The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria
www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org

Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council
www.stscouncil.org

Working together for universal sustainable tourism...

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What is sustainable tourism?
A confusing scenario...

- Many definitions...
- Many designations: 
  Responsible tourism, green tourism
- Many sectors: 
  Ecotourism, adventure tourism, community tourism
- Proliferation of labels and certifications
This has led to:
- Supplier confusion
- Consumer confusion
- Green washing
- Lack of international credibility

SOLUTION:
Common Global Language for Sustainable Tourism
Why should you care? Trends

• **Rising consumer interest:**
  - 84% of Expedia customers interested in sustainable hotels and willing to pay 5% more;

• In a recent Travelocity survey:
  - 59 percent of respondents stated a “green” rating would have at least some influence in their hotel selection in 2009;
Why should you care? Trends

• Increasingly governmental programs and new regulations are favoring sustainable tourism;

• Rise in media attention to issues of sustainability and tourism.
Why should you care?

- Increasingly travel agents and tour operators are promoting and differentiating more sustainable products... AND, it makes COMMON SENSE.
Why do we need a common language?

- Governmental agencies need support to create or review national/regional certification systems.
- Tourism companies are seeking advice on identifying internationally recognized sustainable tourism criteria.
- Consumers are becoming more and more conscious and need to be assured that sustainability statements by the industry are credible.
Why do we need a common language?

- Voluntary sustainable tourism initiatives need credible references to developing their own programs.
- Mutual recognition and reciprocity among programs is needed in order to mainstream sustainability.
- Media need guidance to recognize sustainable tourism providers and sustainable tourism certification schemes.
Two initiatives with a common mission:

- To come up with a common language to define sustainable tourism globally
- To build confidence in the market place by providing supplier and consumers
- To unlock tourism’s potential for conservation and poverty alleviation
What is the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria?

A set of 37 criteria intended to frame the main components of sustainable tourism.

The criteria are organized around the four pillars of sustainable tourism:
- effective sustainability planning
- maximizing social and economic benefits to the local community
- reduction of negative impacts to cultural heritage
- reduction of negative impacts to environmental heritage
Example criteria:

- **A.1.** The company has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, sociocultural, quality, health, and safety issues.

- **B.3.** Local and fair-trade services and goods are purchased by the business, where available.

- **C.2.** Historical and archeological artifacts are not sold, traded, or displayed, except as permitted by law.

- **D.1.3.** Energy consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted, while encouraging the use of renewable energy.
Objectives...

- Provide a common language, relevant and applicable to accommodation providers and tour operators of all sizes and in all locations, across the industry.

- Bring travel businesses, conservation organizations, certification bodies, UN agencies together in common understanding.

- Identify the common ground among existing certification and voluntary sustainable tourism programs - serve as the baseline for STSC.
GSTC Background

• Began in mid-2007, the GSTC Partnership is a coalition of 32 organizations that have come together to foster increased understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles.


• Launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, October 6th, 2008.
GSTC Partnership

- **Over 50 active partners**
- **Objectives:**
  - Define sustainable tourism criteria/indicators
  - Disseminate the GSTC
  - Promote education about ST (academia)
  - Work with the industry on appropriate implementation tools
Steering Committee

- American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA)
- The American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA)
- Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST)
- Condé Nast Traveler
- Conservation International
- Ecotourism Kenya
- ECOTRANS
- Expedia, Inc.
- Federation of Tour Operators (FTO)
- German Sustainable Development Cooperation Agency (GTZ)
- HM Design
- International Hotel & Restaurant Association (IH&RA)
- National Geographic Adventure
- National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations
- Rainforest Alliance (RA)
- Travelocity/Sabre
- Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD)
- Sustainable Travel International (STI)
- The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)
- Tourism Concern
- Travel Weekly- US
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations Foundation
- United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

GSTC Today...

- Used by hotels and tour operators to create or adapt their sustainability programs: Fairmont and Hyatt

- Serve as guidance for Expedia.com’s “Go Green” and Travelocity.com’s “Green Directory” websites

- Used by government of Egypt to develop the Green Star Label

- Used by financial institutions like the IDB to select projects for funding

- This week, through the UNEP, the US Council of Mayors will adopt a resolution,

  “PROMOTING GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CRITERIA TO INCREASE TRAVEL TO U.S. CITIES”
GSTC Today...

