Training, Awards & Certification Program

Capacity Building & Recognition for Sustainable Destination Management

Version 4.6 | November 2019

www.greendestinations.org
Tourism managers are facing continuous tourism growth and developments in the market with regard to sustainability. Politicians, local communities and the travel sector expect destination managers to enhance tourism benefits while preventing nuisance and overtourism.

Green Destinations developed a program offering support to destination managers in implementing suitable solutions and in delivering sustainable and responsible tourism, while actively involving their local community and business sector. This program applies to destination managers working at a local, regional and national level, and to protected area managers. The program also prepares for GSTC-Accredited Certification and for pre-certification Awards for those who seek international recognition for sustainable destination management.

In times of overtourism, travelers are looking for an authentic holiday experience, well-protected natural and cultural heritage and a clean and healthy environment. Holidaymakers do not choose a “sustainable destination”, they expect any destination to be sustainable. We help you to meet that expectation, and to provide a better quality in the process.

1 The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) accredits Certification bodies against the highest international standards
Who are we and what do we offer?

We are the Green Destinations foundation. Together with our partners around the world we support more than 200 destinations in 60 countries to deliver responsible tourism based upon globally recognized principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More than any other certifier, we offer destination recognition and visibility in the market, to inform travelers how clean, green and responsible destinations are. This will support well-considered destination selection.

Our programs for destination management and recognition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination management, monitoring, training and support</th>
<th>Green Destinations Awards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on the basis of our GSTC-Recognised Green Destinations Standard, a set of guidelines supporting the UN SDGs.</td>
<td>recognise your progress and political leadership. The QualityCoast Awards are specially designed for more urban destinations focusing on waterfront sustainability, seaside and beach quality.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Involving your tourism businesses</th>
<th>GSTC-Accredited Certification as a Sustainable destination</th>
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<tr>
<td>in sustainability, making your holiday offer more responsible and visible through the Good Travel Guide.</td>
<td>is the ultimate recognition for ambitious destinations.</td>
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Awards are based upon assessments by independent auditors and will provide you with an agenda for improvement. The assessment cycle is two years; Awards and Certificates are presented at our annual Global Green Destinations Days (GGDD) or at international trade shows (ITB Berlin, FITUR Madrid). In addition, national or local events may be organized by our country representatives.

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What are the benefits?

We offer effective opportunities to improve your sustainability, quality, competitiveness and marketing, while receiving the best possible independent recognition of your efforts.

By joining Green Destinations, you will enjoy these benefits:

- Enhanced monitoring, benchmarking and reporting of important sustainability and quality aspects, making use of a comprehensive dossier on the GD online platform.
- Independent assessment of strengths and weaknesses based upon our GSTC-Recognized Standard; this assessment is more extensive than a “GSTC Assessment” since we use additional guidelines on strategic impact assessment, overtourism and carbon & climate.
- Independent suggestions to improve your tourism sustainability, with reference to innovative “green solutions”.
- Priority access to our Green Destinations events, enabling you to present your success stories, to learn from international experience and to be inspired by peers.
- Global recognition through Green Destinations Benchmark Awards or GSTC-Accredited Certification.
- Automatic nomination to the Sustainable Destinations Top 100 competition and to the Sustainable Destinations Awards, hosted and sponsored by ITB Berlin, the world’s Leading Travel Trade Show.
- Membership of the largest and most affordable destination program (best-price guarantee).
- NEW: participation in our responsible travel promotion program, including free exposure in the Good Travel Guide and in bookdifferent.com.

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After each award presentation you can organize a media event in your destination, giving you the opportunity to present your successful efforts to your citizens. You can display the award banners and flags throughout your destination. Visitors recognise and appreciate your commitment. Such displays enhance visitor appreciation and consumer ratings.

Visibility to travellers

QualityCoast destinations have been among the Top Award winners at ITB Berlin, the world’s leading travel trade show.
Who can participate?
The program is open for all destinations: municipalities, cities, islands, regions, protected areas and private destinations. A combination of local communities can participate as one destination. Destinations pay a fee which varies depending on their population or size.

What are the focus areas?
The program is structured by the sustainability management guidelines of our Green Destinations Standard. Progress is monitored through indicators, which makes the program concrete and measurable. You can easily implement our guidelines and indicators in your management system.

The Standard is published here, and consists of guidelines covering six main themes:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Social Well-Being
- Business & Hospitality
Option 1. 
Destination Development & Monitoring

Destination managers who are interested to find out about the options can start with a subscription to the Green Destinations online platform, allowing them to:

- Get access to the 30 most important guidelines for destination development
- Report what is done to adhere to on up to these guidelines (“sustainability reporting”)
- Self-assessment and action planning
- Provide indicator data, monitor and benchmark performance

Additionally, you may consult one of our trainer-advisors for active support; register to Global Green Destinations Days (GGDD) or engage our training & support workshop program (Option 2B).
Option 2.
Green Destinations Awards

Participating destinations provide indicator data and summarise what is done to adhere to all relevant guidelines (“sustainability reporting”) on our online platform. Relevant guidelines will be used as criteria for adherence to the Standard by an independent auditor.

