

Set of Criteria for Destinations

October 2022

This set of criteria is GSTC recognized since September 2022

1. Management: Strategy and Planning

1.1 Political Framework

There is a clear commitment from the local authorities with regard to the implementation of the sustainability process.

1.2 Tourism Strategy

For the destination, there is a multi-year tourism development concept (e.g. tourism strategy or destination strategy) in which the dimensions of sustainability (climate protection, resource conservation, biodiversity, human rights, cultural identity, local prosperity, etc.) are integrated and includes an identification and assessment of tourism assets. Risks of tourism are presented. The strategy is regularly reviewed by the DMO on the basis of measurable objectives.

Relevant stakeholders have been involved with development of the strategy and action plan from the beginning.

This document is published on the company's website.

1.3 Sustainability Council

The topic of sustainability is institutionalised in existing committees in the destination, or the destination has established a Sustainability Council composed of representatives of various stakeholder groups, including the private sector, public sector and civil society, which takes into account the dimensions of sustainability (socio- economic, cultural and environmental issues), has defined responsibilities and supports the sustainable development of the destination.

The group involves the private sector, public sector and civil society.

1.4 Capacity of the Destination Management Structure

The destination is represented by an adequately funded managerial organisational structure, which is responsible for a coordinated approach to tourism with the participation of various actors.

1.3.1. Share (%) of communes in the tourism destination that have an above-average tourism intensity for this region

1.3.2. Share (%) of communes in the tourism destination that are organizationally represented in the DMO

1.5 Mission Statement with Reference to Sustainability

The DMO has a corporate mission statement with reference to ecological responsibility, social responsibility for the region (to the external), responsibility towards employees (to the internal) and transparency in its operations and transactions. This document is published on the company's website.

1.6 Sustainability Manager

The DMO has appointed a responsible person with sufficient competence and time resources. It coordinates the sustainability tasks internally and is the point of contact for the destination enterprises and external stakeholders, if necessary, supported by a sustainability team.

1.7 Destination Enterprises

The destination has a partner network of service providers, which involves relevant actors of the destination and is dedicated to the sustainable development of tourism.

Sustainability activities of suppliers and service providers are actively supported by those responsible for tourism; support is provided for a sustainable orientation of the companies.

The destination promotes the application of GSTC-I Recognized standards (TourCert Industry) and GSTC-I Accredited certification schemes for tourism enterprises, where available.

1.7.1. Share (%) of recognized partner businesses

1.7.2. Number of tourism enterprises in the destination with environmental or sustainability label

1.7.3. Share (%) of hospitality tourism businesses in the destination with environmental or sustainability label

1.7.4. Sustainability Index (%) Tour guide

1.8 Dialogue with Stakeholders

Those responsible for tourism identify socially and economically relevant stakeholders of tourism and integrate them into the sustainability process of the destination through regular dialogue.

1.9 Communication on Sustainability

Those responsible for tourism actively communicate and provide information about objects, initiatives, and measures for the sustainable development of tourism in the destination and publicize a list of sustainability certified enterprises.

1.9.1. Sustainability Index (%) Guest information evaluation

1.10 Sustainability Report

In a standardised sustainability report, the DMO presents the relevant topics, initiatives and measures as well as the degree to which the certification criteria have been met and the improvement programme. This report is available to the public and published on the internet.

1.11 Legal Compliance

The DMO knows and complies with all relevant laws (e.g. health, safety, work and environmental aspects).

Laws and regulations regarding property rights and acquisitions are documented and enforced.

Laws and regulations comply with communal and indigenous rights, ensure public consultation and do not authorize resettlement without free prior and informed consent and fair and just compensation.

Laws and regulations also protect user and access rights to key resources. Gesetze und Vorschriften schützen auch die Nutzungs- und Zugangsrechte zu wichtigen Ressourcen.

1.12 Framework for Location Development

The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies which control the location and nature of development, require environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impact assessment and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. Regulations also apply to operations, including property rental and concessions for tourism purposes. The guidelines,

regulations and policies were created with public participation and are widely communicated and enforced.

