



Way Forward to Obtain Sustainable Tourism Certification



Sustainable Tourism service certification involves a series of steps to demonstrate the commitment to environmentally and socially responsible tourism practices. Those steps are as follows;

1. **Research on Certification Program:** Start by researching the sustainable tourism certification (i) **meaning** and its (ii) **recognition** to the organisations and (iii) **brand** value. The program has some specific criteria and guidelines that aligns with your product and services towards sustainability.
2. **Understand Certification Criteria:** Organisations has to familiarise with the criteria and requirements of the certification program. Well-known **sustainable certification criteria** is developed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) which is used by many certification organisations such a Green Destination, Control Union and Eart Check. (*Refer to www.gstc.org or www.sltda/sustainable_tourism/lk*). These criteria often cover areas such as energy and resource conservation, waste reduction, community engagement, and cultural preservation. Full understanding is important as what is expected from the business to meet these standards.
3. **Self-Assess and Improve Your Operations:** Conduct a thorough assessment of tourism service operations to identify areas where the business can initiate sustainability actions by making necessary changes to meet the certification criteria. These actions include implementing energy-efficient practices, reducing water usage, promoting biodiversity conservation, and supporting local communities etc.
4. **Develop a Sustainability Policy:** Create a clear and comprehensive sustainability policy for your business. This policy should outline the commitment to sustainable practices and specify the steps you are taking to achieve your sustainability goals. Make sure your employees and stakeholders are aware of and support this policy.
5. **Documentation and Data Collection:** Collect and document relevant data and evidence to demonstrate your compliance with the certification criteria. This involves tracking energy consumption, waste reduction, water usage, and community engagement efforts etc. Maintain detailed records that can be provided to the sustainable certification body.
6. **Training and Education:** Provide training and education to your working staff to ensure that they understand and support your sustainability initiatives. Training can cover topics like waste reduction, energy conservation, and responsible tourism practices.
7. **Engage with Local Communities:** Foster partnerships with local communities and engage in activities that benefit the local economy and culture. This can include sourcing products and services locally, supporting local artisans, and participating in community development projects.



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8. Sustainable Certification Steps:

Step 1: Do a self-assessment of your sustainable initiatives as per No.4 & 5 (this note) and see the compliance level you may reach. (Visit SLTDA website)

Step 2: Apply & enter into level one of the NSTC- Green Destination Certification platform i.e., Good Travel Level I & II.

Step 3: Keep improving to reach higher levels of sustainability with Good Travel Seal (GTS) and Good Travel Seal Plus (GTSP) of Green Destination Certification as you wish to be more sustainable.

Contact Sustainable Tourism Unit (STU) Tel. 0112426800 & self-dial Ext.s 171,172 (during office hours) or <infonstc@srilanka.travel>. Also visit www.sltda.gov.lk/en/sustainable-tourism for more/updated information for self-assessment and guidance on sustainable certification. If require the STU of SLTDA will guide you through its application process and introduce to Green Destination's Good Travel Sustainable Tourism Certification platform. Once the **application is submitted and respective fee is paid**, auditors will conduct an on-site audit or evaluate to assess the compliance with the criteria for certification. Once successful level is achieved you will receive your Sustainable Certificate. Also, you will be listed in the website as sustainability certified tourism business.

9. **Compliance and Continuous Improvement:** Once certified, the GD & SLTDA continue to monitor and improve your sustainability efforts. The certification programs require ongoing commitment and improvement. Regularly report the organisation progress to the certification body to maintain your status.

10. **Promote Your Certification:** After obtaining certification, the organisations can promote the sustainable tourism service to their customers. The certification logo can be used with your marketing materials and website highlighting the commitment on responsible tourism.

This Certification will be a valuable way to differentiate the tourism service and attract environmentally and socially conscious travelers.

Note: - Keep in mind that the process may vary depending on the specific certification program you choose, so be sure to follow the guidelines and requirements closely.

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