# SEO Technical requirements

## XML Sitemap

The XML Sitemap (list webpages of site) provides search engine crawlers with more information about the structure of the site. As a result, we aim to achieve better search engine listings.

**Success Criterias:**

After creating the file, the developer should validate that the XML Sitemap has been created correctly. This can be done using online tools and then by submitting it to Google Search Console. Tools such as Screaming Frog SEO Spider can also help to identify discrepancies between the sitemap and the website.

**For further Reading:**

[Tips and Best Practices for XML-Sitemaps](https://ahrefs.com/blog/xml-sitemap/)

[Official instructions from Google on how to submit and analyse sitemaps](https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/183668?hl=en)

[Screaming Frog page](https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider/)

[Xml Sitemap check](https://www.xml-sitemaps.com/validate-xml-sitemap.html)

## Page Speed

Page speed is an important place to start. Slow page speed is often the number one reason for user abandonment, especially on mobile sites.

**Success Criteria:**

* First Input Delay < 100 ms
* Time to Load < 3 s
* Time to First Byte < 200 ms
* Google Lighthouse Performance Score >= 90 points

**For further Reading:**

[Check loading Times](https://www.webpagetest.org/)

[GtMetrix Tool](https://gtmetrix.com/)

## Internal Linking

To create a better experience for our visitors and improve SEO, our website needs a clear and meaningful internal linking structure. This means connecting related pages, like linking blog posts about wellness retreats to booking options or spa services. Using descriptive anchor text, such as "Explore our wellness packages," makes these links intuitive and user-friendly.

Internal links are vital because they help visitors quickly find the information they need while guiding search engines to understand our site’s structure. For example, someone reading about spa services can easily navigate to booking options or related activities.

***Success Criteria:***

* All key pages, such as accommodations, services, and activities, are linked from relevant sections.
* Anchor text is descriptive and directly related to the destination page (e.g., "Discover wellness packages" instead of "Click here").
* There are no broken internal links, and all links lead to the intended pages.
* Validate using tools like Google Search Console or Screaming Frog to check for crawl errors and internal link coverage.
* Bounce rates are reduced, and time spent on the site increases as users easily navigate through content.

***For further readings:***

[Moz - Internal Linking Best Practices](https://moz.com/learn/seo/internal-link)

[Google's Guide to Internal Linking](https://developers.google.com/search/docs/crawling-indexing/links-crawlable)

[Importance of link architecture](https://developers.google.com/search/blog/2008/10/importance-of-link-architecture)

## Hreflang Tags

Implement Hreflang tags to specify the language and geographic targeting of pages. These tags ensure that users from different countries are served the correct version of the site based on their language preferences (e.g., English for US guests and French for French-speaking audiences).

Luxury resorts often attract international clientele who prefer to browse and book in their native language. Without hreflang tags, search engines might display the wrong language version of a page, leading to confusion or frustration for potential guests. Hreflang tags prevent duplicate content issues and improve the user experience by ensuring users see content tailored to their region and language.

**Success Criteria:**

* Hreflang tags are included in the HTML <head> of each page or via the HTTP header.
* Tags point to the correct language/region versions of pages.
* Verified with tools like Google Search Console or Hreflang Testing Tools.

**For further Reading:**

[Der hreflang-Guide für internationales SEO - SISTRIX](https://www.sistrix.de/hreflang-guide/)

[A Guide to Hreflang Tag Best Practices for SEO](https://www.weglot.com/guides/hreflang-tag)

## Mobile-Friendly and Responsive Design

Ensure the website design is fully responsive, meaning it adjusts seamlessly to devices of all screen sizes. Test the site for mobile usability and make sure interactive elements like booking forms, image galleries, and navigation menus are optimized for touch-based interactions.

High-net-worth individuals often browse and book on mobile devices, expecting the same luxury experience online as they would in person. A responsive website design ensures that the resort’s key selling points high-quality images, smooth booking processes, and detailed information are accessible on any device, creating a premium user experience. Moreover, Google prioritizes mobile-friendly websites in its rankings, making this crucial for search visibility.

**Success Criteria:**

* Passes Google’s Mobile-Friendly Test and shows no issues in Search Console’s Mobile Usability report.
* All images, buttons, and forms are optimized for touch interaction without any display issues on smaller screens.
* Smooth performance and navigation across a variety of devices, verified through manual testing and tools like BrowserStack.

