# GSTC

## Global Sustainable Tourism Council

## Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria
VERSION 1, 1 NOVEMBER 2013

AND

## Suggested Performance Indicators
VERSION 1, 10 DECEMBER 2013

FOR

## Destinations

## Preamble

Sustainable tourism is on the rise: consumer demand is growing, travel industry suppliers are developing new green programs, and governments as well as 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 Council (GSTC) Criteria was created in an effort to reach a common understanding of sustainable destinations. The GSTC Criteria are the minimum undertakings that any tourism management organization should aspire to when considering sustainability in their practices. To satisfy the definition of sustainable tourism, destinations must take an interdisciplinary, holistic and integrative approach which includes four main objectives: (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 GSTC Criteria are designed to be used by all types and scales of destinations.

The GSTC Criteria was created by the tourism community in part as a response 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 in the GSTC Criteria.

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

The GSTC 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 media to recognize destinations and inform the public about personal sustainability efforts
- 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
- 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, 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 GSTC Criteria. The GSTC Criteria for Destinations were conceived as the beginning of a process to make sustainability the standard practice in all forms of tourism.

# Criteria 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. This could be due to 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.

# Performance Indicators

The performance indicators presented here are designed to provide guidance in measuring compliance with the GSTC Criteria for Destinations (GSTC C-D). They are not intended to be the definitive set or all-inclusive, but to provide a solid sample set for users of the GSTC C-D in developing their own indicator sets.

This set of indicators will be updated periodically, as new information is developed. If you would like to suggest new indicators or other improvements, please send your suggestions to destinations@gstcouncil.org.

## Combined Indicators and Criteria

This document is the combined Criteria and the Performance Indicators, for the official text see www.gstcouncil.org

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## CRITERIA
## INDICATORS
## SECTION A: Demonstrate effective sustainable management

**A1 Sustainable destination strategy**

**The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year destination strategy that is publicly available, is suited to its scale; that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health, and safety, and aesthetic issues; and was developed with public participation.**

IN-A1.a. Multi-year destination strategy that includes a focus on sustainability and sustainable tourism and includes environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health, and safety issues

IN-A1.b. Multi-year destination plan or strategy that is up-to-date and publicly available

IN-A1.c. Multi-year destination plan or strategy that was developed with public participation

IN-A1.d. Political commitment to implement the multi-year destination plan and evidence of implementation

**A2 Destination management organization**

**The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector and public sector. This group is suited to the size and scale of the destination, and has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues. This group's activities are appropriately funded.**

IN-A2.a. An organization has responsibility for a coordinated approach to the management of sustainable tourism

IN-A2.b. The private sector and public sector are involved in the organization and coordination of tourism

IN-A2.c. The tourism organization is suited to the size and scale of the destination

IN-A2.d. Individuals within the tourism organization have assigned responsibilities for sustainable tourism

IN-A2.e. The tourism organization is appropriately funded

**A3 Monitoring**

**The destination has a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to environmental, economic, social, cultural, tourism, and human rights issues. The monitoring system is reviewed and evaluated periodically.**

IN-A3.a. Active monitoring and public reporting of environmental, economic, social, cultural, tourism, and human rights issues

IN-A3.b. Monitoring system is reviewed and evaluated periodically

IN-A3.c. Tourism impact mitigation procedures funded and active

**A4 Tourism seasonality management**

**The destination dedicates resources to mitigate seasonal variability of tourism where appropriate, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultures and environment, to identify year-round tourism opportunities.**

IN-A4.a. Specific strategy for marketing off-season events and attracting year-round visitors

