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USAID INDO-PACIFIC OPPORTUNITY PROJECT (IPOP) - SRI LANKA TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVITY

Sustainability Standards, Certification and Initiatives in the Tourism Industry 2023

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Sustainability Standards, Certification and Initiatives in the Tourism Industry 2023

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| ASMET | Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism Sri Lanka |
| BIOFIN | Biodiversity Finance Initiative |
| CB | Certification Body |
| CEA | Central Environmental Authority |
| CI | Conservation International |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| CST | Certification for Sustainable Tourism |
| DSM | Demand Side Management |
| DWC | Department of Wildlife Conservation |
| EIS | Environment Information System |
| ETIS | European Tourism Indicators System |
| EU | European Union |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| GBCSL | Green Building Council of Sri Lanka |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GEF | Global Environmental Facility |
| GHG | Green House Gases |
| GRI | Global Reporting Initiative |
| GoSL | Government of Sri Lanka |
| GSTC | Global Sustainable Tourism Council |
| ICT | Information Communication Technology |
| ICT | Costa Rican Tourism Board (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo) |
| IEC | International Electrotechnical Commission |
| IPOP | USAID Indo-Pacific Opportunity Project |
| ISEAL | International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling |
| ISO | International Organization for Standardization |
| ITU | International Telecommunication Union |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature |
| KII | Key Informant Interviews |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| LED | Light Emitting Diode |
| LEED | Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design |
| MDF | Market Development Facility |
| MoE | Ministry of Environment |
| MoT | Ministry of Tourism |
| MSME | Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises |
| NDC | Nationally Determined Contributions |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| NSTC | National Sustainable Tourism Certification |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PARTNER | USAID Partnership for Accelerating Results in Trade, National Expenditure and Revenue Project |
| PET | PolyEthylene Terephthalate |
| PSD | USAID Catalyze Private Sector Development Activity |
| PSDG | Provincial Sectoral Development Grant |
| RECP | Resource Efficient Cleaner Production |
| S4IG | Skills for Inclusive Growth |
| SAARC | South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation |
| SAF | Sustainable Aviation Fuel |
| SAIL | USAID Supporting Accelerated Investment in Sri Lanka |

| | |
|--------|--|
| SCBD | Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity |
| SCP | Sustainable Consumption and Production |
| SLAB | Sri Lanka Accreditation Board for Conformity Assessment |
| SLAITO | Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators |
| SLITHM | Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management |
| SLSI | Sri Lanka Standards Institution |
| SLTA | Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance |
| SLTDA | Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority |
| SLTPB | Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau |
| SME | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| STI | Sustainable Travel International |
| THASL | The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka |
| UDA | Urban Development Authority |
| UMS | Utility Management System |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Development Organization |
| UNSDG | United Nations Sustainable Development Goals |
| UNWTO | United Nations World Tourism Organization |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USGBC | United States Green Building Council |
| WSC | World Standards Cooperation |
| WTTC | World Travel and Tourism Council |

INTRODUCTION

As more and more travelers actively seek out businesses that prioritize sustainable practices, it has become increasingly crucial for Sri Lanka to elevate its standards in not just tourism but *sustainable* tourism to maintain its competitive position in the industry. Sustainable tourism is broadly defined as practices in and by the tourism industry to reduce the social, environmental and economic impacts of the industry and ensure responsible consumption and management of resources.

It is critical that policy makers and all relevant stakeholders are knowledgeable about sustainable tourism and how to ensure it is practiced correctly. It is also vital that stakeholders are up to date with trends and are aware of internationally recognized standards and certification to maintain the quality of tourism in Sri Lanka.

This document serves as a reference book of the most current standards and certification schemes for sustainable tourism. It also provides a snapshot of various other initiatives taken by the industry to achieve sustainability and highlights some of the key programs implemented by the government, donor organizations and the private sector that enable sustainable practices within the industry. Through this, the reader is expected to obtain a fair understanding of the current landscape for sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka.

The demand for sustainable travel has been on the rise, especially since the pandemic. In a survey by Booking.com,¹ 61% of participants indicated that the pandemic influenced them to travel sustainably in the future. Another survey found that 78% of high-end travelers “believed it’s important to choose travel companies that have a strong sustainability policy”.² *Rebuilding Tourism in Asia-Pacific: A More Conscious Traveler?*³ that surveyed 4,500 travelers across the region had similar findings.³

¹ Booking.com. 2021. “Sustainable Travel Report 2021.” Booking.com. https://www.sustainability.booking.com/_files/ugd/6b9913_bda34290d24941b6b6aad4279d5a23c7.pdf.

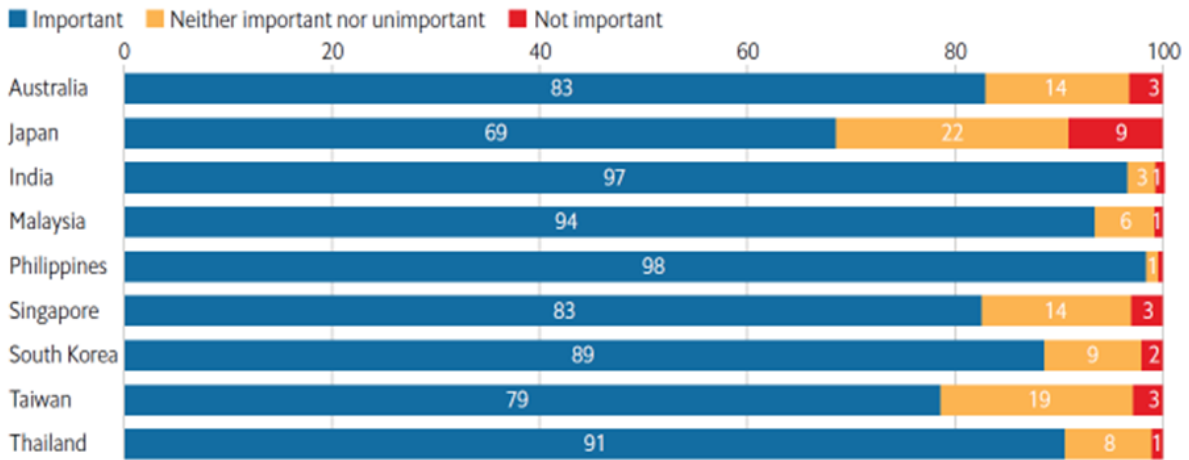
² Hospitality Net. 2022. “Affluent Travellers Willing to Pay More for Sustainable Experiences.” Virtuoso. Accessed August 22, 2022. <https://www.hospitalitynet.org/news/411188.html>.

³ The Economics Group. 2022. “Rebuilding tourism in Asia-Pacific: A more conscious traveller?” Economist Impact. Accessed August 22, 2022. https://impact.economist.com/perspectives/sites/default/files/rebuilding_tourism_apac_economist_impact_airbnb.pdf.

Figure 2: The desire for conscious tourism cuts across geography

How important is sustainable tourism to you? Please select one.

(%)



Source: Economist Impact.

Figure 1. Perceived importance of sustainable tourism by country ⁴

The findings from the study represented in Figure 1 are particularly relevant to Sri Lanka, as the country's topmost source market is India, where 97% of travelers say sustainability is important.⁵

Thus, there is a heavy demand for sustainable tourism both globally and locally. But with the large number of tourism businesses claiming to be sustainable, travelers are increasingly looking for validation of a business's commitment to sustainability. This has led to the popularity of standards and certification in tourism, going beyond quality assurance and delving further into the impact of a business on the environment and communities.

WHAT ARE STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATIONS?

A **sustainability standard** is a set of minimum requirements a business must meet and maintain to be considered "sustainable".

Sustainability certification is the formal process by which a product, service, or organization is assessed and verified as meeting specific sustainability criteria and standards.

Sustainability initiatives are various programs implemented at an organizational level at one's own accord depending on the knowledge, affinities or preferences of the respective entity. Such voluntary endeavors are common, although not formally regulated, recognized or certified.

Industry-specific, as well as general purpose, sustainability standards are available at the global and national levels. According to a United Nations report, there are 463 sustainability schemes in 199

⁴ Economist Impact. "Rebuilding Tourism in Asia-Pacific: A More Conscious Traveller?," 2022. https://impact.economist.com/perspectives/sites/default/files/rebuilding_tourism_apac_economist_impact_airbnb.pdf.

⁵ Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. 2020a. "Annual Statistical Report." SLTDA. Accessed August 14 2022. https://www.slt-da.gov.lk/storage/common_media/Annual%20Statistical%20Report%202021%20-Final%2025.4.20223624932970.pdf.

countries across 25 industry sectors.⁶ In the case of the travel and tourism industry, standards are arranged to assess impacts in four broad areas: environment, community, culture and economy.

Performance Based vs Process Based Certification Schemes

Sustainability standards or certification schemes are broadly categorized as performance based and process based.

A performance-based standard adopts an approach where progress and compliance with internal and external goals are assessed against certain criteria.

A process-based standard focuses on establishing a suitable management system within the enterprise, using internal monitoring systems to improve procedures and practices.⁷

Sustainability standards are created and offered by private companies, non-profit entities, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, or a combination of these. Likewise, country specific standards regulated by the respective government agencies are also available.

Certification entails a third-party assessment confirming that an entity meets the applicable standards. An organization typically chooses to pursue certification as a way to communicate its dedication to sustainability to its stakeholders. An audit is a mandatory step toward certification. As certification programs have varying grading levels to suit the capacity and resources of a business operation, the auditing process varies in terms of frequency and approach.