**For further Reading:**

[Kostenloser Mobile Friendly Test: Prüfen Sie die Kompatibilität Ihrer Website auf mobilen Geräten](https://seomator.com/de/mobile-friendly-test)

[Mobile Friendly Test | Check Your Website on Mobile](https://seranking.com/free-tools/mobile-friendly-test.html)

## FID (First Input Delay)

Optimize First Input Delay (FID) to ensure users can interact with the website quickly and without delay. FID measures the time between a user’s first interaction (e.g., clicking a button or link) and the browser's response. Achieving an FID under 100 milliseconds ensures that the site feels responsive and user-friendly, especially for interactive elements like booking forms or navigation menus.

FID is a critical metric for luxury resort websites because potential guests expect a seamless, premium browsing experience. Delays in interactions, such as slow loading of booking forms or unresponsive menu clicks, can frustrate users and negatively impact the resort’s brand image. A fast and responsive website reassures users that the resort provides high-end, reliable service, starting from their very first interaction online. Since many guests book their stays or inquire about services directly on the site, a low FID can significantly enhance their overall experience and increase conversions.

**Success Criteria:**

* Achieve an FID score of **less than 100 milliseconds**, as reported by tools like Google PageSpeed Insights or Lighthouse.
* Minimize heavy JavaScript execution that delays browser responsiveness. This can be done by deferring unused JavaScript, reducing the use of large libraries, and leveraging asynchronous loading techniques.
* Key interactive elements (e.g., the “Book Now” button, menu navigation, contact forms) respond immediately when clicked, tested manually across multiple devices and browsers.
* Address FID issues flagged in Google Search Console’s Core Web Vitals report.

**For further Reading:**

[First Input Delay (FID) | Articles | web.dev](https://web.dev/articles/fid?hl=de)

[Max. potenzielles First Input Delay | Lighthouse | Chrome for Developers](https://developer.chrome.com/docs/lighthouse/performance/lighthouse-max-potential-fid?hl=de)

## Image SEO

To optimize our website's performance and improve its visibility, it's important to ensure that all images are optimized. This means using descriptive filenames that indicate what the image represents, adding alt text to help search engines to understand the content of the images, and compressing image sizes to reduce loading times without compromising quality.

This requirement is important because images are one of the most powerful tools for showcasing the beauty and uniqueness of the resort. Since search engines cannot "see" images, adding alt text helps them understand the content, improving the website’s chances of appearing in image search results.

***Success Criteria:***

* Descriptive filenames like luxury-suite-mountain-view.jpg are used instead of generic names like IMG1234.jpg.
* Alt text is added for every image, describing what it shows (e.g., “Luxury suite with a mountain view in Tyrol”).
* Image formats like WebP are used for faster loading.
* The website passes the test: “Coding images efficiently” (on Google Page Speed)

***For further reading:***

[Google's Guide to Image SEO](https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/google-images)

[Optimizing Images for the Web](https://wpengine.com/resources/optimize-images-for-web/)

[Google Page Speed](https://pagespeed.web.dev/)

## HTTPS and Secure Booking

To build trust and protect visitors, our website must use HTTPS for all pages, especially for booking and payment systems. HTTPS ensures that any data shared between the user and our site, such as credit card details or personal information, is encrypted and safe from hackers.

This is essential because visitors need to feel confident that their information is secure when interacting with our site. Without HTTPS, browsers displays a “Not Secure” warning, which can quickly drive potential guests away. Additionally, HTTPS is a ranking factor for Google, so implementing it can help boost the website's visibility in search results.

*Success Criteria:*

* Every page on the site uses HTTPS, and no “Not Secure” warnings appear in the browser.
* Booking forms and payment systems use secure encryption to protect personal and financial information.
* No “mixed content” errors (where secure and insecure content is mixed) are present on any page.
* Use tools like SSL Checker or Why No Padlock? to confirm the HTTPS setup is working perfectly.

*For further reading:*

[What is https](https://www.upguard.com/blog/what-is-https)

[Google's Guide to Secure Your Site](https://developers.google.com/search/blog/2018/12/why-how-to-secure-your-website-https)

[Cloudflare - What is HTTPS?](https://www.cloudflare.com/en-gb/learning/ssl/what-is-https/)