- Embedded within Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas

- Include in performance evaluation framework for the World Heritage Alliance for Sustainable Tourism

- Provide a framework for the Association of Travel Agents of the US Green Partner’s program and Sustainable Travel International’s Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program

- Serve as key input for Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council for accreditation of certifications.
Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council
www.stscouncil.org
Challenges in Tourism Certification

Marketing
- False claims
- Confusion between tourism certification and other tourism awards and endorsements
- Consumer and industry confusion about number and variety of certification seals in the marketplace
- Local certification schemes with no international recognition

Communication
- Isolated efforts
- Fragmentation
- Duplication of efforts
Challenges in Tourism Certification

International Credibility

- Not all labeled as "eco" is truly "eco" - greenwash.
- Green labels should have precise requirements and these must be respected.
- Need for an international mechanism to help coordinate efforts and enhance credibility of certification through accreditation.
“The confusing array of eco-certification programs around the world prompts a push for a universal standard.”
-- John Newton, “It’s Not Easy Being Green,” *Conde Nast Traveler*

“Hundreds of businesses tout their “ecotourism” credentials, and scores of organizations work to certify that some of these are actually valid, yet the uninitiated traveler has no way of knowing whether the Ecotourism Society of Saskatchewan is as effective as Australia’s Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program, or whether that wonderful guide in Borneo spends his weekends poaching tropical snakes.”
-- Barry Lynn, “The Accidental Ecotourist.” *American Way*

“Unfortunately, there is no international agency that guarantees if a trip is ecological or eco-friendly. There is no agency that awards an international seal of approval, whereas there are, literally, hundreds of programs that all have different standards...”
-- Pauline Frommer, “Eco-Tourism: Environmentally Friendly Vacations,” *BusinessWeek television*
Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC)

• **What is STSC?** A proposed umbrella organization to accredit those certification programs that meet a universal minimum standard (the GSTC).

• **How it was initiated?** Informed by regional certification networks in existence as early as 2003 (Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas; VISIT in Europe; Sustainable Tourism Network in Southern Africa).

• **Leadership:** The STSC will be housed at the United Nations Environment Programme but Rainforest Alliance has provided technical and administrative leadership for the effort since 2001.
STSC Main Responsibilities

- Guide the establishment and development of certification programs.
- Increase credibility of certification programs through accreditation.

This will result in:
- Providing consumers with information for the selection of socially and environmentally friendly products and services.
- Promoting consumer and industry awareness.
- Raising environmental and social standards in the industry.
STSC Benefits

• Protect the environment, residents and consumer rights by reducing “greenwashing” and false claims.

• Give exposure to certification programs and their certified products as globally recognised sound operations.

• Service tour operators, travel agencies, associations and NGOs committed to sustainable tourism to identify sound programs to recognize or work with.

• Promote a powerful global brand with marketing value to complement current marketing strategies of accredited certification programs.
STSC Temporary Executive Board

- Chris Thompson, Business Chamber - Europe
- Kelly Bricker, Business Chamber - Intl.
- Amos Bien, Business Chamber - Latin America
- Steve Noakes, Business Chamber - Asia Pacific
- Neel Inamdar, Environmental Chamber - Intl.
- Oliver Hillel, Environmental Chamber - Intl.
- Martina Kohl, Environmental Chamber - Europe
- Naut Kusters, Environmental Chamber - Europe
- Erika Harms, Social-Cultural Chamber - Intl.
- Tricia Barnett, Social-Cultural Chamber - Intl.
- Luis Sarmento, Social-Cultural Chamber - Africa
- Anna Spenceley, Social-Cultural Chamber - Africa
- Herbert Hamele, Independent Chamber - Europe
- Michael Conroy, Independent Chamber - US
- Cathy Parsons, Independent Chamber - Asia Pacific
- Guy Chester, Independent Chamber - Asia Pacific
- Fabian Roman, Independent Chamber - Latin America
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[http://www.stscouncil.org](http://www.stscouncil.org)
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Thank you very much! Vinaka vaka levu!

Questions?