Sustainability Reporting

Sustainability reporting is a vital aspect in the process of obtaining certification. To standardize sustainability reporting, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) was formed in the USA in 1997. The GRI develops best practices or guidelines in sustainability reporting covering a myriad of areas including those that are applicable to the tourism industry. It is an independent, international organization that helps enterprises record and communicate their impact by providing them with the necessary tools to do so irrespective of the size of the organization.⁸

In addition to sustainability standards, many other guidelines, manuals and basic voluntary schemes are offered by government and non-governmental organizations as a starting step on a journey to achieve sustainability of an entire business operation. Such programs do not entail rigorous goals to achieve or intense management plans, but a simple set of tools and measures to follow as a start. Similarly, the private sector also does voluntary reporting and activities to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability in the form of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects, as well as annual reports on their goals and progress towards sustainability.

⁶ United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards. 2018. "Voluntary Sustainability Standards, Trade and Sustainable Development." UNFSS. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://unfss.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/UNFSS-3rd-Flagship-Report-FINAL-for-upload-1.pdf>.

⁷ Earthcheck Research Institute. 2021. "An Ocean of Labels: Navigating the world of certification." Accessed September 10, 2022. <https://www.itmustbenow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-Sept-An-Ocean-of-Labels.pdf>.

⁸ GRI. 2022. "Global Reporting Initiative." Globalreporting.org. Accessed September 16, 2022. <https://www.globalreporting.org/>

CHAPTER 1: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM LANDSCAPE IN SRI LANKA

This chapter provides an overview of the sustainable tourism certification programs that are most prevalent in Sri Lanka. The individual certification programs are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

While the rise in global demand for sustainable tourism remains evident, the unique tourism landscape of Sri Lanka needs to be understood to lay the foundation to support and develop sustainable tourism at the local level. Policy and decision makers will require the baseline set in this chapter in order to guide and direct state initiatives and private sector projects effectively.

Many initiatives have already been taken at an individual or brand level to elevate the sustainable tourism offering of the country. Many major hotel chains and tour operators in Sri Lanka have voluntarily conformed to some of the global sustainability standards applicable to the tourism industry. A number of MSMEs in the accommodation and service sectors have implemented their own sustainability programs. Even though these initiatives have not been “validated” *per se*, they have nonetheless proven to be beneficial for environmental conservation and local community empowerment.

INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE CERTIFICATION IN SRI LANKA

A snapshot of business enterprises in the tourism industry that have obtained global sustainable tourism certification is illustrated below (Refer to Annex 4 for details). This list contains business entities that have received certification as of June 2022 and may not include those that are currently undergoing certification.

CERTIFIED TOURIST BUSINESSES IN SRI LANKA

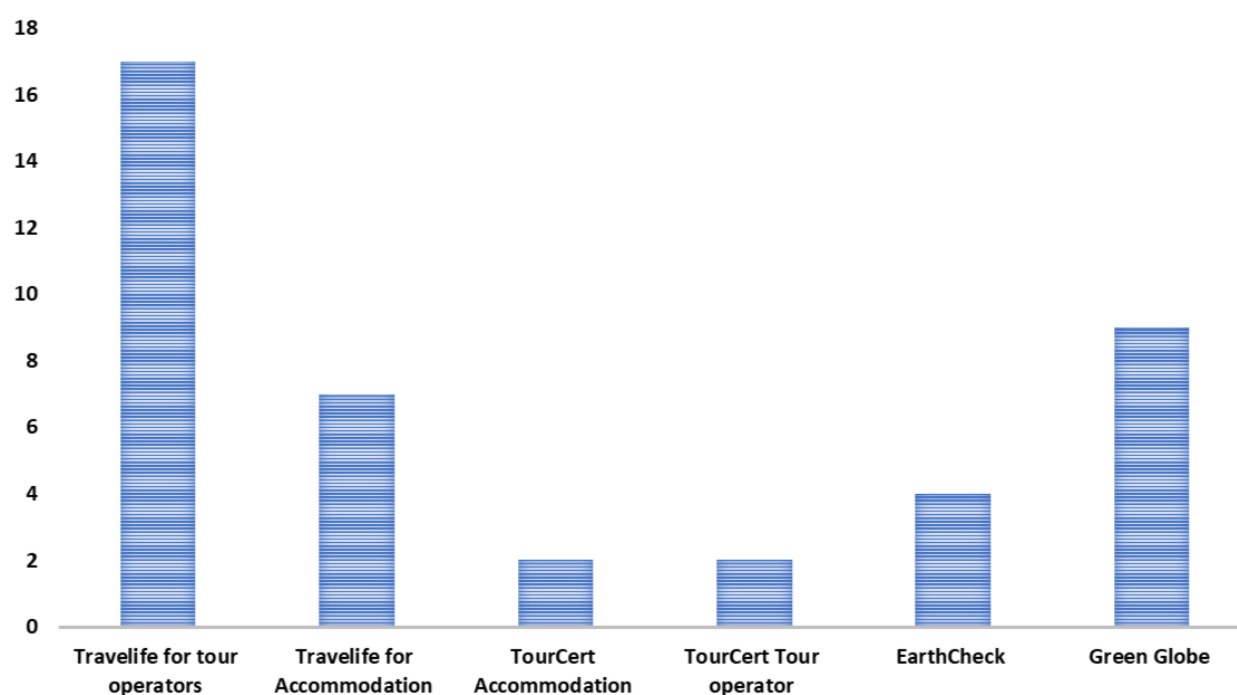


Figure 2. Number of tourist businesses in Sri Lanka certified under global sustainable tourism certification

There are also sustainable certification schemes popular in the local tourism industry although not directly relevant to the industry. One such scheme is the LEED Certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a Green Building certification.

Table 1. LEED certified tourist accommodation in Sri Lanka

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Platinum certified | Rainforest Ecolodge (Pvt.) Ltd. |
| Gold certified | Cape Weligama Resort, Cinnamon Bey Hotel |
| Silver certified | Ulagalla Walawwa Resort-Anuradhapura |
| Bronze certified | Kandalama Hotel |

Rainforest Alliance is a popular certification program in Sri Lanka and the country currently has close to 100 Rainforest Alliance-certified farms, most of which are tea estates. Other Rainforest Alliance farms grow rubber, spices, herbs, fruits, and medicinal and ornamental plants.

LOCAL SUSTAINABLE CERTIFICATION IN SRI LANKA

Under the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC), 34 hotels were certified in 2019 under a pilot program implemented by SLTDA and UNDP. The pie chart below depicts the number of hotels awarded under each category. (Refer to Annex 5 for further details).

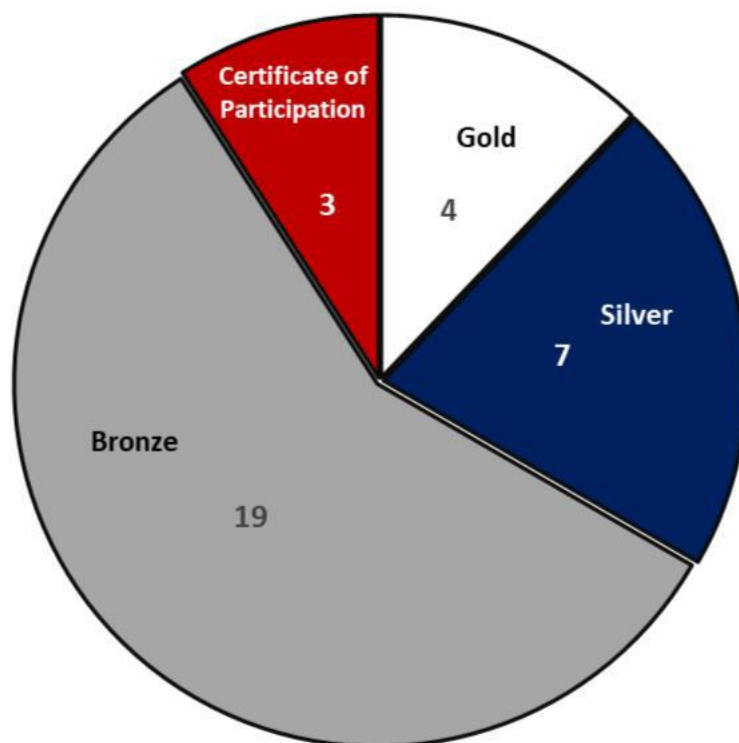


Figure 3. Number of NSTC Certified Tourist Accommodation Providers in Sri Lanka

OTHER NON-TOURISM RELATED SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION IN SRI LANKA

| GreenSL Rating | | National Cleaner Production Centre | |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| GreenSL Platinum | GreenSL Gold | RECP Certified | Zero waste alliance awards |
| Barberyn Waves Ayurveda Resort Weligama (2020) | Heritance Arah, Maldives | Kandalama Hotel (first to be RECP certified in 2003) | Ravana Gardens |
| | Aitken Spence Hotels (2019) | | |
| | Adhitya Ayurveda | | |
| Gal Oya Lodge (2015) | Gunawardhana Ayurveda Holdings (PVT) Ltd. (2019) | | Jetwing Lighthouse |
| | Aliya Resorts & Spa (2013-2014) | | |

CHAPTER 2: INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION

This chapter provides summaries of international standards and certification programs applicable to the tourism industry.

GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL (GSTC)

Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is arguably the most well-known organization for accrediting certification bodies and recognizing tourism related standards. Most sustainability standards designed specifically for the travel and tourism industry are based on criteria formulated by the GSTC, which revolve around four pillars of sustainability:

- management for sustainability
- social
- culture and community, and
- environment

There are separate sets of GSTC standards for three different sectors of the tourism industry:

- hotels and other accommodations
- tour operators, and
- destinations

Being certified is an indication that a tourism product or service complies with the highest social and environmental ideals.

Certification is proof of meeting a specific standard, often done through a third-party audit process. Certification is not conducted by GSTC but by third party certification bodies, with GSTC Organization Membership.

Accreditation is a mark of recognition given by GSTC to certification bodies. Accreditation is given after a vigorous examination of the process of certification offered by a certification body, ensuring that certification is issued in a neutral and transparent manner. Assurance Services International is the partner body of GSTC that carries out accreditation.

Recognition is a status granted to a set of standards that align with GSTC criteria. However, it does not relate to GSTC certification or accreditation. GSTC Organization Membership is required to be eligible for GSTC- recognition.

How the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) was formed

Recognizing the need to establish universally accepted guiding principles to ensure sustainability within the global travel and tourism industry, the “Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria” was formed in 2007 by a coalition of 32 world organizations, including the Rainforest Alliance, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Foundation (UN Foundation), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The objective of the partnership was to develop globally accepted criteria that would be the basis for the recognition and adoption of sustainable tourism across the world. The coalition launched the GSTC criteria at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2008 as an open-source standard.

In addition to having its own standards, GSTC recognizes standards developed by others (such as by countries). For a sustainability standard to be GSTC-recognized, the standard must be compatible with the four main pillars of the GSTC. GSTC recognition is conferred after application and upon a successful review. Certification under a GSTC-recognized standard is not equivalent to a GSTC-certified standard (Annex I contains a list of standards recognized by GSTC as of June 2022). A business certified under a GSTC recognized standard cannot be deemed as GSTC-certified.

There are many country-specific standards that are not GSTC-recognized. These may be based on the GSTC system but have been customized to suit the requirements of a country’s tourism industry and internal resources and planning. Some non-GSTC-recognized programs include India’s Sustainable Tourism for India Standard, Eco Awards Namibia, Clean Point Quality Seal of Mexico, Iceland’s Vakinn Certification and the Philippines’ ANAHAW-Philippine Sustainable Tourism Certification.

ISEAL

Many of the leading sustainability standards that prevail in the tourism industry including the Global Sustainable Tourism Certification (GSTC) are guided by the UK based International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling (ISEAL) Alliance, established in the year 2000. It acts as an overarching organization that collates best practices for the design and implementation of social and environmental standards systems.⁹

ISO STANDARDS

Standards developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) are the most widely accepted set of standards in the world. Some of them relate both directly and indirectly to the tourism industry.

⁹ ISEAL. n.d. “Home.” Accessed September 18, 2022. <https://www.isealliance.org/>.

Founded in 1946, the ISO is the world's largest developer of voluntary standards. It is an independent, non-governmental membership organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. Initially, it produced standards related to engineering and technology, but it now covers a wide range of industries and processes. Today, ISO has members from 165 countries and convenes over 3,000 technical bodies that develop standards across various sectors. It collaborates with several UN agencies and approximately 700 other organizations that contribute to the standard development process by sharing their expertise and best practices.¹⁰

At present, there are 24,286 ISO standards, which are all process based. The ones that are related to sustainable tourism are listed below. Some of these are directly relevant to the travel and tourism industry while some are common standards that can be readily applied. These standards must be purchased online, and certification is obtained by one of the numerous ISO certified accreditation bodies.

Table 2. Table of ISO standards relevant to the tourism industry

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| ISO 18065:2015 | Tourism and related services — Tourist services for public use provided by Natural Protected Areas Authorities — Requirements |
| ISO 13009:2015 | Tourism and related services — Requirements and recommendations for beach operation |
| ISO 20611:2018 | Adventure tourism — Good practices for sustainability — Requirements and recommendations |
| ISO 21401:2018 | Tourism and related services — Sustainability management system for accommodation establishments |
| ISO 17679:2016 | Tourism and related services — Wellness spa — Service requirements |
| ISO 22876:2021 | Tourism and related services — Bareboat charter — Supplementary charter services and experiences |
| ISO 21621:2021 | Tourism and related services — Traditional restaurants — Visual aspects, decoration and services |
| ISO 14001:2015 | Environmental management systems — Requirements with guidance for use |
| ISO 26000:2010 | Guidance on social responsibility |
| ISO 20121:2012 | Event sustainability management systems |
| ISO 21416:2019 | Recreational diving services — Requirements and guidance on environmentally sustainable practices in recreational diving |
| ISO 50001:2018 | Energy management systems — Requirements with guidance for use |
| ISO 14064-1:2018 | Quantification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and removals |

It is important to note that the Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI) is a member of ISO and can adopt an ISO standard specifically for Sri Lanka. In this case, the standards can be purchased from SLSI, usually at a discounted price.

¹⁰ ISO. "About Us." ISO, 2023. Accessed September 18, 2022. <https://www.iso.org/about-us.html>.

An organization can opt to be certified under any number of standards. The ISO standards largely differ from the commonly used performance-based GSTC systems, as business operations are required to formulate their own management plan based on the ISO criteria. While this may not be a straightforward exercise, it allows a business operation of any size to create a suitable, context-specific sustainability plan.

OTHER SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

While the GSTC may be the most well-known certification in the tourism industry, it is not the only one. There is a wide range of sustainability certifications available in the world tourism industry covering products and services to businesses and destinations. Summarized below are a few of the most common sustainability certifications in the tourism sector. Further details on the schemes offered by these providers are available in Annex 2.

- **Travelife**

Travelife provides sustainability certification for tour operators and accommodations. Travelife for tour operators is based on international standards such as the GSTC, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Tour Operator's Initiative and several more. It combines both management and performance criteria and has two levels of certification: Travelife Partner and Travelife Certified.¹¹



Travelife for accommodation is based on GSTC-recognized criteria covering human rights, biodiversity, fair labor, emissions and several other aspects of sustainability. The certification comprises three sets of standards based on the size of the enterprise (1- Micro; 2- Small; 3- Medium, large and mega). Micro enterprises are categorized as those with a nightly occupancy of 1 to 30 guests and small properties have a nightly occupancy of 31 to 160 guests. Medium, large and mega properties are those with an occupancy of over 161 guests.

- **TourCert**

TourCert provides consultancy and certification for destination companies, tour operators, hotels and businesses such as travel agents, tourist attractions and other enterprises. The company also offers the TourCert Qualified certification, an easier certification that helps businesses begin their sustainability journey and take the first step towards certification. TourCert criteria is based on ISO guidelines and is also GSTC-recognized.¹²



- **EarthCheck**

EarthCheck is a science-based certification for tourism businesses, destinations, developers, building designers and events. The brand has a range of certifications targeting various areas of tourism, from businesses and destinations to events and building design. Its certification schemes include EarthCheck Certified, EarthCheck Sustainable Destinations, EarthCheck Designs, EarthSafe, EarthCheck ECO, EventCheck and EarthCheck Evaluate. EarthCheck Evaluate is specifically for small



¹¹ Travelife. "Travelife Sustainability Certification." Travelife Sustainability Certification. Accessed July 9, 2023. <https://travelifesustainability.com/>.

¹² TourCert. "TourCert – Travel for Tomorrow." TourCert . Accessed July 9, 2023. <https://tourcert.org/en/>.

businesses and start-ups for an easy start that gradually builds up towards higher standards of certification.¹³

- **Green Globe**

Green Globe is a widely recognized sustainability certification program specifically tailored for businesses and organizations within the travel and tourism industry. Its primary objective is to promote sustainable practices and responsible tourism by evaluating and certifying these entities based on their environmental, social, and economic performance. The program has two core components: the membership program and the destination program. Since its inception, Green Globe has granted certifications to various travel and tourism companies, including hotels, resorts, conference centers, attractions, and other related industries.¹⁴



There are three levels of certification within the program. Certified Member status is awarded to businesses that meet all the required criteria within the Green Globe standard for travel and tourism with Gold and Platinum Member status granted to members that have maintained five and ten consecutive years of certification, respectively.

- **Green Destinations**

Green Destinations is an international organization that actively supports sustainable destinations, businesses, and communities. Its core programs include the GD Awards and Certification for destinations, the Good Travel Program for businesses, and the Top 100 Sustainability Stories.¹⁵



For businesses, Green Destinations provides options like the Good Travel Scan, an ideal starting point for MSMEs that is based on ten universal values in tourism sustainability and involves a self-assessment survey with 26 questions aligned with the Good Travel Standard. Other options are the GSTC Criteria, the Climate Action Standard for addressing climate change, and the Good Travel Seal (GTS) with four certification levels for comprehensive sustainability recognition.

- **Biosphere**

The Biosphere Standard is a comprehensive framework developed by the Responsible Tourism Institute (RTI) to assess and promote sustainable practices in tourism and other sectors. The Biosphere Standard evaluates entities based on four key dimensions: environmental responsibility, social responsibility, economic responsibility and quality and continuous improvement.¹⁶



Biosphere offers several levels of certification based on the entity's compliance with the sustainability criteria. Biosphere Responsible Tourism Certification is awarded to tourism businesses such as hotels, tour operators, and restaurants that meet the established sustainability criteria. Biosphere Sustainable

¹³ EarthCheck. "EarthCheck." Earthcheck.org, 2014. <https://earthcheck.org/>.

