Sustainable destination standard

Criteria and indicators

Innovation Norway

Sustainable Destination

Introduction

The Standard for Sustainable Destination is a set of criteria and indicators that guides the development of travel and tourism in a more sustainable direction and provides specific measuring and monitoring points.

Innovation Norway owns the Standard for Sustainable Destination version 3.0 of January 1st 2022.

The Standard is based on a broad professional foundation through UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), developed through assessment and analysis of similar systems, tested on a selection of destinations, and implemented in close collaboration with destinations, local public actors and authorities.

The Standard for Sustainable Destination 3.0 was internationally approved on 8th of March 2022 through Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the global body for assessment and approval of standards in tourism. The criteria, as well as Norwegian administration and law, form the basis for approval.

Achieving the GSTC-Recognized status means that this sustainable tourism standard has been reviewed by GSTC technical experts and the GSTC Assurance Panel and deemed equivalent to the GSTC Destination Criteria for sustainable tourism.

The criteria and indicators are also linked to the UN's sustainability goals and to other standards such as United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) used in municipalities and county municipalities through "Bærekraftsløftet", European Travel Commission (ETC) and their Sustainable Tourism Indicators, and Norway's National Environmental targets.

The unit responsible for answering and implementing the standard needs to be a law-abiding, responsible, and ethically conscious company. The destination management company, or similarly, responsible for the scheme, needs to have a satisfactory internal control system to ensure that the company acts in accordance with applicable law, including (but not limited to) the legislation outlined in an appendix to the Standard.

A
Destination management

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
A1-1 The destination has a broadly composed destination management (team) with responsibility for ensuring a coordinated approach to the work on sustainable tourism	A1-1.1	Does the destination have a destination management team with responsibility for coordinating the work on tourism, including the destination's socio-economic, cultural, climate and environmental conditions. The destination management team is broadly composed with participation from the private sector, public sector, voluntary sector and local communities
	A1-1.2	Has/have the municipality/municipalities passed a resolution in the municipal council to become an active contributor to achieving the Sustainable Destination mark
	A1-1.3	Is the destination management taking the initiative to involve local stakeholders, developers (investors/builders) and owners of holiday homes in the destination's development
A1-2 A significant proportion of relevant enterprises in the destination must actively participate in financing, developing and marketing the destination	A1-2.1	Proportion of tourism enterprises that are members of the destination company and have written agreements on paying annual membership fees in relation to the total number of tourism enterprises in the destination
	A1-2.2	Number of measures for recruiting new member enterprises in the last 3 calendar years

B
Destination strategy

CRITERIA		INDICATOR	
B1-1 The destination has a multi-year strategy followed by publicly available concrete action plans, developed in an inclusive process and based on the goals of greater sustainability and good visitor management		B1-1.1	Does the destination management team have a long-term strategy for the destination that includes socio-economic, cultural, climate and environmental opportunities and challenges, and that contributes to good visitor management
		B1-1.2	Has the strategy been developed through an inclusive and open process, does it cover the entire destination, has it been adopted by the destination management team and is it updated at least every 3 years
		B1-1.3	Has the strategy been followed up with an annually updated action plan that includes sustainable tourism development and measures that ensure progress towards the objectives of the strategy
B1-2 The destination has a system for monitoring the development of tourism within socio-economic, cultural and environmental areas. Measures and results are measured regularly, evaluated and reported publicly		B1-2.1	Is there a plan to provide briefings, at least once a year, on the status of the strategy and action plan for the tourism industry, the municipal council and any other relevant stakeholders in the destination
		B1-2.2	Has the destination management put in place measures that ensure the long-term follow-up of the work on sustainable destination development
B1-3 The destination management must ensure responsible marketing and promotion with respect for nature, culture, local communities and the residents		B1-3.1	Does the destination management have procedures (measures) that ensure marketing materials and information for visitors about the destination are correct with respect to products, services and sustainability messages
		B1-3.2	Are marketing materials/messages in relevant languages designed so that it actively contributes to responsible visitor behaviour, safety and visitor management

