022

Reconnecting Sierra Leone with international tour operators

Working with Visit Sierra Leone and Tourism is Life, Invest Salone organises a familiarisation visit for international tour operators. Specialist operators from the UK, Europe and the US experience Sierra Leone's nature, culture, heritage and community tourism, and meet local industry representatives.

Key outcome: International operators gain first-hand knowledge of Sierra Leone, strengthening links with local destination management companies and helping rebuild the country's visibility in overseas travel markets.

January 2023

Mapping opportunities for tourism investment

Invest Salone publishes an insights report on tourism in Sierra Leone, examining the sector's competitive advantages, constraints and investment opportunities. The analysis highlights adventure and ecotourism, heritage and ancestry travel, diaspora tourism and winter-sun tourism, alongside the need for stronger skills, standards, destination management and international promotion.

Key outcome: A clearer evidence base identifies priority tourism markets and the practical conditions needed to improve competitiveness and attract investment.

November 2023–February 2025

Building business capability and international market connections

Invest Salone provides technical assistance to four tourism service providers to strengthen their business strategies, identify and expand target markets and improve service efficiency. This business-level support is complemented by support for two Sierra Leonean tour operators to participate in World Travel Market in London, providing opportunities to engage directly with international buyers, partners and tourism industry networks.

Key outcome: Tourism businesses strengthen their market readiness and commercial capabilities, while international exposure creates opportunities to develop new market relationships and partnerships.

May–September 2024

Promoting new niches within Sierra Leone's tourism offer

Through its Made in Salone series and other communications platforms, Invest Salone highlights the potential of sports and adventure tourism, gastronomy and cultural tourism to broaden Sierra Leone's visitor offer. Stories featuring the Tour de Lunsar and Street Child Marathon, Sierra Leonean cuisine, and the country's growing visual arts, music and theatre sectors demonstrate how locally rooted experiences can attract visitors while creating opportunities for businesses and communities.

Key outcome: Greater visibility for distinctive niche tourism segments helps broaden Sierra Leone's tourism proposition beyond its established nature, heritage and beach attractions, while highlighting opportunities for local enterprise, jobs and economic activity.

6–13 November 2024

Bringing sustainable tourism opportunities to international investors

A major delegation representing eight development finance institutions visits Sierra Leone to explore opportunities in infrastructure and sustainable tourism. Invest Salone and ARIA organise a tourism roundtable at Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary and visits to potential projects, presenting the sector's growth prospects, investment pipeline and wider development impact.

Key outcome: International investors gain direct exposure to Sierra Leone's sustainable tourism opportunities and to the sector's potential to create jobs, strengthen livelihoods and support cultural and environmental conservation.

7 October 2025

Building the evidence base for future tourism investment

Invest Salone publishes "Fostering investment opportunities in Sierra Leone: Tourism sector research". Based on consultation with tour operators, the study identifies four priority segments: international adventurers, diaspora 'homecoming' travellers, regional explorers and international conference organisers, and sets out investment and enabling-environment needs.

Key outcome: New research provides government, businesses, investors and partners with a stronger evidence base for targeting markets, addressing constraints and developing Sierra Leone's tourism offer.

Through Invest Salone, UK support contributed to:

- Reconnecting Sierra Leonean tourism businesses with international tour operators and travel markets
- Providing technical assistance and strategic business and marketing support to destination management companies
- Creating opportunities for local tourism firms to participate in international trade fairs and build commercial networks
- Building the evidence base on tourism markets, constraints and investment opportunities
- Promoting the development and visibility of niche tourism segments, including sports and adventure, gastronomy, arts and cultural tourism
- Bringing international investors into direct contact with sustainable tourism opportunities
- Strengthening the case for tourism as a source of jobs, livelihoods, enterprise growth and economic diversification.

Result

A stronger foundation for a more competitive, visible and investment-ready tourism sector, with better-connected local businesses, greater international market exposure, a broader Made in Salone tourism proposition and a stronger evidence base for future sustainable tourism growth.