¹⁴ Green Globe. "https://www.greenglobe.com." www.greenglobe.com. Accessed July 19, 2023.

¹⁵ Green Destinations . "Green Destinations | Tourism for People, Nature & Climate." Green Destinations. Accessed August 2, 2023. <https://www.greendestinations.org/>.

¹⁶ Biosphere . "Biosphere Responsible Tourism." Biosphere. Accessed August 9, 2023. <https://www.biospheretourism.com/en>.

Destination Certification is given to destinations like cities, regions, and national parks that demonstrate a holistic commitment to sustainability across various sectors and stakeholders. Biosphere Commitment is a recognition for entities that show dedication to sustainability.

OTHER SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATIONS RELEVANT TO THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

There are certain other standards that are not tourism-specific, but which can be beneficial in bringing the industry toward sustainability.

- **LEED Certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)**

The US Green Building Council (USGBC) developed the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program in 1993, providing a scheme for buildings to be certified as environmentally sustainable and efficient. It is now accepted globally with more than 100,000 buildings obtaining the certification.¹⁷



LEED standards can be applied to Building Design and Construction, Interior Design and Construction, Building Operations and Maintenance, Neighborhood Development, and Homes and Cities and Communities. In addition, LEED Recertification and LEED Zero applies to buildings that are already certified so they can further improve and reach higher goals.

LEED certification is common within the tourism industry and is most often applied to hotel and accommodation facilities to increase energy and resource efficiency and decrease the carbon footprint. LEED certification does not provide guidance on overall sustainability considering the community and cultural aspects.

- **Rainforest Alliance Certification**

With the growing demand for agrotourism and culinary based tourism initiatives, certification programs within the agriculture sector greatly influence the sustainability of the tourism sector. Moreover, as agriculture is a key element in the tourism supply chain, having a large base of certified food sources for sustainability would make an impactful contribution to achieving sustainability goals of the tourism sector.



The Rainforest Alliance has two certification programs - one for farms and the other for the supply chain. The standard for farms focuses on improved livelihoods, landscape conservation, and ensuring social wellbeing. The standard for supply chain requirements is a framework to ensure that the farm's entire supply chain adopts responsible business practices and helps build a resilient industry. More than two million farmers have been certified under the agriculture standard.¹⁸

- **B Corp Certification**

The B Corp Certification is granted by the non-profit organization B Lab. It's a worldwide certification available to any type of business, regardless of their industry. This program is open to businesses of all sizes, even startups. It includes a "Pending



¹⁷ USGBC. "LEED Rating System." usgbc.org. USGBC, 2020. <https://www.usgbc.org/leed>.

¹⁸ Rainforest Alliance. "What Does 'Rainforest Alliance Certified' Mean?" Rainforest Alliance, October 28, 2020. <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/insights/what-does-rainforest-alliance-certified-mean/>.

B Corp" status designed for companies that might struggle to immediately meet sustainability standards.¹⁹

While the assessment is centered around a company's environmental and social impacts, this standard stands out due to its approach of driving a systemic economic change that benefits all stakeholders.

The B Corp certification ensures that companies support all their stakeholders by driving changes in their corporate governance structures and mandating transparency not only within the B Corp movement but also extending it through legally binding measures.²⁰ The certification process begins with an impact assessment, and companies must accumulate the required points. This certification journey is a gradual one, tailored to each individual company.

OTHER SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

In addition to the sustainability certification programs discussed above that involve an obligatory audit process, there are a multitude of guidelines, manuals, and voluntary commitments that can serve as an initial step for businesses eager to initiate its sustainability endeavors. A few widely recognized and relevant foundational programs and guidelines presently in use within the tourism sector are listed below.

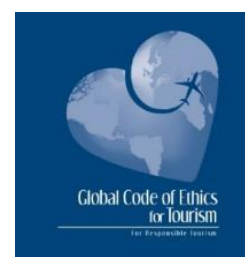
- **Hotel Sustainability Basics**

Launched in April 2022 by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) together with a group of leading hotel companies and with support of the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, the Hotel Sustainability Basics provides 12 guiding fundamental actions that can be used by any hotel, accommodation provider or property of any size. The Basics program is a step-by-step approach intended to be done over the course of three years. It is an open-source document that has been designed to align with some of the leading existing standards - including GSTC. By starting with the Basics, even the smallest business operation can begin its sustainability journey and gradually increase its performance to reach a level where certification can be obtained through a globally accepted sustainability standard. A verification scheme for this voluntary system is currently underway.²¹



- **UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is a set of principles formulated to guide all stakeholders in the tourism industry, including governments, businesses and tourists themselves. It is a basic framework for responsible and sustainable tourism with the intention of minimizing negative impacts on the environment, cultural heritage, and communities. The Code of Ethics was adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization and consists of 10 articles covering the economic, social, cultural and environmental components of travel and tourism.²²



¹⁹ B Corp Certification. "B Corp Certification Demonstrates a Company's Entire Social and Environmental Impact." [www.bcorporation.net](https://bcorporation.net/en-us/certification/), October 6, 2023. <https://bcorporation.net/en-us/certification/>.

²⁰ B Lab. n.d. "B Lab Global Site." Accessed August 3, 2022. <https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/>.

²¹ Hotel Sustainability Basics. "Hotel Sustainability Basics." [wtcc.org](https://wtcc.org/initiatives/hotel-sustainability-basics). Accessed October 3, 2022. <https://wtcc.org/initiatives/hotel-sustainability-basics>.

²² UNWTO. "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism | UNWTO." www.unwto.org, 2020. <https://www.unwto.org/global-code-of-ethics-for-tourism>.

- **UNEP Tour Operator Initiative (TOI)**

With the mission to improve sustainability within the sector, TOI members are encouraged to formulate their own commitments towards achieving sustainability along three main pillars: supply chain management, collaboration with destinations, and sustainable reporting. A guide on sustainable practices has been developed and disseminated by the members of the TOI among their contracted hotels in the hope of improving sustainability practices.

- **UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge**

A collaboration between UNESCO and the Expedia Group, UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge was created to promote sustainable travel, community resilience, and heritage conservation globally. The pledge is free of charge and inclusive, aiming at tourism properties and operators at all levels. It is specifically targeted toward small scale entities who may be facing constraints in obtaining regular sustainability certification. Businesses must commit publicly and sign the pledge annually as a continued confirmation of ensuring and improving on sustainability measures. The main themes of the pledge are community engagement, energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction, and single-use plastic reduction. Properties or operators who sign the pledge can display their badges publicly.²³



Sustainable Travel Pledge

- **OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises**

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organization that focuses on policy improvement in order to achieve prosperity and wellbeing for all. In collaboration with governments, policy makers and citizens, the OECD establishes evidence-based international standards that address current social issues and environmental challenges faced by business operators. They are non-binding principles and standards for responsible business conduct which can be followed voluntarily.²⁴



- **European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS)**

Launched in February 2013, this is a tool developed by the European Commission and can be applied to destinations outside the EU as well. It is a package that consists of management tools for a sustainable approach to doing business, a manual for monitoring progress, and an information pack targeted at policymakers, tourism enterprises, and other stakeholders.²⁵



²³ UNESCO. "UNESCO and Expedia Group Join Forces in Sustainable Tourism Pledge." UNESCO World Heritage Centre, October 2019. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2131>.

²⁴ OECD. "MNE Guidelines - Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development." oecd.org, 2023. <https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/mneguidelines/>.

²⁵ European Commission. "European Tourism Indicators System for Sustainable Destination Management." single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu. Accessed August 9, 2023. https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/tourism/eu-funding-and-businesses/funded-projects/sustainable/indicators_en.

The diagram below graphically depicts the context and relationships between the various standards, programs and related stakeholder organizations mentioned in this resource book thus far. The ISEAL and GRI, which are overarching organizations, set the benchmark for best practices and reporting, while the GSTC and ISO are the basis for most of the commonly used standards in the tourism industry. The boxes at the bottom indicate standards that are not directly relevant to tourism and other non-standard programs that do not entail a formalized process for validation of one's sustainability journey.