C
Environmental and cultural sustainability

C1. CULTURAL WEALTH

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
C1-1 The destination management must have an overview available of material and intangible culture and cultural heritage and plans in place for the responsible dissemination and use	C1-1.1	The destination management have defined what is of both cultural and cultural-historical interest: places, objects or traditions of cultural interest that could be a resource for tourism
	C1-1.2	Have plans and/or strategies been developed in an open process for tourism's use, preservation and responsible dissemination of the destination's material and immaterial culture and cultural heritage
	C1-1.3	The number of visitor attractions in the destination registered on www.kulturarv.no
C1-2 Active efforts must be made to develop local offerings of food and beverages	C1-2.1	Are there plans and/or strategies for the destination with measures for the increased use and dissemination of local food/beverages and food/beverage traditions
	C1-2.2	Number of producers of local food/beverages in the destination registered on www.lokalmat.no
	C1-2.3	Number of enterprises with quality labelling for local food/beverages registered on https://www.norskmat.no/no/spesialitet

C2. BIODIVERSITY

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
C2-1 The destination management must have an overview available of nature and natural areas of particular interest to tourism and a plan for protection through responsible dissemination and use	C2-1.1	The destination management has defined natural areas of particular interest to tourism, including areas with intervention-free nature, habitats and landscape areas with natural and cultural heritage, as well as natural phenomena such as the Northern Lights, midnight sun, dark sky, etc.
	C2-1.2	Are there plan (s) and / or strategy (s) with measures, developed in an open process and with landowner involvement, for development, marking, facilitation and dissemination of nature and nature areas of special interest to tourism so that unwanted burdens from visitors can be avoided
	C2-1.3	Proportion of intervention-free nature in the destination in the last available survey (Norway's environmental target 1.1)
	C2-1.4	Development of area in intervention-free natural areas in the destination (Norway's environmental target 1.1.8)

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
C2-2 The destination management must contribute to the work on visitor strategies and any vulnerability analyses	C2-1.2	The number of holiday homes in the destination registered
	C2-2.2	Have comprehensive risk and vulnerability analyses, mapping vulnerable nature to protection, been prepared in development areas for tourism (cabins, viewpoints, roads and hiking trails)
	C2-2.3	Have visitor strategies been developed for world heritage sites, national parks, protected areas and/or other visitor attractions where the destination management has actively contributed to the work
C2-3 The destination management has a system for ensuring compliance with local, national and/or international standards for animal welfare and protective management of species (animals, plants and living organisms)	C2-3.1	Has the destination management team implemented measures to inform tourism enterprises and/or visitors about good management in relation to animal welfare and current standards on stewardship of species (animals, plants and living organisms)

C3 GHG EMISSIONS AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
C3-1 The destination management has a goal of reducing both local GHG emissions and emissions related to visitors' transport to, from and at the destination	C3-1.1	Does/do the municipality/municipalities have a climate plan with goals, measures and instruments for reducing emissions within its/their borders
	C3-1.2	Has the destination management set specific, long-term goals for reducing emissions related to visitors' transport to, from and at the destination
	C3-1.3	Total CO2 emissions from visitors' transport to and from the destination must be measured
	C3-1.4	Number of new measures in the last 3 years that reduce emissions related to visitors' transport to and from the destination
	C3-1.5	Number of new measures in the last 3 years that reduce emissions related to visitors' transfer/transport at the destination
C3-2 The destination management has identified risks and measures related to tourism's adaptation to a changing climate	C3-2.1	Have local challenges and opportunities related to current and future climate change been identified
	C3-2.2	Does/do the municipality/municipalities have a strategy for climate adaptations that includes outdoor recreation/excursion areas and/or visitors as a target group
	C3-2.3	Have future climate change, risks and considerations related to tourism been communicated to tourism enterprises and visitors

