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.
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.

www.greendestinations.org
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 GTSC Certified** 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 all compliance should be fully supported by evidence. Every 3 years, an on-site assessment is required. 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 fees that differentiate by the program (Award or GSTC Certification), destination type (community, protected area or private destination) and size (inhabitants, surface or capacity).

[www.greendestinations.org](http://www.greendestinations.org)
# Our Program at glance

## GD AWARDS
- Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum Award based on compliance-points earned per criterion

## GSTC CERTIFICATION
- Goal: 100% compliance with GD Standard
- 20% of criteria may have (non-essential) non-conformities but require annual progress reporting

## RESULT OF THE APPLICATION
- Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum Award based on compliance-points earned per criterion

## COMPLIANCE VERIFICATION
- Compliance may be decided based on narratives and/or stakeholder confirmation
- Fully evidence-based and stakeholder-confirmed compliance
- Yearly progress report on any pending Corrective Actions

## CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE
- Following GSTC Accreditation guidelines for independent certification
- Adhering to GSTC Accreditation guidelines for independent certification

## ASSESSMENT
- Every 4 years: 1-day on-site assessment
- Every 2 years: desk assessment
- Every 3 years for 2–4 days, desk and on-site assessment

## PROMOTIONAL BENEFITS
- Invitation to annual award ceremony
- Flags, social media posts, other exposure
- Free Basic page on GoodTravel.Guide
- Pre-selection for annual Top 100 competition
- 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
- Including auditor fees (excl. travel expenses)
- Excluding GD Training for DMO Staff
- Excluding audit costs (depending on size)
- Including GD Training for DMO Staff

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**Interested?** For more information and registration, visit our website [here](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](image)
- ![Culture & Tradition](image)
- ![Nature & Scenery](image)
- ![Social Well-Being](image)
- ![Environment & Climate](image)
- ![Business & Communication](image)

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.

www.greendestinations.org
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.

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

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