



**Tourism for People,
Nature & Climate**

DESTINATION CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



A Program for Destinations

Although interrupted by the global pandemic, many tourism destinations worldwide experience continuous growth, bringing challenges to maintain a sustainable balance between their environmental, cultural, and social resources. Now more than ever, destination managers are expected to actively develop and manage tourism sustainably, avoiding negative impacts and maximising the benefits it brings.

Together with our partners worldwide, Green Destinations offers the tools and **GSTC-Recognised** framework for sustainable tourism development by comprehensively assessing destination sustainability policies and practices, planning for improvements, learning from peers, and celebrating achievements with Certification Awards or GSTC Certification.

Green Destinations Programs and Services have supported over 500 destinations in 90+ countries to deliver responsible tourism.

Green Destinations Awards recognise progress in sustainable destination management, policies, and political leadership. QualityCoast Awards are specially designed for destinations focusing on waterfront sustainability, seaside, and beach quality.

Green Destinations GSTC Certification is our **GSTC-Accredited** recognition for ambitious destinations aiming for advanced compliance with the globally agreed sustainability criteria.

Our Destination Certification Program offers something **for all destinations**: large or small, new to or experienced in sustainable destination management. Municipalities, cities, islands, regions, protected areas, and private destinations* can apply. At the same time, countries, states or provinces can opt for our **"Regional Program"** to collectively introduce sustainable destination management and certification to a number of destinations within a territory.

(*) Accommodations, single buildings, attractions and theme parks are not eligible. Eco-lodges and privately-owned protected areas are eligible if there is effective stewardship for a considerable area that is otherwise not managed.



Soča Valley (SI), Slovenia Green Gold



Sintra (PT), Green Destinations Gold

Publicity and Promotion

We provide strong publicity and market visibility for our destinations to inform travellers about clean, green and responsible destinations and to empower consumers to make well-considered travel choices.

The Awards and GSTC Certification are presented at our annual [Green Destinations Conference](#) and the [ITB Berlin event](#). These events provide our destinations with international exposure and publicity opportunities for their sustainability achievements.

The annual [Top 100 Destination Sustainability Stories](#) competition invites destinations to showcase their best sustainability achievements by submitting a 'Good Practice Story'. Indeed, narratives and stories are often just as interesting for travellers as certifications. **Certified destinations are automatically pre-selected for the yearly Top 100 competition.**

After each awarded certification, destinations can organise a media event in the destination, giving the opportunity to present the result of efforts to stakeholders. Flags and banners can be displayed throughout awarded destinations. Visitors recognise and appreciate the commitment - such displays enhance visitor appreciation and consumer ratings.

The [Good Travel Guide](#) website is our affiliate program to showcase destinations participating in all Green Destinations Programs for destinations and businesses. The Guide focuses on making responsible destinations, accommodations and activities visible to travellers.



GD Destination Certification and Story Awards at ITB, 2023



Our Certification Program

The **Green Destinations Awards** and QualityCoast Awards indicate compliance levels with the **Green Destinations Standard V2** (GSTC-Recognised). Independent audits are required every 2 years and result in **Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum** designation. Each alternate audit must be conducted on-site.



Green Destinations GSTC Certification is our program for destinations that aim for full adherence to the Green Destinations Standard criteria. The assessment is more rigorous, involving broad stakeholder consultation to verify compliance, and compliance should be demonstrated with documented evidence. Validity is 3 years but a surveillance audit takes place every year and an on-site renewal audit takes place after 2 years. Destinations are advised to apply for Certification if they have reached at least a Gold Award level or prepared with a different (GSTC-Recognised) assessment or recognition program.

Contact us for applicable fees that differentiate by the **program** (Award or GSTC Certification), destination **type** (community, protected area or private destination) and **size** (inhabitants, surface or capacity).



Torroella - L'Estartit (ES), Green Destinations Gold



Norderney (DE), QualityCoast Gold

Our Program at glance

GD AWARDS



GSTC CERTIFICATION



RESULT OF THE APPLICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum Award based on GD Standard compliance levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'GSTC-Certified' : based on full compliance with the GD Standard
COMPLIANCE VERIFICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance may be decided based on narratives and/or stakeholder confirmation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully evidence-based and stakeholder-confirmed compliance Yearly progress report on any pending Corrective Actions
CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following GSTC Accreditation guidelines for independent certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhering to GSTC Accreditation guidelines for independent certification
ASSESSMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every 4 years: 1-day onsite audit Every 2 years: desk audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial onsite certification audit (2-4 days) After 1 year: surveillance audit After 2 years: onsite renewal audit
PROMOTIONAL BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invitation to annual award ceremony Flags, social media posts, other exposure Free Basic page on GoodTravel.Guide Pre-selection for annual Top 100 competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As GD/QC Award, + featured on GSTC's Map of Certified Destinations Exclusive status as one of very few destinations (globally) to receive GSTC-accredited certification
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including auditor fees (excl. travel expenses) Excluding GD Training for DMO Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excluding audit costs (depending on size) Including GD Training for DMO Staff



Saba (NL Carib), QualityCoast Silver



Berg en Dal (NL), Green Destinations Certified



Bonaire (NL Carib) QualityCoast Silver

Interested? For more information and registration, visit our website [here](http://www.greendestinations.org).