1.13 Improvement Program

The DMO draws up an improvement programme, which responds to socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and impacts arising from tourism and includes measures both for the organisation itself and at destination level.

The improvement programme is updated annually and systematically monitored to identify the improvement and issues.

2. Management: Development of Sustainable Offers

2.1 Visitor Satisfaction and Feedback

The destination regularly monitors and publicly reports on the level of visitor satisfaction regarding quality and sustainability and, if necessary, takes corrective action in response. A feedback or complaint system is in place and publicly accessible.

2.2 Quality Awareness and Innovation

Those responsible for tourism promote quality assurance, especially in service quality and/or certification of service providers, motivate tourism companies to participate in quality campaigns and encourages a continuous innovation process.

2.2.1. Share (%) of tourism companies with a quality award

2.3 Visitor Information and Engagement

Visitors are informed about sustainability issues in the destination and the part that they can play in addressing them. They are informed about sensitive sites and cultural events. Principles for visitor behaviour and visitor engagement have been developed together with nature conservation authorities, cultural institutions and local communities. Destination enterprises are encouraged to adopt these principles. These principles are also available to tour operators and guides before and at the time of the visit.

2.3.1. Number of tourist information points

2.3.2. In case of guest survey: Percentage (%) of guests who indicate their awareness about the destination's sustainability efforts and activities

2.4 Promotion and Informational Material

Promotion and information content about the destination in all media is accurate with regard to its products, services, and sustainability claims. It reflects the destination's sustainability approach and treats local communities and natural and cultural assets with respect.

2.5 Site Interpretation

Accurate interpretative material is provided which informs visitors of the significance of the cultural and natural aspects of the sites they visit. The information is culturally appropriate, developed with host community collaboration, and clearly communicated in languages pertinent to visitors and residents.

2.6 Accessibility

The visit of tourist attractions and facilities in the destination is also possible for people with restrictions or special needs. This is especially true for sites of outstanding cultural and ecological importance. The topic of accessibility is listed in all means of communication of the DMO;

facilities/places of interest are marked accordingly. Particular information is provided on barrier-free public transport.

Tourist attractions and facilities take measures to design and implement solutions where sites and facilities are not immediately accessible.

2.6.1. Share (%) of tourism companies with an award as barrier-free company (in Germany the label "Reisen für Alle")

2.7 Sustainable Product Components

Those responsible for tourism regularly survey and evaluate the level of sustainability of its communicated tourism products.

2.7.1. Share (%) of tourism services assessed by the DMO with reference to sustainability

2.7.2. Sustainability Index (%) Product evaluation

3. Economy: Economic Security

3.1 Economic Stability

Those responsible for tourism collect key data for assessing the economic stability of the destination, monitor and publish it and sets targets for appropriate growth - taking into account ecological and socio-cultural sustainability.

Appropriate measures may include evidence on the distribution of economic benefits.

3.1.1. Average bed occupancy (%)

3.1.2. Average length of stay (in days)

3.1.3. Number of overnight stays per 1.000 inhabitants (tourism intensity)

3.1.4. Total income (€) of tourism in the region

3.1.4.1 Total direct income (€) of tourism in the region

3.1.4.2 Total indirect income (€) of tourism in the region

3.1.5. Tourist expenses (€) per visitor per day

3.1.6. Amount of tax revenue from tourism

3.1.7. Share (%) of direct jobs (full-time equivalents) in tourism at overall workplaces

The DMO provides information about the economic stability of the own company.

3.1.8. Composition of DMO turnover

3.1.9. Economic development of the last 3 years of DMO sales

3.2 Seasonal Variability and Economic Stability

The DMO monitors the monthly distribution of tourist arrivals and overnight stays as well as the seasonal fluctuations in the destination.

Together with tourism providers, the DMO carries out measures aimed at seasonally distributing tourism activities in such a way that there is a balance of interests between the local tourism industry, the population, culture and the environment.