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| CRITERIA | INDICATORS |
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| **A5 Climate change adaptation**<br><br>**The destination has a system to identify risks and opportunities associated with climate change. This system encourages climate change adaptation strategies for development, siting, design, and management of facilities. The system contributes to the sustainability and resilience of the destination and to public education on climate for both residents and tourists.** | IN-A5.a. Current system for climate change adaptation and risk assessment<br>IN-A5.b. Laws or policies to mitigate climate change and encourage technologies to mitigate climate change<br>IN-A5.c. Program to educate and raise awareness among the public, tourism enterprises, and visitors about climate change |
| **A6 Inventory of tourism assets and attractions**<br><br>**The destination has an up-to-date, publicly available inventory and assessment of its tourism assets and attractions, including natural and cultural sites.** | IN-A6.a. Current inventory and classification of tourism assets and attractions including natural and cultural sites |
| **A7 Planning Regulations**<br><br>**The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies that require environmental, economic, and social impact assessment and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. The guidelines, regulations and/or policies are designed to protect natural and cultural resources, were created with local inputs from the public and a thorough review process, are publicly communicated, and are enforced.** | IN-A7.a. Planning or zoning guidelines, regulations and/or policies that protect natural and cultural resources<br>IN-A7.b. Guidelines, regulations, and/or policies that address sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition<br>IN-A7.c. Planning guidelines, regulations, and/or policies were created with local inputs from the public and a thorough review process<br>IN-A7.d. Planning guidelines, regulations, and/or policies are publicly communicated and are enforced |
| **A8 Access for all**<br><br>**Where appropriate, sites and facilities, including those of natural and cultural 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 is 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.** | IN-A8.a. Policies supporting access to tourist sites and facilities, including those of natural and cultural importance, for individuals with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements, where appropriate<br>IN-A8.b. Accessibility solutions are designed to take into account the integrity of the site while making reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities |

| CRITERIA | INDICATORS |
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| **A9 Property acquisitions**<br><br>**Laws and regulations regarding property acquisitions exist, are enforced, comply with communal and indigenous rights, ensure public consultation, and do not authorize resettlement without prior informed consent and/or reasonable compensation.** | IN-A9.a. Policy or legislation, including enforcement provisions, exist<br>IN-A9.b. Policy or legislation that considers indigenous rights, ensures public consultation and authorizes resettlement only when there is informed consent and/or reasonable compensation |
| **A10 Visitor satisfaction**<br><br>**The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction, and, if necessary, to take action to improve visitor satisfaction.** | IN-A10.a. Collection and public reporting of data on visitor satisfaction<br>IN-A10.b. System to take action to improve visitor satisfaction based on monitoring information |
| **A11 Sustainability standards**<br><br>**The destination has a system to promote sustainability standards for enterprises consistent with the GSTC Criteria. The destination makes publicly available a list of sustainability certified or verified enterprises.** | IN-A11.a. Industry-supported sustainable tourism certification or environmental management system<br>IN-A11.b. Sustainable tourism certification or environmental management system recognized by the GSTC<br>IN-A11.c. Monitoring of tourism business participation in tourism certification or environmental management system<br>IN-A11.d. Publicly available list of sustainably certified or verified enterprises |
| **A12 Safety and security**<br><br>**The destination has a system to monitor, prevent, publicly report, and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards.** | IN-A12.a. On-going compulsory inspections of fire, food hygiene, and electricity safety for tourism properties<br>IN-A12.b. Safety precautions such as first aid stations at beaches/tourist attraction sites<br>IN-A12.c. System to prevent and respond to crime<br>IN-A12.d. Taxi licensing system with clear pricing and an organized taxi dispatch system at points of visitor entry<br>IN-A12.e. Public reporting of safety and security |
| **A13 Crisis and emergency management**<br><br>**The destination has a crisis and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination. Key elements are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises. The plan establishes procedures and provides resources and training for staff, visitors, and residents, and is updated on a regular basis.** | IN-A13.a. Publicly available crisis and emergency response plan that considers the tourism sector<br>IN-A13.b. Financial and human capital to implement the crisis and emergency response plan<br>IN-A13.c. Crisis and emergency response plan developed with input from the tourism private sector and includes communication procedures for during and after a crisis or emergency<br>IN-A13.d. Crisis and emergency response plan provides resources and training for staff, visitors, and residents<br>IN-A13.e. Crisis and emergency response plan is updated on a regular basis |

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| CRITERIA | INDICATORS |
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| **A14 Promotion**<br><br>**Promotion is accurate with regard to the destination and its products, services, and sustainability claims. The promotional messages treat local communities and tourists authentically and respectfully.** | IN-A14.a. Destination promotional messages that represent local communities and visitors authentically and respectfully<br>IN-A14.b. Destination promotional messages that are accurate in their description of products and services |