C4 CLEAN ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
C4-1 The destination management has a goal of increasing the number of environmental and sustainability marks and certifications among tourism enterprises	C4-1.1	The organisation with primary responsibility for local destination cooperation is environmentally certified
	C4-1.2	The destination's municipal administration/administrations is/are environmentally certified
	C4-1.3	Number of member enterprises that are environmentally certified
	C4-1.4	Are environmentally certified enterprises highlighted on the destination company's webpages
	C4-1.5	Number of measures implemented in the last 3 years to increase the number of certified enterprises
C4-2 The destination management has a goal of reducing energy consumption in tourism, promoting energy efficiency and increasing the proportion of renewable energy	C4-2.1	Number of measures implemented by the destination management related to energy saving, efficiency gains and an increased proportion of renewable energy in the last 3 years
	C4-2.2	Proportion of member enterprises that have implemented energy-saving measures in the last 3 years
	C4-2.3	Number of measures implemented to minimise light and noise pollution in the destination in the last 3 years
C4-3 The destination management has a goal of reducing water consumption and ensure high quality of water resources	C4-3.1	Is the purity of drinking water measured annually and reported publicly in line with the Drinking Water Regulations
	C4-3.2	Is the cleanliness of bathing water in popular bathing spots measured annually and disseminated publicly
C4-4 The destination management must ensure proper waste management in relation to/ for visitors to the destination	C4-4.1	Is there a concrete plan for waste management with relevant source separation in the destination and that deals with areas with many visitors (holiday buildings, hiking areas, etc.)
	C4-4.2	Proportion of member enterprises that source separate relevant fractions (minimum 3)
	C4-4.3	Number of holiday homes per waste disposal station for source separated waste (minimum 3 fractions)
	C4-4.4	Has the destination management assessed that the need for toilets and waste disposal stations, with emptying frequency as required, is covered at natural collection points in excursion areas and urban centres with high visitor pressure
	C4-4.5	Has the destination management assessed that the need for publicly available emptying stations for campervans in the destination is covered and in line with demand
C4-5 The destination management has a system for encouraging enterprises to avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle waste	C4-5.1	Proportion of waste production going to district heating and/or recovery
	C4-5.2	Proportion of accommodation and hospitality enterprises (tourism enterprises) who have implemented measures to reduce food waste and single-use plastics in the last 3 years

C4 CLEAN ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY CONTINUING

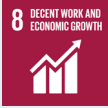| CRITERIA	INDICATOR
C4-6 The destination management must set environmental and climate requirements for purchases and procurements 	C4-6.1 Does the destination management have a strategy for purchases and procurements that emphasises climate friendliness, the environment and local goods and services

D
Social wellbeing and impacts

D5 VISITOR MANAGEMENT

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
D5-1 In an inclusive process, the destination management must plan and incorporate measures for the use and communication of natural and cultural areas that promote good interaction between the tourism industry, local communities and visitors	D5-1.1	Has the destination management identified, on an annual basis, areas (natural and urban centres) that are particularly exposed to overcrowding due to high visitor volumes
	D5-1.2	The destination management has implemented measures to mitigate the potential adverse impact of tourism on nature/ biological diversity, culture and local communities (such as repairing paths, traffic management, signage, alternative routes, zoning or additional information)

D6 LOCAL COMMITMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
D6-1 The destination management must measure and publicly report the local communities' ambitions, concerns and satisfaction with the development of tourism	D6-1.1	Resident surveys based on the national template must be conducted and published at least every 3 years
	D6-1.2	Proportion of residents who are positive about tourism in the destination
	D6-1.3	Number of measures that strengthen relations between tourism and local residents and that are based on the results of the resident surveys
	D6-1.4	Number of measures that increase the voluntary efforts and engagement of business stakeholders, residents and visitors for the common good, cultural heritage and/or biological diversity

D7 JOB QUALITY FOR TOURISM EMPLOYEES

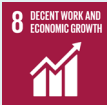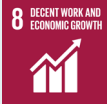| CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
D7-1 The destination management must work to promote more local employment, status and pride in tourism	D7-1.1	Proportion of employees (restaurant, catering and tourism trades) employed by member enterprises.
	D7-1.2	Number of apprenticeships/internships at member enterprises.
	D7-1.3	Number of measures implemented by the destination management team that promote recruitment, career development, status and local pride
D7-2 The destination management must take the initiative to increase expertise in areas that are important for the responsible development of tourism	D7-2.1	Number of expertise enhancing measures in the last 3 yearsinitiated by the destination management and that include the climate-friendly and sustainable development of tourism.

