TourCert®
Travel for Tomorrow

TourCert Position on Climate Neutrality

The term "climate neutrality" is now used inflationarily and therefore often leads to misunderstandings and even deliberate consumer deception. According to the definition, climate neutrality means a balance between carbon emissions and the removal of carbon from the atmosphere through carbon sinks. To achieve net-zero emissions, all greenhouse gas emissions worldwide must be offset through carbon sequestration.To date, there are no artificial carbon sinks capable of removing carbon from the atmosphere on the scale necessary to achieve climate targets. Carbon stored in natural sinks such as forests is released back into the atmosphere through fires, land-use changes, or deforestation. For this reason, CO_2 emissions must primarily be drastically reduced in order to achieve climate neutrality.

If we take a closer look at products and services in tourism, the complexity and difficulty of achieving this goal become very clear. All interrelationships, including upstream and downstream process chains, must be taken into account. In tourism, this is particularly challenging because data collection alone requires significant effort and emissions can only be avoided to a limited extent.

The TourCert certification refers to a holistic sustainability management system that, among other aspects, records greenhouse gas emissions related to office ecology, business travel, and mobility, for example in connection with sold travel products. Nevertheless, despite a wide range of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and compensate for them, the TourCert certification must not be associated with the wording "climate neutrality", nor should it be displayed alongside a corresponding label.

For companies wishing to focus specifically on climate protection, TourCert now offers a new product for the hospitality sector. **Climate Management by TourCert** creates structures and processes that systematically address the identification, recording, avoidance, and reduction of relevant emission sources while involving management and employees from the very beginning. Companies are first sensitized to the issue and then empowered through knowledge transfer to assess their starting point by preparing a greenhouse gas inventory. Based on this, they can establish meaningful reduction targets and achieve measurable impact through an easily implementable climate program. **Climate Management by TourCert** is not a certification but rather a long-term management system.

The preparation of the carbon footprint is carried out by external partners to ensure the required impartiality and a robust greenhouse gas inventory in accordance with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. TourCert recommends a comprehensive greenhouse gas inventory including relevant Scope 3 emissions (upstream and downstream indirect emissions), since the majority of emissions in the hotel industry arise in these areas. As it is still not possible, especially in tourism, to avoid all emissions, compensation of greenhouse gas emissions may serve, after the greatest possible reduction efforts, as a short-term interim solution and proactive contribution to climate protection. However, we refrain from communicating this as "climate neutral" and also encourage our community to avoid using this wording. For taking financial responsibility for residual emissions, we exclusively recommend certified climate protection projects under the GOLD Standard that are aligned with our mission statement, as these projects integrate measures to improve social sustainability and educational components.

Climate neutrality can by no means function solely through the expansion of natural and

technological sinks, which are limited and cost-intensive. CO_2 compensation is therefore only one component of climate protection, just as climate management is only one component of a company's overall sustainability strategy.Transparency and honest communication are essential and are also required by the EU Claims Directive.

The following principle guides all areas of TourCert's activities:
Avoid before reduce before compensate.

TourCert is EMASplus certified, has signed the Glasgow Declaration, and participates in the climate protection program of the BVMW, which includes the preparation of a greenhouse gas inventory and the definition of reduction targets.