The destination’s indicator data are processed in a database (with data from 2000+ other destinations). The combined results of the auditor assessment and indicator performance defines your award level.

The Green Destinations and QualityCoast Award levels follow directly from the overall result of the guidelines and – to a lesser extent - the indicator performance:

- **BRONZE AWARD** from 60% overall result
- **SILVER AWARD** from 70% overall result
- **GOLD AWARD** from 80% overall result
- **PLATINUM AWARD** from 90% overall result

The Award Certificates are presented at our annual **Green Destinations conferences**. You can take advantage of the annual Award presentations in your marketing. Awards and the stories about your achievements are often just as interesting for travelers as certification.

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**Option 2A. Sustainability Reporting & Assessment**

This option is suitable when your destination coordinator (or team) has already made good progress in sustainable destination management. After registration (to confirm the destination’s commitment to sustainable tourism) the destination coordinator will receive a login to our online Assessment and Reporting platform and can start the sustainability reporting on relevant criteria and indicators.

A “GSTC Assessment” can be done as a first step of in the first year of our reporting and assessment. The GD Standard has a wider scope than the GSTC Standard, with optional and additional guidelines. By working on the platform, your destination team will learn about relevant new approaches and solutions. Your Green Destinations coach will provide technical instructions (like a helpdesk) and will advise whether your reporting is sufficiently advanced to request an external Award assessment (audit).

This option 2A does not provide you with strategic support, so newly participating destinations are advised to seek direct support from an expert recognized by Green Destinations, or to participate in our new Training & Support program, either as a destination or as an individual destination manager. More information below (Option 2B).
Option 2B. Training & Support for Improvement

In this option, the procedure is the same as in 2A, but in addition you will be actively supported online or on-site - by one of our trainer-advisors in:

- making a Tourism Impact Assessment
- making the sustainability reporting more efficiently
- preparing improvements that will quickly make a difference

Reporting usually requires 15 working days of your sustainable tourism coordinator, who will be trained on the job.

Further support to destination managers is facilitated through:

- a new series of training & support workshops and webinars that will be introduced country by country, depending on the interest. Check our Newsletter;
- participation in our Global Green Destinations Days (GGDD)

You can also be supported in creating a stakeholders' group; in organizing local stakeholder meetings and a public survey to help checking and mobilising support for sustainable tourism among the business sector and the local community.

The support service is entirely flexible in the number of hours and in the period of support. A suggested basic online support package would consist of 60 hours during the first sustainability reporting. A basic on-site support package consists of a five-day training involving the destination coordinator and a small group of stakeholders.

Option 2C. Country Baseline Assessment

Green Destinations developed a unique support tool for countries and regions. This enables you to assess to what extent the Green Destinations Standard is complied with at the country (or regional) level. This assessment takes place interactively with country experts. Read more here.
Option 3. Destination Certification

For GSTC-Accredited certification a destination must comply with all relevant guidelines (criteria). It is only useful to seek certification if you are at least at Gold Award level. The benefits of our Awards program are included in our certification.

*Green Destinations Certified* is the highest achievable level of certification for tourist destinations. The requirements and fees of GSTC-Accredited certification are higher than those of the Awards program.

### Overview of the membership options

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<tr>
<td>Indicators Assessment (database)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR. of Guidelines / Reporting Criteria</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Independent Assessment</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility for Sustainable Top 100</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidance &amp; Good Practice Examples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site Audit</td>
<td></td>
<td>EVERY 4-5 YEARS</td>
<td>EVERY 2 YEARS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must comply with all mandatory criteria of the GD Standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accredited by GSTC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QualityCoast or GD Awards Included</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visibility for Consumers</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Membership Fee per Year</td>
<td>FROM €370</td>
<td>FROM €1575</td>
<td>FROM €5250</td>
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Options 1-3
The process step-by-step

“One-size-fits-all” does not apply to destinations: every destination has its own ambitions and restrictions. Immediate certification is usually not possible. Therefore, we recommend a stepwise approach as illustrated below, beginning with the Awards program, which is the most cost-effective approach in preparing for certification. Once prepared, you may apply for Certification.

Beach or waterfront destination

Any destination: city, town, island, protected area

QualityCoast Awards
Bronze > Silver > Gold > Platinum

Green Destinations Awards
Bronze > Silver > Gold > Platinum

Destination Development
(only working on the online platform)

GSTC-Accredited Green Destinations Certification

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Several of our guidelines encourage your business sector in enhancing sustainability in many ways. When this is done well, this alone can upgrade your Award level. Also, we expect Gold and Platinum destinations to have a recognized green travel offer (e.g. ecolabel hotel).

We will suggest your businesses to use a platform full of useful tips and tools, making your holiday offer more sustainable and visible through the Good Travel Guide. In awarded destinations, companies and attractions selected for this Guide will be allowed to use a special logo (as shown here) in their marketing, with the aim to contribute to a common branding of the destination.
Further information – worldwide support service

Green Destinations: www.greendestinations.org
Find here a brief introduction to Green Destinations

Green Destinations has qualified representatives and experts around the world speaking your language!

For any enquiries: contact@greendestinations.org
Registration: certification@greendestinations.org

Leiden, the Netherlands, November 2019