

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations

Preamble

Sustainable tourism is on the rise: consumer demand is growing, travel industry suppliers are developing new green programs, governments and international agencies are creating new policies to encourage sustainable practices in tourism. But what does “sustainable tourism” really mean? How can it be measured and credibly demonstrated, in order to build consumer confidence, promote business prosperity, foster community benefits, and fight false claims?

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are an effort to come to a common understanding of sustainable destinations, and are the minimum undertakings that any tourism management organization which wishes to be sustainable should aspire to reach. To satisfy the definition of sustainable tourism, destinations must take an interdisciplinary, holistic and integrative approach which includes four main objectives: to (i) demonstrate sustainable destination management; (ii) maximize social and economic benefits for the host community and minimize negative impacts; (iii) maximize benefits to communities, visitors and cultural heritage and minimize impacts; and (iv) maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts. The criteria are designed to be used by all types and scales of destinations.

The criteria are part of the response of the tourism community to the global challenges of the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals. Poverty alleviation, gender equity and environmental sustainability, including climate change, are the main cross-cutting issues that are addressed through the criteria.

The criteria and indicators were developed based on already recognized criteria and approaches including, for example, the UNWTO destination level indicators, GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators, and other widely accepted principles and guidelines, certification criteria and indicators. They reflect certification standards, indicators, criteria, and best practices from different cultural and geo-political contexts around the world in tourism and other sectors where applicable. Potential indicators were screened for relevance and practicality, as well as their applicability to a broad range of destination types.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are administered by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

Some of the expected uses of the criteria by tourism management organizations include the following:

- Serve as basic guidelines for destinations which wish to become more sustainable
- Help consumers identify sound sustainable tourism destinations;
- Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize destinations and inform the public regarding their sustainability;
- Help certification and other voluntary destination level programs ensure that their standards meet a broadly-accepted baseline;
- Offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programs a starting point for developing sustainable tourism requirements; and
- Serve as basic guidelines for education and training bodies, such as hotel schools and universities.

The criteria indicate what should be done, not how to do it or whether the goal has been achieved. This role is fulfilled by performance indicators, associated educational materials, and access to tools for implementation

from public, NGO and private sector providers all of which are an indispensable complement to the Destination Level Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations were conceived as the beginning of a process to make sustainability the standard practice in all forms of tourism.

Application

It is recommended that all criteria be applied to the greatest extent practical, unless for a specific situation the criterion is not applicable and justification is provided. There may be circumstances in which a criterion is not applicable to a specific tourism destination or destination management organization, given the local regulatory, environmental, social, economic or cultural conditions. In the case of smaller destinations and communities, it is recognized that limited resources may prevent comprehensive application of all criteria.

Because destinations are comprised by many different enterprises, organizations and individuals, the application of these criteria should include thorough consideration of the cumulative effects of activities. Measurement at the destination scale will usually capture the net result of cumulative effects at the individual scale. However monitoring of impacts is not an end in itself; it should be viewed as a tool for improving the sustainability of the destination.

Further guidance on these criteria may be found from the supporting indicators and glossary, which will be published by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

Global Sustainable Tourism Destination Criteria

DRAFT 2 CRITERIA (version 0.2, 12 October 2012)	
SECTION A: DEMONSTRATE SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	<i>Current Status in the Burren?</i>
<p>A1 Tourism Strategy</p> <p>The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year tourism strategy that is publicly available, is suited to its scale, that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural heritage, quality, health, and safety issues, and was developed with public participation.</p>	
<p>A2 Tourism management organization</p> <p>The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism. This group has defined responsibilities for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural heritage issues.</p>	
<p>A3 Monitoring</p> <p>The destination has a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to environmental, economic, social, and cultural heritage issues.</p>	

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<p>A4 Climate change adaptation</p> <p>The destination has a system to identify challenges and opportunities associated with climate change. This system encourages climate change adaptation strategies for development, siting, design, and management of tourism facilities. The system contributes to the sustainability and resilience of the destination.</p>	
<p>A5 Inventory of attraction sites</p> <p>The destination has an up-to-date, publicly available inventory of its key tourism assets and attractions including natural, historical, archaeological, religious, spiritual, and cultural sites.</p>	
<p>A6 Planning regulations</p> <p>The destination has planning guidelines, regulations, and policies that integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. The regulations protect natural and cultural heritage, are publicly communicated, and are enforced.</p>	
<p>A7 Access for all</p> <p>All tourist sites and facilities, including those of natural, cultural and historic importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements. Where such sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access should be afforded through the design and implementation of solutions that take into account both the integrity of the site and such reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements as can be achieved.</p>	
<p>A8 Property acquisitions</p> <p>Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions exist, are enforced, consider communal and indigenous rights, and do not authorize resettlement without informed consent and/or full compensation.</p>	
<p>A9 Tourist satisfaction</p> <p>The destination has a system to monitor, to publicly report and, if necessary, to take action to improve tourist satisfaction.</p>	
<p>A10 Sustainability standards</p> <p>The destination has a system to promote sustainability standards consistent with the GSTC criteria for tourism enterprises.</p>	
<p>A11 Safety and security</p> <p>The destination has a system to prevent and respond to tourism-related crime, safety, and</p>	