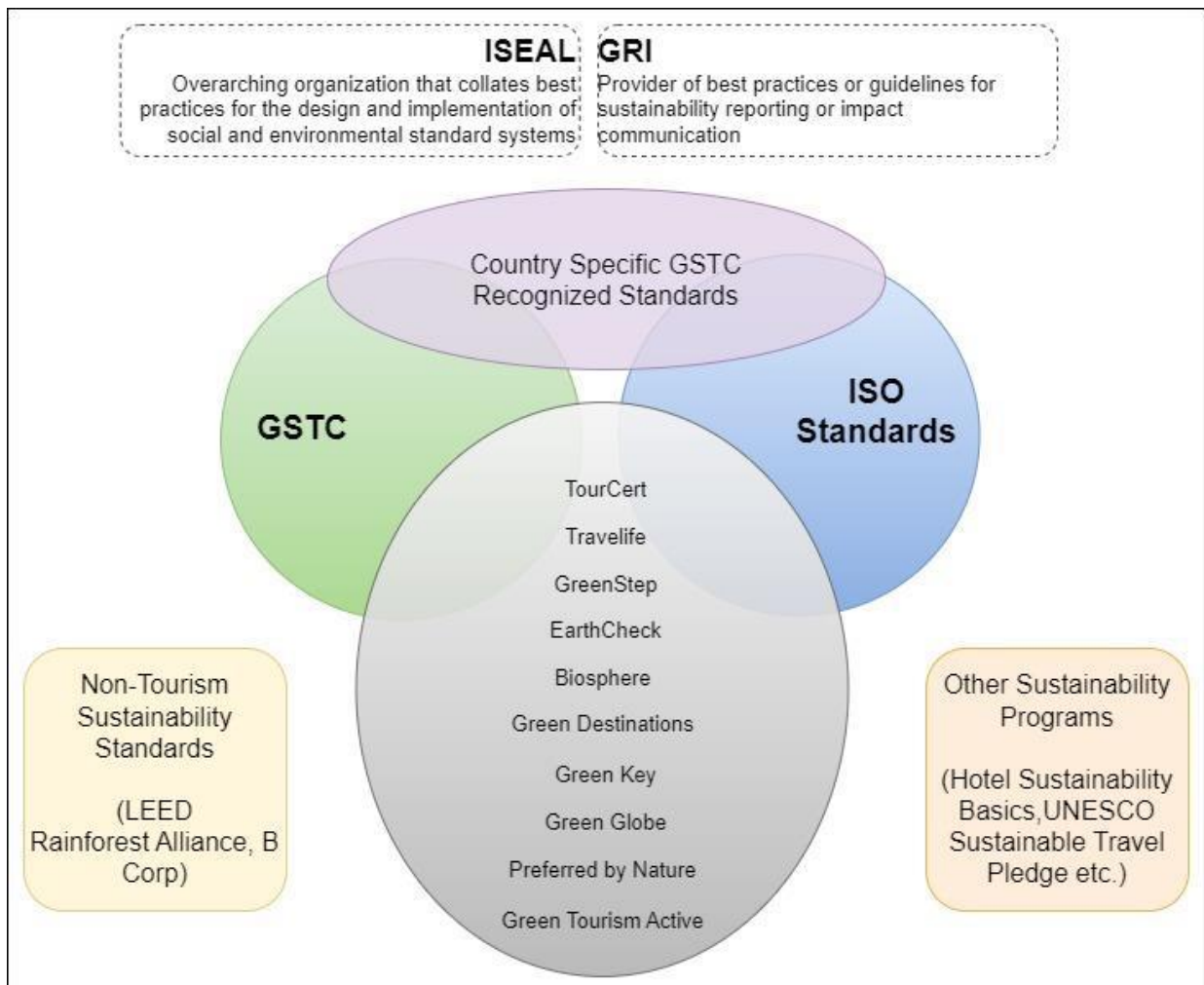


Figure 4. Map of tools available for sustainable tourism

CHAPTER 3: STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION IN SRI LANKA

SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS IN SRI LANKA

There has been a growing interest in sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka over the past 10 years, as evidenced by home grown sustainability standards and participation in international sustainability certification programs. In addition to government agencies and non-profit entities, many private consulting companies have taken the lead in facilitating various applicable sustainability standards and environmental management schemes within the country.



The key sustainability standards available for the tourism industry are described below. Most of these standards (except those implemented recently) have been accredited by the Sri Lanka Accreditation Board for Conformity Assessment (SLAB), which is the overarching accreditation authority in Sri Lanka. Housed under the Ministry of Trade, this institution is tasked with ensuring conformity to globally accepted practices when testing, verifying and validating.

NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CERTIFICATION (NSTC)

Following the direction of the Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP) 2017- 2020, SLTDA partnered with the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) of UNDP in mid-2018 to launch a sustainability certification program known as the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC). The NSTC is based on the GSTC criteria, with some modification for the Sri Lankan context. The NSTC first began with criteria for the accommodation sector and, with continued support from UNDP, now includes criteria for sustainable destinations as well. Criteria for tour operators are anticipated but, as of the date of this report, are not yet developed.

SLTDA became a member of GSTC in 2018, but the membership currently is lapsed. Development of the NSTC involved three working committees:

1. Steering Committee – Overall administration and coordination. Members: SLTDA's Research and International Relations and Standard and Quality Assurance Departments and related industry associations.
2. Stakeholder Committee – Industry input and knowledge. Members: approximately 30 government agencies and industry associations, such as the Department of Wildlife Conservation, Forest Department, Department of Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management, Chauffeur Guide Association of Sri Lanka, etc.
3. Evaluation Committee – Conducted the audit and evaluation process. Members: Chamber of Commerce, IUCN, UN organizations, and sustainability consultants.

UNDP BIOFIN and SLTDA conducted training on the NSTC criteria and then the first round of accommodation certification began. Of the 4,446 accommodations providers registered with SLTDA, 42 hotels volunteered to participate in the Phase I round of certification. Accommodations were graded based on a checklist directly adopted from the GSTC criteria to fit the Sri Lankan context. Three audit teams, made up of GSTC trained staff from SLTDA, reviewed eligible accommodations against the checklist. Thereafter, the senior evaluation committee assessed the level of certification for each accommodation (Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze).

Of the 42 participating hotels, 37 qualified for certification and only one met the criteria for the highest Platinum level of certification. According to various stakeholders interviewed by the Project, the lessons learned from the first round of evaluation are as follows:

- The marking scheme used for evaluation should be modified to include a clear and uniform method of awarding marks.

- The checklist of criteria for grading needs to be revisited and modified to better suit the situation at the ground level.
- Dr. Mihee Kang, Global Assurance Program Director and Asia-Pacific Region Director for GSTC, recommended that instead of a check box, a color code or range be adopted to better indicate the level of compliance/fulfillment of individual criteria.
- Guidelines or focused training for auditors need to be introduced to avoid bias or discrepancies in marking.
- There should be a mechanism to monitor those who have obtained the NSTC certification.

The NSTC for accommodation was offered free of charge with plans to impose a nominal fee in the future as the program progresses. The second phase of hotel certification is yet to be implemented.


ABOUT GSTC CRITERIA CERTIFICATION TRAINING MEMBERSHIP EVENTS NEWS DONATE

Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) Awards Hotels through the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC)

Home / Posts / News / Destinations, Members News, Past Trainings / Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) Awards Hotels through the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC)

Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) initiated the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC) as the first step towards making Sri Lanka's tourism industry sustainable with the technical and financial assistance from UNDP Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN).

As part of the process, hotels were awarded for their sustainable practices on 5th August 2019 at Ape Game, Battaramulla with the participation of John Amaratunga, Minister of Tourism Development, Wildlife & Christian Religious Affairs; Randy Durband, GSTC CEO; and Dr. Mihee Kang, GSTC Director for Asia-Pacific.

The certification scheme was developed within the global context, with the facilitation of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). The certification scheme was designed after a series of consultations with the stakeholders where issues, suggestions, and recommendations were obtained. As the pilot project, it was decided to implement the certification in the accommodation sector in the first phase and later open it to all tourism service providers. Auditing of hotels started in April 2019 by the SLTDA staff who were trained before by GSTC.

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Figure 5. Launch of the NSTC in 2019 ²⁶

In 2021, UNDP provided additional support to SLTDA for GSTC certification of nine sustainable destinations. Provincial level tourism entities were invited to submit proposals for destinations within their boundaries. SLTDA then reviewed the proposals and selected the destinations (one destination per province) for sustainable development based on certain criteria, including the current level of sustainability initiatives in the proposed destination and the ease of implementation. SLTDA next

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme - Sri Lanka. 2019. "37 Hotels to Be Recognised for Sustainable Practices by SLTDA." UNDP. August 14, 2019. <https://www.undp.org/srilanka/press-releases/37-hotels-be-recognised-sustainable-practices-slt-da>.

provided a list of steps that need to be completed to make the chosen destination sustainable as per GSTC criteria. Provincial tourism entities are now tasked with completing the implementation.

Sigiriya was selected as the first destination to be certified. The process of certification entails a carrying capacity and value chain assessment, promotional activities in the form of a website, and the establishment of signage and other visibility tools. Other Provincial Council Bureaus/Departments have indicated that there is a lag in the development of their selected destinations, such as Delft Island in the Northern Province, due to lack of funding.

Table 3. List of sustainable destinations by province

| | Province | Proposed Destination |
|----|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 01 | Central Province | Sigiriya World Heritage Destination |
| 02 | Western Province | Pilikuththuwa Heritage Destination |
| 03 | Wayamba Province | Gangewadiya Wetland Destination |
| 04 | Uva Province | Ellawala Falls Destination |
| 05 | Sabaragamuwa Province | Waulpane Lime Cave Destination |
| 06 | Northern Province | Delft Island Destination |
| 07 | Southern Province | Mandunagala –Walawa Nadee Destination |
| 08 | Eastern Province | Panama Community Village Destination |
| 09 | North Central Province | Mihinthale Heritage Destination |

Parallel to the NSTC program, the UNDP also funded the Sustainable Tourism Unit (STU) within SLTDA. The unit was established in September 2022 with staff double-tasked from different departments. There are plans to recruit dedicated staff for this unit. The STU is led by the Chairman, and the project plans to extend the unit to the provinces at some point in the future.

- **Good Travel certification for SMEs by SLTDA and Green Destinations**

SLTDA, together with Green Destinations, began a certification scheme for micro enterprises in April 2023. The scheme awards the Good Travel Certification by Green Destinations as a part of the NSTC program. This allows small businesses to achieve recognized global certification and sets them on track to progress to higher levels of certification over time.

To kick off the scheme, SLTDA conducted a series of sessions across the island to educate MSMEs and help them apply. The cost of certification will be covered by a UNDP grant for 200 MSMEs from the first round of applicants. The certification will be valid for two years, after which businesses will have to renew the certification themselves. However, the cost of the Good Travel certification offered by SLTDA and Green Destinations is at a slightly lower cost than that offered directly by Green Destinations.