### SECTION B: Maximize economic benefits to the host community and minimize negative impacts

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| **B1 Economic monitoring**<br>**The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination's economy is monitored and publicly reported at least annually. To the extent feasible, this should include visitor expenditure, revenue per available room, employment and investment data.** | IN-B1.a. Regular monitoring and reporting of visitor expenditure data, revenue per available room, employment and investment data<br>IN-B1.b. Regular monitoring and reporting at least annually of direct and indirect contributions of tourism<br>IN-B1.c. Collection and public reporting at least annually of tourism-related employment data, disaggregated by gender and age group |
| **B2 Local career opportunities**<br>**The destination's enterprises provide equal employment, training opportunities, occupational safety, and fair wages for all.** | IN-B2.a. Legislation or policies supporting equal opportunities in employment for all, including women, youth, disabled people, minorities, and other vulnerable populations<br>IN-B2.b. Training programs that provide equal access to all, including women, youth, disabled people, minorities, and other vulnerable populations<br>IN-B2.c. Legislation or policies supporting occupational safety for all<br>IN-B2.d. Legislation or policies supporting fair wages for all, including women, youth, disabled people, minorities, and other vulnerable populations |
| **B3 Public participation**<br>**The destination has a system that encourages public participation in destination planning and decision making on an ongoing basis.** | IN-B3.a. System for involving public, private, and community stakeholders in destination management planning and decision making<br>IN-B3.b. Public meeting(s) to discuss destination management issues each year |
| **B4 Local community opinion**<br>**Local communities' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with destination management are regularly monitored, recorded and publicly reported in a timely manner.** | IN-B4.a. Regular collection, monitoring, recording, and public reporting of data on resident aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with destination management<br>IN-B4.b. Collection, monitoring, recording, and public recording of data occurs in a timely manner |
| **B5 Local access**<br>**The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites.** | IN-B5.a. Programs to monitor, protect, and rehabilitate or restore public access by locals and domestic visitors to natural and cultural sites<br>IN-B5.b. Monitoring of behaviour and characteristics of local, domestic and foreign visitors to tourist sites and attractions |
| **B6 Tourism awareness and education**<br>**The destination provides regular programs to affected communities to enhance their understanding of the opportunities and challenges of tourism, and the importance of sustainability.** | IN-B6.a. Program to raise awareness of tourism's role and potential contribution held in communities, schools, and higher education institutions |
| **B7 Preventing exploitation**<br>**The destination has laws and established practices to prevent commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation and harassment of anyone, particularly of children, adolescents, women, and minorities. The laws and established practices are publicly communicated.** | IN-B7.a. Laws and a program to prevent commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation, discrimination or harassment of residents or visitors<br>IN-B7.b. Laws and program are publicly communicated |

| CRITERIA | INDICATORS |
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| **B8 Support for community**<br>**The destination has a system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives.** | IN-B8.a. Programs for enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute donations to community and biodiversity conservation initiatives and/or infrastructure development |
| **B9 Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade**<br>**The destination has a system that supports local and small- and medium-sized enterprises, and promotes and develops local sustainable products and fair trade principles that are based on the area's nature and culture. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.** | IN-B9.a. Program to support and build capacity of local and small- and medium-sized enterprises<br>IN-B9.b. Program encourages enterprises to purchase goods and services locally<br>IN-B9.c. Program to promote and develop local sustainable products based on local nature and culture<br>IN-B9.d. Program to include local artisans, farmers, and suppliers in the tourism value chain |

## SECTION C: Maximize benefits to communities, visitors, and culture; minimize negative impacts

| CRITERIA | INDICATORS |
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| **C1 Attraction protection**<br>**The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve natural and cultural sites, including built heritage (historic and archaeological) and rural and urban scenic views.** | IN-C1.a. Management system to protect natural and cultural sites, including build heritage and rural and urban scenic views<br>IN-C1.b. Management system to monitor, measure, and mitigate tourism impacts on sites and attractions |
| **C2 Visitor management**<br>**The destination has a visitor management system for attraction sites that includes measures to preserve, protect, and enhance natural and cultural assets.** | IN-C2.a. Administrative mechanism responsible for implementing visitor management plans and operations |
| **C3 Visitor behavior**<br>**The destination has published and provided guidelines for proper visitor behavior at sensitive sites. Such guidelines are designed to minimize adverse impacts on sensitive sites and strengthen positive visitor behaviors.** | IN-C3.a. Cultural and environmental guidelines for visitor behaviour in sensitive sites<br>IN-C3.b. Code of practice for tour guides and tour operators |
| **C4 Cultural heritage protection**<br>**The destination has laws governing the proper sale, trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts.** | IN-C4.a. Laws or regulations to protect historical and archaeological artefacts including those located under water, and evidence of their enforcement<br>IN-C4.b. Program to protect and celebrate intangible cultural heritage (e.g., includes song, music, drama, skills and crafts) |
| **C5 Site interpretation**<br>**Accurate interpretive information is provided at natural and cultural sites. The information is culturally appropriate, developed with community collaboration, and communicated in languages pertinent to visitors.** | IN-C5.a. Interpretive information available to visitors in tourist offices and at natural and cultural sites<br>IN-C5.b. Interpretive information is culturally appropriate<br>IN-C5.c. Interpretive information is developed with community collaboration<br>IN-C5.d. Interpretive information is available in languages pertinent to visitors<br>IN-C5.e. Tour guide training in the use of interpretive information |
| **C6 Intellectual property**<br>**The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals.** | IN-C6.a. Laws, regulations or programs to protect intellectual property rights of local individuals and communities |