Our Methodology

The Certification Program for Destinations is structured by the **sustainability management** guidelines of our **Green Destinations Standard**, which is **recognised** by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to cover globally agreed sustainability requirements.

The standard covers six main themes:



Destination Management



Culture & Tradition



Nature & Scenery



Social Well-Being



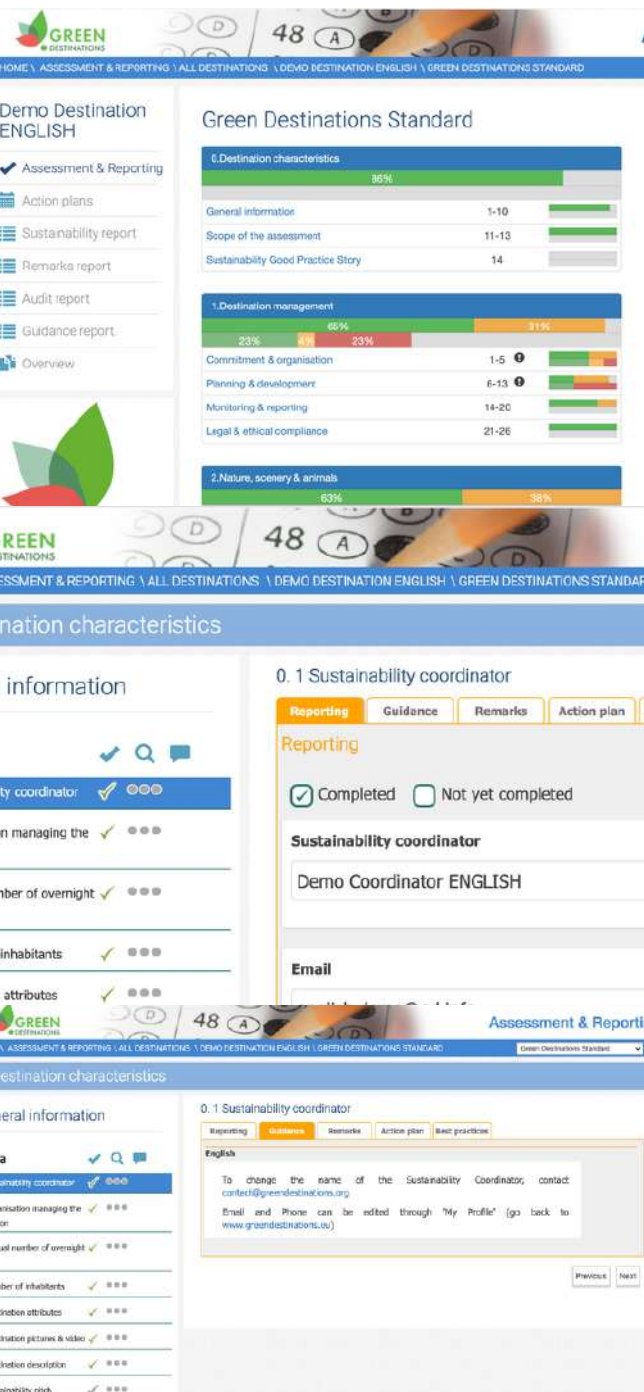
Environment & Climate



Business & Communication

Destinations signing up for the program engage in a sustainability management cycle aimed at continuous improvement with periodic assessment and independent verification. The main steps **after registration** include:

- **Engagement and Reporting:** Induction training to destination sustainability, the certification program, how to apply the GD Standard and key resources. Preparing the application by reporting compliance to 75 mandatory criteria of the GD standard.
- **Evaluation:** Technical check and independent assessment of reported sustainability compliance.
- **Certification Award:** A Certification Committee evaluates auditor conclusions and issues the Award or Certification, which remains valid for 2 or 3 years respectively.
- **Action Planning:** For improvements based on provided recommendations, guidance and good practice examples.



Support and Training

Our **Training and Support Program** offers online training and support tools for sustainable destination management for DMO staff, destination managers, practitioners, and key tourism stakeholders. Find out more [here](#).

Destinations applying for GD Awards or GSTC Certification start with an initial **Engagement period** (max 12 months) to prepare their application with a number of mandatory and optional training and support elements.

	Engagement Period*	Support Program*
Reporting Platform tools & resources Incl. helpdesk support		
Foundations of Sustainable Destination Management (online training)		
GD Standard Interpretation of 75 criteria (advanced online training)		
Top 100 Competition Registration and submission support		
Tourism Impact Assessment (online training module + coaching)		
Technical Check for Certification Pre-assessment evaluation of application		
GD standard rapid assessment Support to criteria compliance reporting		
Business Sector Sustainability Scan Stakeholders		
Destination carbon footprint calculator (available in EU only)		
Destination KPI Benchmark Report support in collecting & reporting data		
Public Sustainability Report 10 indicators		
Climate Action Planning (incl. Climate Impact map)		

(*) The price of each package is based on standard rates. Contact us to enquire about the local rates of these services in your region.

Contact us:

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Leiden, The Netherlands