SRI LANKA GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL STANDARDS

The Green Building Council of Sri Lanka (GBCSL) is a non-profit organization affiliated with the World Green Building Council and the Global Eco Labelling Network under which local green building certifications are issued.²⁷ At present, the GBCSL offers the following certifications:

- GreenSL Rating System - built environment, sustainable city, roads and infrastructure, sustainable building materials
- GreenSL Labelling System – for products

The GreenSL Rating System for the built environment covers the thematic areas of management, sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials, resources and waste management, indoor environmental quality, innovation and design process, and social and cultural awareness.

More weight is given to sustainable sites, energy and atmosphere, and water efficiency considering the challenges Sri Lanka faces due to limited land and water resources. Each chapter contains a set of prerequisites that must be fulfilled in order to apply for certification, and each requirement thereafter is awarded points or credits according to its importance. The total points that can be scored is 100. Depending on the performance of the building, the following certifications are available:

- GreenSL Certified – 40-49 points
- GreenSL Silver – 50-59 points
- GreenSL Gold – 60-69 points
- GreenSL Platinum – over 70 points

Currently, there are 61 GreenSL certified buildings in Sri Lanka. The system is currently the only local standard available for green building, but other international standards such as the LEED certification are also in use in Sri Lanka.

RESOURCE EFFICIENT CLEANER PRODUCTION (RECP) ASSESSMENT BY NATIONAL CLEANER PRODUCTION CENTRE SRI LANKA

The National Cleaner Production Centre's (NCPC) Resource Efficient Cleaner Production (RECP) assessment is a global concept formulated by United National Environment Program (UNEP) in 1994.²⁸ The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is responsible for developing the methodology and implementing the program.²⁹ Sri Lanka was the 23rd country to establish a National Centre out of the current 50 and this Centre has now been in operation for 20 years. The country focal point for the Centre is the Ministry of Industries and the management consists of representatives from both the government and the Chambers.³⁰



²⁷ Green Building Council of Sri Lanka. 2019. "Green Building Council of Sri Lanka." Green Building Council of Sri Lanka. Accessed October 5, 2022. <https://www.srilankagbc.org/>

²⁸ National Cleaner Production Centre. n.d. "RECP Assessments – NCPC." NCPC. Accessed September 28, 2022. <https://www.ncpcsrilanka.org/services/recp-assessments/>

²⁹ Introductory meeting with the National Cleaner Production Centre (NCPC), meeting minutes, July 12, 2022, USAID-IPOP – SLTDA, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

³⁰ National Cleaner Production Centre, Sri Lanka. n.d. "NCPC – Leading the nation towards a cleaner and greener future." National Cleaner Production Centre, Sri Lanka. Accessed October 3, 2022. <https://www.ncpcsrilanka.org/>

The Cleaner Production audit uses an assessment tool created by UNIDO which is being utilized by hotels to measure their resource flows, water and energy efficiency, waste streams, etc. RECP assesses environment friendly practices and does not require strenuous record-keeping. KPIs are given to the client based on their current performance and data sheets are given to them to populate with the necessary numerical/financial information. The Centre also works on assisting hotels with greenhouse gas quantification, energy/water audits, carbon footprint consultancy services, conducting waste audits, etc.

Another initiative by the NCPC is the Eco Label SL which is a product-oriented label that has been introduced to the industries of dairy, tea, chemicals and construction. It is one of the 38 globally accredited Eco Labels by the Global Ecolabel Network (GEN) out of the 455 Eco Labels available in the world. Currently, the NCPC is working together with Japan's Eco Mark to develop a label suited to tourism.

The NCPC also conducts certification of persons as consultants and sustainability managers. Furthermore, the NCPC is officially accredited to conduct capacity building and training programs on behalf of government institutions such as the Central Environmental Authority and the Sustainable Energy Authority.

SRI LANKA STANDARDS INSTITUTION STANDARDS

The Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) is the national standards body of Sri Lanka under the Ministry of Technology. It is a member of the ISO and is accredited by the Sri Lanka Accreditation Board (SLAB) and the Dutch Accreditation Council (RvA) to issue certifications. Therefore, accreditations issued by SLSI are recognized around the world. While the SLSI is not the only entity that can develop standards in Sri Lanka, it is the only one that can use the SLS mark (which may or may not be important for sustainability certification).

The SLSI can either adopt or develop standards for Sri Lanka. Adoption is where SLSI directly adopts an existing standard, possibly with minor changes to suit the context. A standard is then approved by the Sectoral Committee, which is made up of industry experts. In contrast, development of a standard involves drafting the standard and then putting it through a formal process involving review and input from relevant experts. This can take six months to one year and must be approved by a Sectoral Committee.

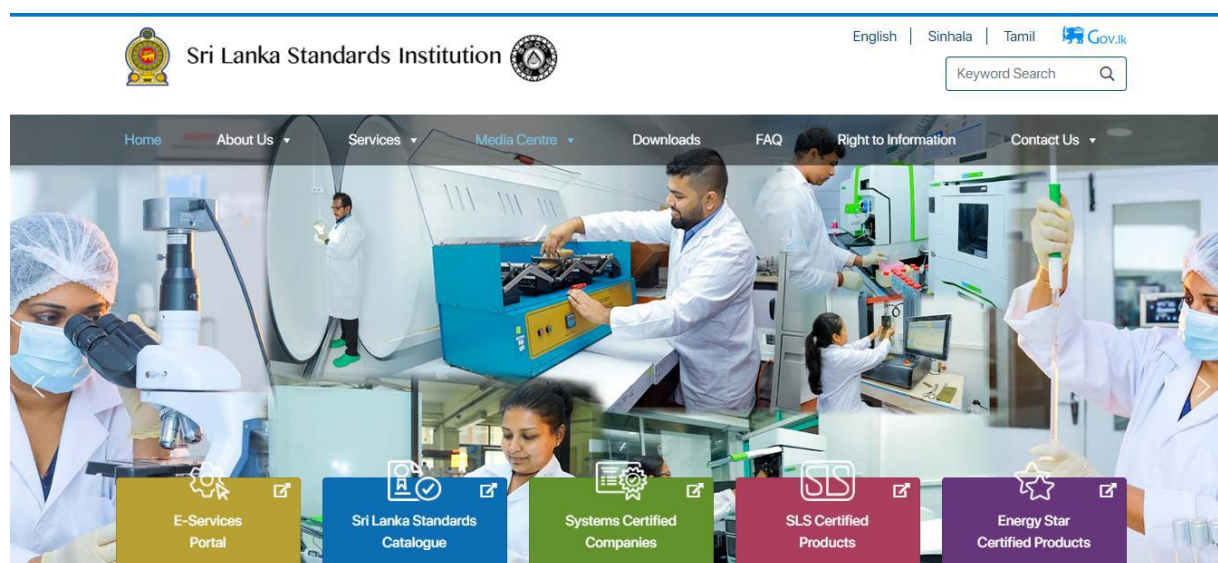


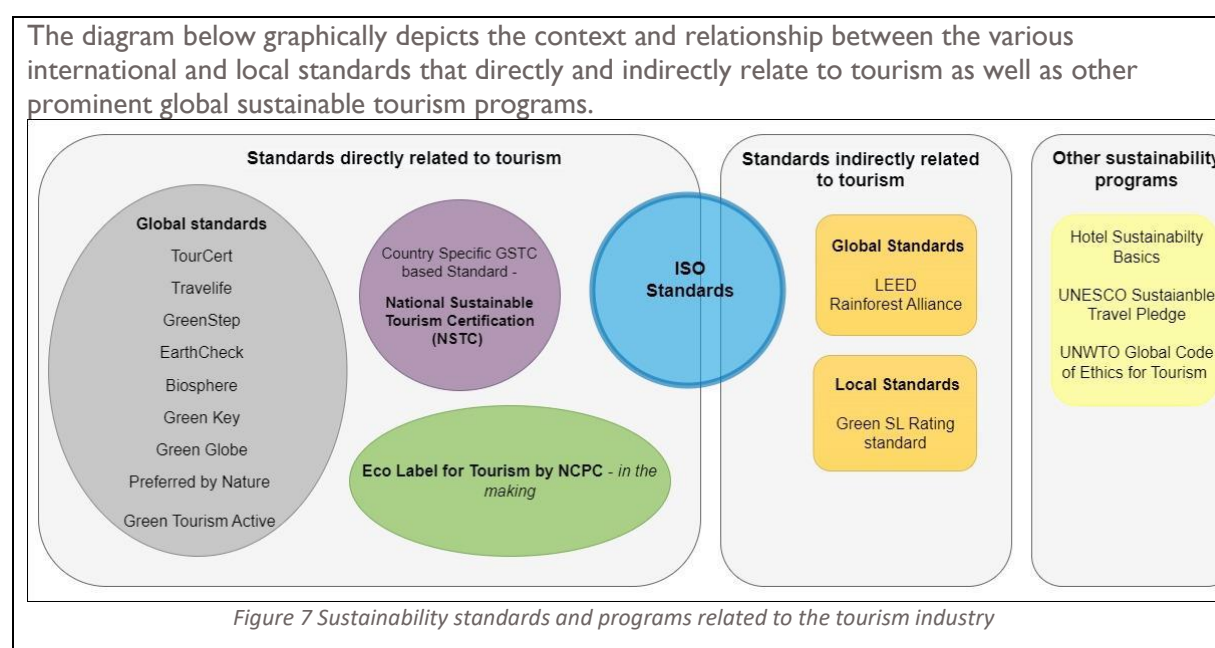
Figure 6. Homepage of Sri Lanka Standards Institution³¹

³¹ SLSI. "Sri Lanka Standards Institution." Sri Lanka Standards Institution, May 31, 2023. <https://slsi.lk/web/>.

