

2026



Green Destinations Certification Program



www.cb.greendestinations.org

An *Independent* Destination Sustainability Certification

The **Green Destinations Certification Program** offers GSTC Certification by assessing and certifying tourism destinations against globally aligned sustainability standards.

Certification is delivered **independently, transparently,** and in **compliance** with international accreditation requirements.

Green Destinations is Accredited by the **Global Sustainable Tourism Council** (GSTC) to issue destination certification based on 4 different standards:



GSTC-DESTINATION STANDARD

The global base standard for sustainable destination certification. Our other standards are 'Recognised' to be aligned with this base standard.



GREEN DESTINATIONS STANDARD

Green Destinations' base standard, Recognised by the GSTC since 2016.



SUSTAINABLE SOUTH TYROL STANDARD

A standard dedicated to destinations in this North-Italian region.



MOUNTAIN IDEAL STANDARD

A US-based standard dedicated to mountain destinations in North America.

What is the *Green Destinations Certification Program*?

The Green Destinations Certification Program is a **destination-level certification and benchmarking program** for destinations committed to sustainable tourism management and continuous improvement.

The program evaluates destination management systems, policies, and practices against recognised criteria for environmental, cultural and socio-economic sustainability, supported by **independent auditing** and **impartial** decision-making.

Governance & Independence

Green Destinations Certification is a program by Green Destinations Foundation (est. 2016), which provides governance and system stewardship while safeguarding the impartiality and credibility of certification.

Certification activities are delivered independently from other programs

- Training and capacity-building
- Storytelling and recognition initiatives (including the Top 100 Stories Competition)
- Sponsorship, partnerships, donations or events



Participation in other Green Destinations initiatives does not influence certification or audit outcomes.



What the Certification Program does

- Assesses destination sustainability performance against approved reference standards
- Conducts independent conformity assessments and audits
- Issues certification decisions and certificates
- Maintains public registers of certified destinations
- Operates transparent complaints and appeals procedures



What the Certification Program does *NOT* do

- Provide consultancy or preparatory support
- Train destinations for certification
- Promote or market destinations
- Influence or be influenced by other Green Destinations programs



GSTC Accreditation

Green Destinations Certification operates as **GSTC-accredited certification body** for destination certification in alignment with the standards of the **Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)**.

GSTC accreditation confirms that Green Destinations Certification:

- Applies recognised and robust sustainability standards.
- Operates impartial, independent, and transparent certification processes.
- Meets international best practice for conformity assessment.

Our mission

The Green Destinations Certification Program aims to provide destinations with a **credible, transparent, and internationally aligned pathway** to demonstrate sustainability leadership and continuous improvement.

How to *Join?*

Eligibility requirements

The first step is to establish if your destination is eligible for certification.

[SEE LIST OF ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA HERE >](#)

Enroll in the Green Destinations Certification Program

Destinations enrolled in the Certification Program participate in a sustainability management cycle aimed at continuous improvement through regular assessments and independent verifications.

Methodology

Our certification programs are 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. Progress is monitored through indicators, which makes the program concrete and measurable. You can easily implement our guidelines and indicators in your management system.

Destinations signing up for the certification program engage in a sustainability management cycle aimed at continuous improvement with periodic assessment and independent verification.

The main steps include:

1. Initial Inquiry

Submit your inquiry using our **online form** to express interest in the Awards Program. This allows us to assess your eligibility and provide you with detailed information on the process, requirements, and associated costs based on your destination's size and location.

EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST HERE >

2. Engagement and reporting

Induction training on destination sustainability and applying the GD Standard, and report your compliance with the GD Standard on our **Online Assessment Platform**.

ONLINE ASSESMENT PLATFORM >

3. Evaluation and Audit

Technical check and independent on-site audit of reported sustainability compliance.

4. Certification

A Certification Committee reviews auditor conclusions and (upon a sufficient score), issues the GSTC Certification, which remains valid for 3 years.

5. Action planning for continuous improvement

The online assessment platform provides an Action Planning tool for easy planning and implementing your sustainability improvements following the independent evaluation recommendations.

GSTC Certification

Destinations may pursue GSTC-recognised certification through one of the following pathways:



Each pathway follows defined eligibility requirements, verification steps, and time limits, ensuring consistency and transparency across all certification journeys.

Green Destinations *Affiliate Certification Programs*

Green Destinations acts as Certifier for other Certification schemes, Recognised by GSTC as being aligned with the global standard for destination sustainability. Enrolling in these programs starts with the respective partner organisations who are able to provide any guidance, training and support to prepare an application for Certification.



SUSTAINABLE SOUTH TYROL STANDARD

A regional certification scheme in the bi-lingual Alpine region of Südtirol-Alto Adige in the north of Italy. Developed and managed by the regional organisation for Innovation, Development and Marketing (IDM), the South Tyrol Standard was derived from the GSTC-Destination Standard to become applicable to the regional context.



MOUNTAIN IDEAL STANDARD

A certification scheme for mountain resorts in North America, with a number of well-known destinations certified such as Vail and Breckenridge (Colorado). It has a focus on the sustainability performance in a ski-resort context and is managed by the Walking Mountain Science Center.

Our GSTC-Accreditation extends to these 2 schemes.

*Green Destinations Certification certifies destinations – independently.
Training, storytelling, recognition, and experience-level programmes are delivered separately
and do not influence certification decisions.*

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Get in Touch!

 www.cb.greendestinations.org

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