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health hazards.	
<p>A12 Crisis and emergency preparedness and response</p> <p>The destination has a crisis and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination. Key elements are communicated to residents, tourists, and tourism-related enterprises. The plan establishes procedures and provides resources and training.</p>	
<p>A13 Promotion</p> <p>Promotion is accurate with regard to the destination and its products, services, and sustainability claims. The promotional messages are authentic and respectful.</p>	
<p><i>SECTION B: Maximize economic benefits to the host community and minimize negative impacts</i></p>	
<p>B1 Economic monitoring</p> <p>The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination’s economy is regularly monitored. These results are publicly reported.</p>	
<p>B2 Local career opportunities</p> <p>The destination provides equal employment and training opportunities for local residents. The opportunities are open to women, youth, minorities, and other vulnerable populations.</p>	
<p>B3 Stakeholder participation</p> <p>The destination has a system that enables stakeholders to participate in tourism-related planning and decision making on an ongoing basis.</p>	
<p>B4 Local community opinion</p> <p>Residents’ aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with tourism are regularly monitored, recorded and publicly reported. Care is taken to ensure that key stakeholders are included and that responsive action is taken where needed.</p>	
<p>B5 Local access</p> <p>The destination protects, monitors, and safeguards local resident access to natural, historical, archaeological, religious, spiritual, and cultural sites.</p>	
<p>B6 Tourism awareness</p> <p>The destination provides regular programs to residents to enhance their understanding of tourism opportunities, tourism challenges, and the importance of sustainability.</p>	

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<p>B7 Preventing exploitation</p> <p>The destination has a defined system and established practices to prevent commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children, adolescents, women, and minorities.</p>	
<p>B8 Support for community</p> <p>The destination has a system to enable tourism-related enterprises to support community and development initiatives.</p>	
<p>B9 Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade</p> <p>The destination has a system that supports local entrepreneurs and promotes fair trade principles.</p>	
<p><i>SECTION C: Maximize benefits to communities, visitors, and cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts</i></p>	
<p>C 1 Attraction protection</p> <p>The destination has a policy and system to conserve key natural, historical, archaeological, religious, spiritual, and cultural sites, including scenic, cultural, and wild landscapes.</p>	
<p>C2 Visitor management</p> <p>The destination has a visitor management system for attraction sites that includes measures to preserve and protect key natural and cultural assets.</p>	
<p>C3 Visitor behavior</p> <p>The destination has publicly available guidelines for visitor behavior that are designed to minimize adverse impacts</p>	
<p>C4 Cultural heritage protection</p> <p>Historical and archaeological artifacts are not illegally sold, traded or displayed.</p>	
<p>C5 Site interpretation</p> <p>Interpretive information is provided at key natural, historical, archaeological, religious, spiritual, and cultural sites. The information is communicated in relevant languages.</p>	
<p>C6 Intellectual property</p> <p>The destination has a system to ensure respect for the tangible and intangible intellectual property of individuals and communities.</p>	

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<p>C7 Visitor contributions</p> <p>The destination has a system that encourages visitors to volunteer or contribute to community development, cultural heritage, and biodiversity conservation.</p>	
SECTION D: Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts	
<p>D1 Environmental risks</p> <p>The destination has identified key environmental risks and has a system in place to address these.</p>	
<p>D2 Protection of sensitive environments</p> <p>The destination has a system to monitor the impact of tourism on sensitive environments and protect habitats and species.</p>	
<p>D3 Wildlife protection</p> <p>The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international standards for the harvest or capture, display, and sale of wildlife (including both plants and animals).</p>	
<p>D4 Greenhouse gas emissions</p> <p>The destination has a system to encourage tourism-related enterprises and services to measure, monitor, report, and mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	
<p>D5 Energy conservation</p> <p>The destination has a system to promote energy conservation, measure energy consumption, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The destination encourages tourism-related enterprises to conserve energy and use renewable energy technologies.</p>	
<p>D6 Water management</p> <p>The destination has a system to conserve and manage water usage. The destination encourages tourism-related enterprises to manage and conserve water.</p>	
<p>D7 Water security</p> <p>The destination has a system to monitor its water resources to ensure that use by tourism is compatible with the water requirements of the destination community.</p>	
<p>D8 Water quality</p> <p>The destination has a system to monitor drinking and recreational water quality. The</p>	

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<p>monitoring results are publicly available.</p>	
<p>D9 Wastewater</p> <p>The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems.</p>	
<p>D10 Solid waste reduction</p> <p>The destination has a system to ensure solid waste is reduced, reused, and recycled. The destination encourages tourism-related enterprises to adopt waste reduction strategies.</p>	
<p>D11 Light and noise pollution</p> <p>The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize noise, light, and visual pollution. The destination encourages tourism-related enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations.</p>	
<p>D12 Low impact transport</p> <p>The destination has a system to increase the use of low-impact transport, including public transport, in the destination.</p>	