D8 VISITOR SATISFACTION, SAFETY AND QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE

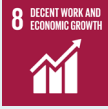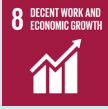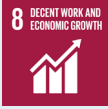| CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
D8-1 The destination management must carry out visitor surveys in key customer segments	D8-1.1	Visitor surveys based on the national template must be conducted in key customer segments and published at least every 3 years
	D8-1.2	Proportion of visitors satisfied with their stay in the destination, ref. visitor survey template
	D8-1.3	Number of measures implemented to improve visitors' experiences in the destination and that are based on knowledge gained from the visitor surveys
D8-2 The destination management has a system for monitoring, preventing and publicly reporting risks, health hazards and crime	D8-2.1	A risk analysis has been produced for visitors in the destination with an action plan for minimising identified risks
	D8-2.2	Does the destination management have regular meetings/a described system for dialogue with representatives of the police and/or rescue services, local health authorities and the municipality's emergency response officer concerning challenges and needs related to visitors
D8-3 The destination management must work to ensure that the tourism industry facilitates public access for people with special needs, as well as inform them about this on its website	D8-3.1	Has the destination management implemented measures that contribute to better facilitation of experiences and facilities for user groups with special needs
	D8-3.2	Is information about public access and facilities for people with reduced mobility, vision, hearing and asthma/allergies available on the destination company's website and in other relevant channels

E
Economic sustainability

E9 ECONOMICALLY VIABLE AND COMPETITIVE DESTINATIONS

CRITERIA	INDICATOR	
E9-1 The destination company or the organisation responsible for the development of tourism is economically viable	E9-1.1	The destination company can point to positive equity and is not defined as being 'in difficulty'
	E9-1.2	The destination company or organisation responsible for the development of tourism can point to accumulated positive operating results in the last 3 years
E9-2 Economic value creation and the ripple effects of tourism must be monitored	E9-2.1	Economic value creation from tourism in the destination in the last calendar year, ref. national measurement of value creation in municipalities
	E9-2.2	Economic ripple effects of tourism (direct and indirect consumption) have been surveyed and communicated to important stakeholder groups in the destination
	E9-2.3	Qualitative ripple effects of tourism (infrastructure and services) have been surveyed and communicated to important stakeholder groups in the destination
E9-3 The destination management must work to promote the balanced development of arrivals throughout the year as a basis for broad local employment and value creation	E9-3.1	Proportion of guest days during low season compared to guest days during peak season (GINI coefficient)
	E9-3.2	Average length of stay (number of guest days) Norwegian visitors.
	E9-3.3	Average length of stay (number of guest days) international visitors
	E9-3.4	Have measures been implemented in the last 3 years to further develop existing, and/or develop new, innovative experiences and products that can increases lengths of stay and contribute to expanding seasons/seasonal adaptation and local value creation in line with strategies and action plans

E10 ECONOMICALLY VIABLE AND COMPETITIVE TOURISM ENTERPRISES

CRITERIA	INDICATOR
E10-1 The destination management must monitor the development of guest nights and arrivals 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	E10-1.1 Number of commercial guest arrivals in the last calendar year (hotels and similar accommodation establishments, holiday home clusters, hostels and campsites) in the destination (or region). E10-1.2 Number of guest arrivals in the last calendar year due to holiday home lets in the destination (or region) E10-1.3 Is an overview available of visitor distribution per market and their estimated consumption in the destination (holiday/leisure and business travellers)
E10-2 The destination management must monitor the development of employment and recruitment in tourism 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	E10-2.1 Proportion of employees in tourism enterprises compared with the total number of employees in the destination E10-2.2 Number of employees in tourism in the quarter with the highest visitor number in the previous calendar year E10-2.3 Number of employees in tourism in the quarter with the lowest visitor number in the previous calendar year
E10-3 The destination management promotes partnerships and supports local SMEs that develop and sell sustainable products, services and experiences 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	E10-3.1 Does the destination management encourage tourism enterprises and visitors to buy local products, services and experiences based on the area's nature and culture E10-3.2 Number of member enterprises partnering with other enterprises in the destination on new tourism experiences, products and services in the last 3 years