3.2.1. Monthly distribution of arrivals

3.2.2. Monthly distribution of overnight stays

3.2.3. Number of months in high season

3.3 Satisfaction with the DMO

The DMO measures the level of satisfaction of its business partners and stakeholders with their services and sustainability orientation.

3.3.1. Satisfaction Index (%) Partners, stakeholders

3.3.2. Response rate (%) of the survey for partners, service providers, stakeholders

4. Economy: Local prosperity

4.1 Regional Economic Cycles

The DMO knows and promotes typical local/regional products. Together with regional actors, associations and institutions, the DMO supports tourism companies in acquiring regional products and services and in the regionalisation of gastronomy.

4.2 Eco-fair Purchasing

The DMO has guidelines for sustainable purchasing that reflect the area's nature and culture and gives preference to regional, environmentally friendly and fair-trade products and services.

Public tender offers include criteria which require contractors to comply with sustainability criteria.

Together with initiatives, associations and institutions, the DMO raises awareness among enterprises and supports them in adopting sustainable purchasing guidelines.

4.2.1. Share (%) of regionally produced, organic and fair-trade products

4.3 Quantity and Quality of Employment

Those responsible for tourism have up-to-date data on employment in tourism and, together with industry associations and political institutions, accompany topics such as seasonal and part-time work, local employment, shortage of skilled workers and demographic change; also incentives are provided to legalize informal businesses and employment.

4.3.1. Number of persons employed in tourism (hospitality)

4.3.2. Number of trainees in tourism (hospitality)

4.3.3. Number of hospitality businesses

4.3.4. Number of employees in other tourism sectors

5. Environment: Protection of Nature and Landscape

5.1 Impact on Nature & Environment

Those responsible for tourism are aware of the current situation of the ecosystems in the destination and of the significant positive and negative effects of tourism activities on nature and the environment, for example through regular discussions and consultations with environmental and nature conservation authorities. The DMO identifies tourism activities with increased environmental risks and actively discusses how to deal with these activities. Measures to avoid and reduce environmental risks are developed from the evaluation (if necessary together with the authorities).

5.1.1. Share (%) of areas designated as protected areas in total area

5.1.2. Sustainability Index (%) biodiversity check

5.2 Cooperation with Nature Conservation Actors

Those responsible for tourism are committed to reducing conflicts between tourism and nature conservation actors and continuously analyse potential areas of conflict.

There is active cooperation between those responsible for tourism and nature conservation associations / actors, reserve administrations and/or nature conservation authorities.

Joint projects are carried out by those responsible for tourism and actors in nature conservation and environmental protection in the destination.

5.3 Biodiversity Conservation

The destination monitors and measures the tourism impact on biological diversity, ecosystems, species and habitats and takes corrective actions where needed. The destination has a system to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.

Destination businesses are being encouraged to engage in biodiversity conservation and visitors are being informed about on how to avoid negative environmental impacts when visiting the area.

5.3.1 Wildlife Interaction

The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards for wildlife interactions. Interactions with free roaming wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, are non-invasive and responsibly managed to avoid adverse impacts on the animals concerned and on the viability and behaviour of populations in the wild.

5.4 Landscape and Townscape Typical of the Region

Those responsible for tourism, tourism providers, regional initiatives and local authorities as well as nature conservation authorities coordinate their efforts in planning tourist infrastructure, in projects to preserve traditional cultural landscapes and in projects to preserve and beautify the cultural-historical townscape, architectural features and to support regional building culture.

5.5 Regional Visitor Guidance

Those responsible for tourism have a system for visitor management which is regularly reviewed. They are involved in the development of systematic visitor guidance concepts and strives for uniform and high-quality designations of tourist routes to tourist attractions (cultural & natural sites) and providers. In the context of visitor guidance, attention is also paid to capacity and sensitivity of the cultural and natural sites, to optimize visitor flow and minimize adverse impacts and conflict avoidance between different user groups of areas.

5.6 Near-Natural Areas and Outdoor Facilities

At least 30% of own company premises and real estate as well as areas in the responsibility of the DMO such as outdoor pools / thermal baths, cultural facilities, beaches and spa parks are designed and maintained in a natural environment.