Standards developed locally can be purchased by the public for a nominal fee while an international standard adopted by SLSI - such as an ISO standard – may cost more. At the time of this writing, there are 40 tourism-related ISO standards that have been adopted by SLSI. A list of these standards has been attached as Annex 3.

SLSI can also develop full certification schemes which include the administration and management of certification, training and overseeing auditors, legal and contractual obligations, financing and auditing among many other aspects. The development of a certification scheme is dependent on the specific requirements of the client, distribution of responsibilities among the two entities, fund availability and other necessary agreements between the parties.

It should be noted that while entities other than SLSI can develop standards, any program that trains auditors to audit compliance with those standards **must** be accredited by the Sri Lanka Accreditation Board (SLAB). SLSI is accredited by SLAB.



CHAPTER 4: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INITIATIVES ACROSS THE GLOBE

Countries, continents and regions across the globe have adopted their own sustainability standards or guidelines for the tourism industry, some of which are based on and recognized by the GSTC as mentioned above. However, there are other standards that are based on UN Sustainable Development Goals, ISO standards and similarly accepted global concepts. Some standards may be based on the GSTC but have not obtained the official recognition that is mandatory in order to associate a standard with the GSTC.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STANDARDS AND INITIATIVES BY COUNTRY

Not all countries adopt sustainability standards in the same manner, nor have they considered the adoption of standards as a means of achieving sustainability of the industry. Some are using other mechanisms - such as pledges for visitors, legal tools, and basic guidelines or principles - to achieve the end result of ensuring sustainability. A few examples from different countries are described below.

- **Palau**

An archipelago of a mere 460 square kilometers (about half the size of New York City's Central Park) lying in the western Pacific Ocean, Palau's 18,000 plus inhabitants depend largely on tourism as their main source of income generation.³² According to BBC Travel, the country received 150,000 visitors in 2015 – more than seven times its population - paving the way for the creation of the Palau Pledge to minimize the negative impacts of tourism on its islands.³³

The “Palau Pledge” for international travelers is the first of its kind in the world. It is now a mandatory immigration requirement for a visitor to sign the pledge promising the children of Palau that no harm shall be caused by the traveler's presence in the country.

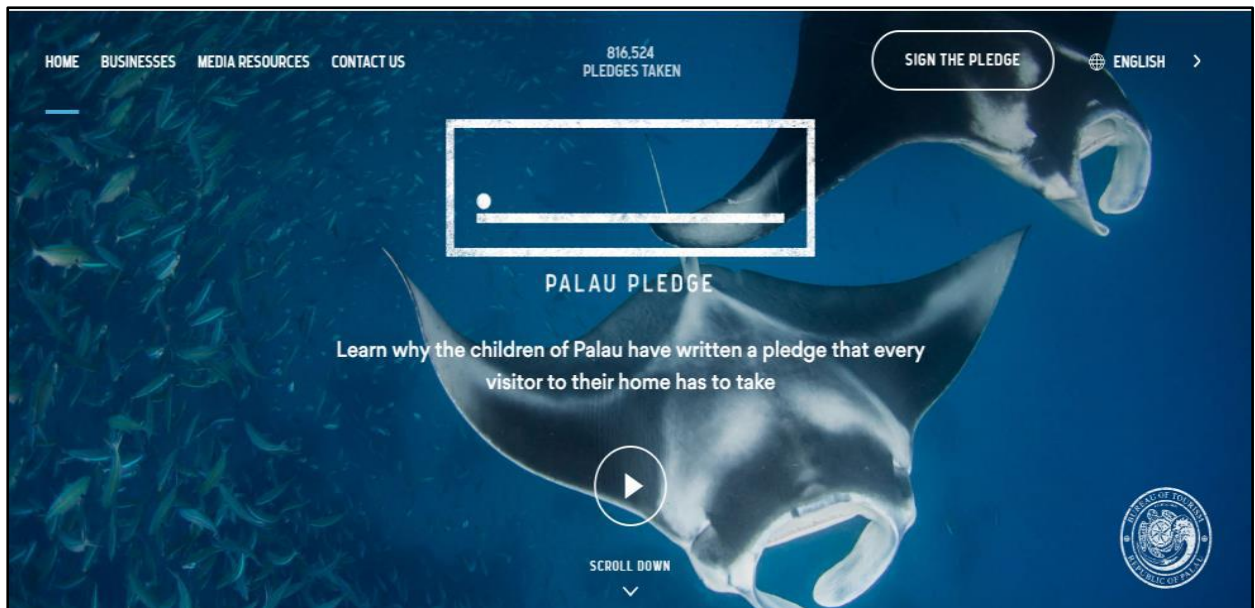


Figure 8. Official homepage Palau Pledge³⁴

Additionally, the Tourism Bureau of Palau introduced the “Palau Business Pledge” for local businesses promoting sustainable practices within the archipelago. The most recent initiative by the forward-thinking nation is the “Ol’au Palau” program where visitors are encouraged to behave responsibly and seek sustainable options, as opposed to spending more money on the islands. This is executed with the help of a mobile application that records points earned by a visitor based on their activities and behavior in the country. If a visitor gets a certain number of points during their stay, they will be given the chance to explore special sites and destinations and indulge in unique experiences that may not otherwise be open or accessible to tourists.

- **Bhutan**

Nestled amongst the Himalayan Mountain region, the country strictly applies a “high value, low volume” principle within its tourism industry.³⁵ To accomplish this, the country increased its sustainable development levy to USD 200 per day, up from USD 65, except for Indian tourists who

³² WorldData.info. n.d. “Palau: country data and statistics.” Accessed August 9, 2022. <https://www.worlddata.info/oceania/palau/index.php>.

³³ Galloway, L. 2022. “Palau’s world-first ‘good traveller’ incentive.” Accessed September 13, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20220517-palaus-world-first-good-traveller-incentive>.

³⁴ Palau Bureau of Tourism. “Palau Pledge.” palaupledge.com, 2019. <https://palaupledge.com/>.

³⁵ Tourism Council of Bhutan. 2020. “Annual Report 2020/21.” Bhutan.travel. Accessed September 25, 2022. [https://www.tourism.gov.bt/uploads/attachment_files/tcb_QIQOSBr_TCB%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%202020-2021%20\(WEB\).pdf](https://www.tourism.gov.bt/uploads/attachment_files/tcb_QIQOSBr_TCB%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%202020-2021%20(WEB).pdf).


will be charged INR 1200 (USD 14.52 as of February 2023).³⁶ This tax is directly payable to the government and purportedly channeled to fund sustainable initiatives across the country, such as capacity building within the tourism workforce and offsetting of the carbon footprint of tourists.

Under a European Union funded SWITCH-ASIA project in 2016, an Environment Information System (EIS) was established as a baseline to help decision making and develop national benchmarks in sustainability. A unique carbon calculator was created for products and services to measure their carbon footprint and a “Carbon Label” is offered to those with a minimal carbon footprint. Entities with the label will receive promotional benefits and branding as an accredited low carbon enterprise.

Green Bhutan: SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS

13 December 2022

Conservation of the environment is one of the four pillars of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness philosophy. As mandated in its constitution, Bhutan preserves (at all times) at least 60 percent of its land under forest cover. In fact, Bhutan is one of the only carbon negative countries in the world. But there are many other important environmental and sustainability projects ongoing in the country. Read more about some of these below.

Download 




Figure 9. Bhutan's Sustainable Development Fee, Department of Tourism- Bhutan website³⁷

- **Singapore**

In line with national policies, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) developed its own Tourism Sustainability Program focusing on building a sustainable tourism sector through capacity development; growth, innovation, and education; and awareness.

The Singapore Tourism Board became a member of GSTC in 2021 and has since encouraged the hotel industry to obtain internationally recognized sustainability certifications. While this is not mandatory, the STB has developed guides and toolkits on topics like reducing food waste, segregating and treatment of waste, reducing single-use plastics, organizing environmentally friendly events, and conducting sustainable meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE). Various other state agencies also developed financial tools, learning courses, and certification programs that pave the way for enterprises to obtain international certification.

³⁶ Sumeda. 2022. “Explained: Bhutan’s Strategy to Levy Sustainable Development Fee on Tourists.” The Hindu. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/bhutan-strategy-daily-tax-tourists-sustainable-development-fee-tax/article65943766.ece>

³⁷ Department of Tourism - Bhutan. “Bhutan’s Sustainable Development Fee.” Department of Tourism - Bhutan, January 2023. <https://bhutan.travel/journal/editorial/bhutan-s-sustainable-development-fee>.

