

GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL INVITES TOURISM DESTINATIONS TO BE A FIRST ADOPTER OF THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL DESTINATION CRITERIA

This is an invitation to destinations that wish to lead the efforts in promoting sustainability through the early adoption of the GSTC destination criteria and indicators. The early adopters will be widely recognized and their findings will help shape the final set of criteria.

Destination stewardship is an approach to tourism development in which local communities, governmental agencies, NGOs and the tourism industry are dedicated to taking a multi-stakeholder approach to maintaining the cultural, environmental, economic, and aesthetic integrity of their country, region, state, or town through sustainable policy and management frameworks.

A tourism destination is defined here as a geographic area currently or potentially attractive to tourists. Destination size is generally a space that one can transit within a day, although there may be exceptions. Local tourism destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations. This is intended to be a guideline for applicants.

Project Objectives

To promote sustainable tourism at a destination level, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is establishing destination level sustainable tourism criteria and indicators to enable good destination stewardship by the travel and tourism industry.

The GSTC will conduct a launch of the baseline sustainable tourism criteria and indicators in at least 5 destination types and within up to 10 destinations to ensure the range of application. All destination types will be considered.

Benefits

Participating in the early adopter program provides selected destinations with the following benefits:

- Recognition through the GSTC website, social media and through a press release announcing the early adopter program and participating destinations.
- Membership for one year for 2 people in the GSTC.
- Speaking opportunity at the annual meeting to present the finding of its destination activities related to the implementation of the GSTC.
- Logo of the organization will be displayed during the process on website.
- Article in the GSTC newsletter on each participating destination.
- Mention in publication about sustainable destinations that GSTC intends to compile and publish at the end of the process.
- Early adoption of baseline sustainable tourism criteria and indicators affords improved destination management and decision-making in terms of evaluating progress in the sustainable development of tourism and identifying related limits and opportunities.
- Findings will inform the GSTC destination criteria and indicator development process.

- Destinations will be invited to join the discussions of the Destinations Working group regarding the GSTC destinations criteria.
- Improved preparedness for destination-level certification including access to the draft baseline criteria and indicators.
- Creates a competitive advantage given the increasing number of private sector companies who are looking for destinations to demonstrate their leadership in sustainability.

Technical Requirements

This invitation is open to destinations of all types and sizes. Applicants that can demonstrate a commitment to and success in implementing and maintaining sustainable policy and management frameworks are eligible to participate in the early adopter program. Applicants may include governments, public lands agencies (e.g., national parks), tourism bureaus, or other destination management organizations, on behalf of the destination.

Application Requirements

Successful applicants must demonstrate some tangible support for the protection of the destination's natural and cultural heritage and direct economic and social benefits to host communities. This requires a formal 2-page application (maximum) that includes the name of the applicant and contact information, and that addresses the following requirements:

1. Detailed description of the destination (country, region, size, volume of tourist arrivals, etc.)
2. Outline the existing tourism planning and policies that enhance or preserve the destination's natural and cultural heritage, its local character and sense of authenticity.
3. Describe how the destination ensures maximum positive and minimum negative impacts to the environment and direct economic and social benefits to local communities.
4. List the key partners who make important contributions to managing and sustaining the destination's natural habitats and cultural heritage.
5. Detail how residents and visitors are being educated about the sustainable tourism efforts of the destination.

Counterpart Funding Requirements

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) will provide a sustainable tourism expert who specializes in destination-level criteria and indicators to complete the verification. Each selected destination will be expected to provide counterpart funding of US\$30,000 for an on-site verification. The on-site verification includes up to 12 days and airfare from the US or UK; lodging, meals, and other internal transportation must be covered by the destination.

Selection Criteria and Process

After submission of the application, the GSTC consultant will follow up with a telephone interview, and then provide recommendations to the GSTC Destinations Working Group. The Working Group will review the applications and measure against the selection criteria, which include: completion of the application requirements outlined above, including the extent to which the destination has implemented sustainable tourism plans, policies, incentives, visitor and resident education initiatives, etc. Decisions will ensure a balanced

regional representation, including a balance between urban, coastal, rural settings, and a balance between mature destinations and developing ones.

Validation Process of Selected Destinations

In order to ensure consistency of approach and criteria, the GSTC will conduct the on-site validations. This process will entail a consultant verifying the extent to which each destination has integrated and implemented the destination level sustainable tourism criteria and indicators, which will be provided prior to the on-site visit. The documentation provided will outline the information and evidence that will need to be compiled prior to the consultants arrival on site, which will enable them to verify each destination's policies and practices.

Cooperation is essential to a successful validation visit therefore the GSTC will request access to all pertinent records. The confidentiality of records reviewed during the course of the validation will be maintained by GSTC and its contractors.

Submission and Decision Schedules

Applications are due November 23, 2011 and may be submitted to Liza Agudelo via email at lagudelo@unfoundation.org or via postal service to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council c/o United Nations Foundation, 1615 M Street, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036.

Selections will be made by December 2, 2011 and the on-site validations will begin on January 2, 2012 and will be completed on or before March 31, 2012.