5.7 Species Exploitation and Animal Welfare

The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards that seek to ensure animal welfare and conservation of species (animals, plants and all living organisms). This includes the harvesting or capture, trade, display, and sale of wildlife species and their products. No species of wild animal is acquired, bred or held captive, except by authorized and suitably equipped persons and for properly regulated activities. Housing, care and handling of all wild and domestic animals meets the highest standards of animal welfare.

6. Management

6.1 Fields of Action Due to Climate Change

Those responsible for tourism are informed about regional climate protection concepts as well as the most important risks and opportunities of climate change for tourism. Targets and measures for climate protection climate adaptation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions are implemented and reported.

Information on predicted climate change, associated risks and future conditions is provided for residents, businesses and visitors.

6.1.1 Climate Change Adaptation

Climate change adaptation strategies are pursued for the siting, design, development and management of tourism facilities.

6.2 Environmentally Friendly Mobility Concepts

The tourism managers develop tourist mobility concepts in the destination and ensure environmentally and climate friendly transport for tourists through its active participation (at least at regional level) and set targets to reduce transport emissions.

6.3 Environmentally Friendly Arrival and Departure

Those responsible for tourism themselves provide guest information with regard to travel options using environmentally friendly and/or public transport and also motivates tourism service providers to inform their guests accordingly.

They also set targets to reduce transport emissions.

6.3.1. Distribution of means of transport for guest arrivals

6.4 Sustainable Mobility on Site

The tourism managers and destination enterprises carry out initiatives and measures to increase the use of environmentally friendly means of transport among its guests, to facilitate daily functional mobility on site and to promote environmentally compatible leisure mobility.

6.5 Climate and Environmental Protection in Companies

The DMO initiates or supports campaigns for CO2 reduction, for the offsetting of remaining emissions and for an environmentally friendly behaviour in tourist businesses and reports on them publicly.

6.6 Water Consumption and Water Risk

The destination provides information and initiates or supports campaigns to reduce water consumption.

Water risk in the destination is assessed and documented.

In cases of high-water risk, water stewardship goals are identified and actively pursued with enterprises, to ensure that tourism use does not conflict with the needs of local communities and ecosystems.

6.7 Water Quality

The destination monitors water quality for drinking, recreational and ecological purposes using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and the destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.

6.8 Wastewater

The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems.

The destination ensures that wastes are properly treated and reused or released safely without adverse impacts on the local population and the environment.

6.9 Light and Noise Pollution

The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution and encourages enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations.

6.10 Energy Efficiency

The destination has targets to reduce energy consumption, improve efficiency in its use and increase the use of renewable energy.

The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report their contribution to these targets.

The DMO is aware of the energy consumption of its own operations, set themselves reduction targets, improve efficiency and strives to increase the use of renewable energies.

6.10.1. Electricity consumption (kWh) per employee per year

6.10.2. Heating energy consumption (kWh) per employee and year

6.10.3. Business trips (km) per year

6.10.4. Share (%) of renewable energies in total energy consumption

6.11 Solid Waste

The DMO measures the amount of waste and sets targets for its reduction.

The destination has a recycling system in place which effectively separates waste by type. Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.

The destination provides information and initiates or supports campaigns to avoid, reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste, including food waste and single-use items, especially plastics

6.11.1. Waste volume (l) residual waste per employee per year

6.11.2 Waste volume (l) paper per employee per year

6.11.3 Waste volume (l) plastic per employee per year

6.12 Paper

The DMO measures and reduces its paper consumption and primarily uses recycled paper.

6.12.1. Total weight paper (kg) per employee and year

6.12.1. Share (%) of recycled paper

6.12.3. Share (%) of FSC/PEFC paper

6.13 Environmentally Friendly Employee Behaviour

Measures are implemented by the DMO to support environmentally friendly behaviour among employees, particularly in the areas of business travel and vehicle fleet, indoor climate and lighting, office materials and waste, nutrition and hospitality.