## SECTION D: Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts

| CRITERIA | INDICATORS |
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| **D1 Environmental risks**<br>**The destination has identified environmental risks and has a system in place to address them.** | IN-D1.a. Sustainability assessment of the destination within the last five years, identifying environmental risks<br>IN-D1.b. System in place to address identified risks |

| CRITERIA | INDICATORS |
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| **D2 Protection of sensitive environments**<br>**The destination has a system to monitor the environmental impact of tourism, conserve habitats, species, and ecosystems, and prevent the introduction of invasive species.** | IN-D2.a. Maintained and updated inventory of sensitive and threatened wildlife and habitats<br>IN-D2.b. Management system to monitor impacts and to protect ecosystems, sensitive environments, and species<br>IN-D2.c. System prevents the introduction of invasive species |
| **D3 Wildlife protection**<br>**The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards for the harvest or capture, display, and sale of wildlife (including plants and animals).** | IN-D3.a. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)<br>IN-D3.b. Regulations and standards for controlling harvesting or capture, display, sale, of plants and animals |
| **D4 Greenhouse gas emissions**<br>**The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, minimize, publicly report, and mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including emissions from service providers).** | IN-D4.a. Program to assist enterprises to measure, monitor, minimize, and publicly report greenhouse gas emissions<br>IN-D4.b. System to assist enterprises to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions |
| **D5 Energy conservation**<br>**The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report energy consumption, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.** | IN-D5.a. Program to promote energy conservation and measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report energy consumption<br>IN-D5.b. Policies and incentives to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, improve energy efficiency, and encourage the adoption and use of renewable energy technologies |
| **D6 Water Management**<br>**The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report water usage.** | IN-D6.a. Program to assist enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report water usage |
| **D7 Water security**<br>**The destination has a system to monitor its water resources to ensure that use by enterprises is compatible with the water requirements of the destination community.** | IN-D7.a. Management system to ensure that water use by enterprises and water requirements of the destination community are balanced and compatible |
| **D8 Water quality**<br>**The destination has a system to monitor drinking and recreational water quality using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and the destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.** | IN-D8.a. Management system to monitor and publicly report on drinking and recreational water quality<br>IN-D8.b. Monitoring results are publicly available<br>IN-D8.c. System to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues |
| **D9 Wastewater**<br>**The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems, and ensures wastes are properly treated and reused or released safely with minimal adverse effects to the local population and the environment.** | IN-D9.a. Regulations for the siting, maintenance, and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems, and evidence of their enforcement<br>IN-D9.b. Regulations to ensure the size and type of waste water treatment is adequate for the location, and evidence of their enforcement<br>IN-D9.c. Program to assist enterprises to effectively treat and reuse wastewater<br>IN-D9.d. Program to ensure proper treatment of wastes and safe reuse or release with minimal adverse effects to local population and environment |

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| CRITERIA | INDICATORS |
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| **D10 Solid waste reduction**<br>**The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste.  Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.** | IN-D10.a. Waste collection system that maintains public records on the amount of waste generated<br>IN-D10.b. Solid waste management plan that is implemented, and has quantitative goals to minimize, and ensure safe sustainable disposal of waste that is not reused or recycled<br>IN-D10.c. Program to assist enterprises to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste<br>IN-D10.d. Program to reduce the use of bottled water by enterprises and visitors |
| **D11 Light and noise pollution**<br>**The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution.  The destination encourages enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations.** | IN-D11.a. Guidelines and regulations to minimize noise and light pollution<br>IN-D11.b. Program to encourage enterprises to follow guidelines and regulations to minimize noise and light pollution |
| **D12 Low-impact transportation**<br>**The destination has a system to increase the use of low-impact transportation, including public transportation and active transportation (e.g., walking and cycling).** | IN-D12.a. Program to increase the use of low-impact transportation<br>IN-D12.b. Program to make sites of visitor interest more accessible to active transportation (e.g., walking and cycling) |

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