7. Social issues: Culture and Identity

7.1 Protection and Preservation of Cultural Assets

The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve cultural assets (including built heritage and cultural landscapes) and are involved in plans to protect the cultural heritage of the destination.

The important cultural assets are known to those responsible for tourism and are presented in communication media for visitors.

7.2 Cultural Artefacts

The destination has laws governing the proper sale, trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts. The laws are enforced and publicly communicated, including to tourism enterprises and visitors.

7.3 Intellectual Property

The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals.

7.4 Cultural Identity

The DMO and their destination enterprises seek to involve and benefit local communities in underlining the special features of the immaterial cultural heritage in the means of communication of the destination (e.g. languages/dialects, songs, music, art and theatre, craftsmanship), unless these give rise to ethical, moral and species protection concerns. It develops and markets corresponding tourist offers to support the local communities and provide authentic experiences.

7.5 Access to Natural and Cultural Sites

The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary, rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites.

8. Social issues: Common Good and Quality of Life

8.1 Human Rights

Those responsible for tourism guarantee compliance with international standards on human rights in their tourism activities and agree on operational goals to ensure human rights.

The destination has laws, practices and an established code of conduct to prevent and report on human trafficking, modern slavery and commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation, discrimination and harassment of or against anyone, particularly children, adolescents, women, LGBT and other minorities.

The laws and established practices are publicly communicated and enforced.

8.2 Risk Management

Those responsible for tourism are informed of acute safety and health risks for tourists by appropriate authorities. A crisis and risk management plan exists to protect tourists in an emergency and, if necessary, to draw consequences for tourist offers.

The destination has a system to monitor, prevent, publicly report, and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards that addresses the needs of both visitors and residents.

Key elements of the risk reduction, crisis management and emergency response plan are

communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises.

Procedures and resources are established for implementing the plan and it is regularly updated.

8.3 Quality of Employment and Family-Friendly Working Conditions

Together with associations, communities and other institutions, the DMO is involved in initiatives to support employment quality, encourages and supports career opportunities and training and family-friendly working conditions in tourist businesses in the destination.

8.4 Acceptance of Tourism in the Local Community

The expectations, concerns and satisfaction of the local population with tourism are regularly analysed and evaluated. For example, the DMO knows about letters of complaint and complaints from the population on tourism issues and integrates tourism acceptance into citizen surveys.

The destination also enables and promotes public participation in sustainable destination planning and management.

The destination has a system to enhance local understanding of sustainable tourism opportunities and challenges and to build the capacity of communities to respond.

8.5 Voluntary and Civic Engagement

Volunteer organisations work closely with the DMO on specific projects. The DMO supports social, ecological or cultural projects in the destination, among other things, in the form of partnerships, sponsoring or voluntary activities. Tourist businesses are encouraged by possible offers of cooperation to also make contributions to voluntary work and civic engagement.

The destination has a system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives in a responsible manner.

8.6 Conditions of Employment

The DMO offers family-friendly working conditions and measures to increase the attractiveness of employment beyond the legal requirements. It is based on collective wages and collective agreements.

8.6.1. Number of permanent employees (full-time equivalents)

8.6.2. Number of freelancers/seasonal employees (full-time equivalents)

8.7 Employee Satisfaction

The DMO determines the satisfaction of its employees.

8.7.1. Satisfaction Index (%) Employees

8.7.2. Response rate (%) of the employee survey

8.8 Justice and Inclusion

The DMO and the destination's tourism enterprises commit to offer equal opportunities in terms of education, training and employment, a safe and secure working environment, and a living wage for all and opportunities regardless of gender, origin, ethnicity, age, faith, sexual orientation and disability. A tolerant and respectful handling in the destination is strengthened.

8.9 Sustainability Training

There is a regular range of further education/training courses for DMO employees on sustainability and other topics.

DMO = Destination Management Organization

Definition Partner Companies: touristic service providers who are in touch with the DMO and are in any business relationship or dependency