The STB and the Singapore Hotels Association recently launched the Singapore Hotel Sustainability Roadmap with a goal of getting more than 60% of the country's hotel rooms GSTC certified.³⁸

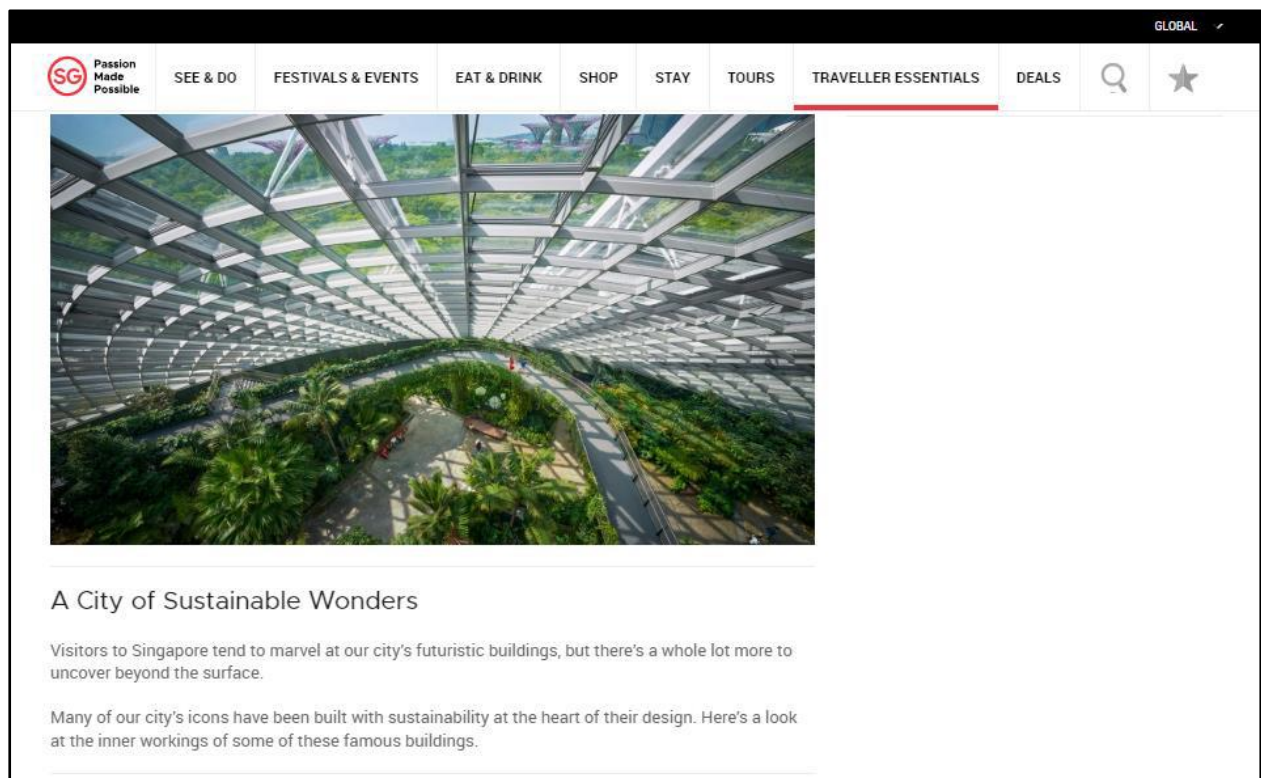


Figure 10. "Green spaces and sustainable buildings in SG", Singapore Tourism Board website³⁹

- **Costa Rica**

Costa Rica unveiled its own sustainable tourism standard, known as the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST), in 1997. The CST is under the oversight of the Costa Rican Tourism Board (ICT) and is GSTC-recognized.⁴⁰

The CST consists of two basic components and an advanced standard to cater to businesses of various sizes and capacities. There is an online platform, and the process includes a mandatory training program on sustainability and a code of ethics. CST auditors are a part of the ICT, but function as an independent unit covering all the regions within the country. According to the TreeHugger website, over 400 businesses in Costa Rica have been sustainably certified.⁴¹

In addition to the CST, there is a parallel program named the "Ecologic Blue Flag Programme"⁴² which provides certification for beaches. This is administered by multiple state entities covering other areas of development also.

³⁸ Chan, Tiffany. 2022. "Singapore Hotel Sustainability Roadmap." GSTC. Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://www.gstcouncil.org/singapore-hotel-sustainability-roadmap/>

³⁹ Singapore Tourism Board. "Green Spaces and Sustainable Buildings in SG." www.visitsingapore.com, January 11, 2023. <https://www.visitsingapore.com/travel-guide-tips/about-singapore/city-in-nature/sustainable-architecture/>.

⁴⁰ Embassy of Costa Rica in Washington DC. 2019. "Embassy of Costa Rica| Embajada de Costa Rica en DC." Accessed September 19, 2022. <http://www.costarica-embassy.org/>

⁴¹ Gallagher, K. 2021. "Costa Rica's Keys to Success as a Sustainable Tourism Pioneer." Treehugger. Accessed September 30, 2022. <https://www.treehugger.com/costa-rica-sustainable-tourism-5120162>.

⁴² Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. n.d. "Ecologic Blue Flag Program." Instituto Costarricense de Turismo - ICT. Accessed September 30, 2022. <https://www.ict.go.cr/en/sustainability/ecologic-blue-flag-program.html>.

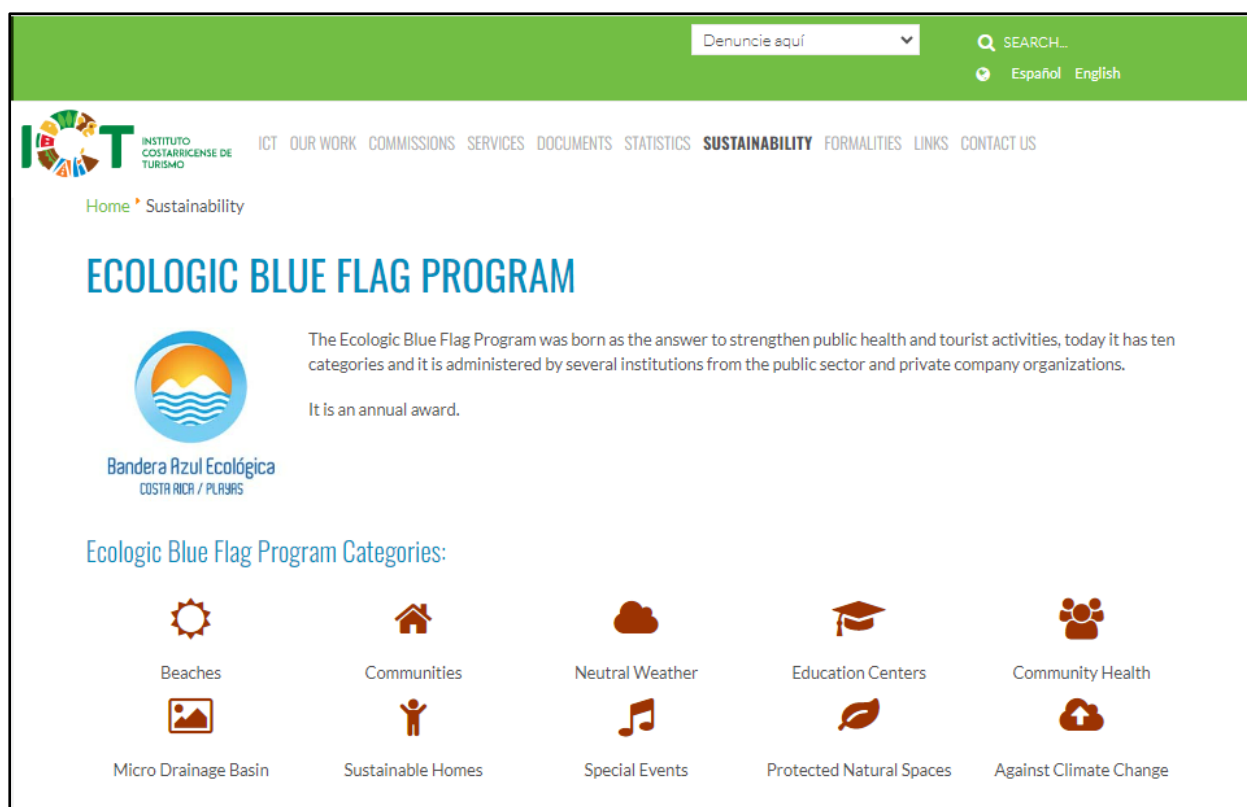


Figure 11. “Ecologic Blue Flag Program”, Costa Rican Tourism Board website⁴³

SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES BY POPULAR WEB-BASED TOURISM SERVICES

Some of the global giants in web-based tourism services have initiated remarkable programs to influence their clientele to become conscious of sustainability and make active contributions via their chosen travel activities. The table below illustrates some of the initiatives taken by key companies.

Table 4. Sustainability initiatives by web-based tourism services

| Company name | Program or initiative |
|---------------------------|--|
| Booking.com ⁴⁴ | Commitment to achieving carbon net zero emissions by 2040, investment in carbon offset projects and development of a climate action plan to “decarbonize the travel industry”. |
| | The company offices are fully powered by renewable energy and practice responsible waste management. |
| | Signatory of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative. |

⁴³ Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. “Ecologic Blue Flag Program.” Instituto Costarricense de Turismo | ICT. Accessed May 30, 2023. <https://www.ict.go.cr/en/sustainability/ecologic-blue-flag-program.html>.

⁴⁴ Booking.com. n.d. “About Booking.com.” Booking.com. Accessed October 17, 2022. https://www.booking.com/content/about.html?aid=360920&label=New_English_EN_ALL-GBIECAUS_14224741686-KiBH2ftlzA2ASNVrtWSzjgS60966727686%3Apl%3Aa%3Apl%3Ap2%3Aac%3Aap%3Aaneg&sid=d38b7476c597a8badda51f4165ee27fb.

| | |
|---|---|
| | The “Travel Sustainable Badge” recognition program makes it easier for travelers to identify sustainable properties, which are awarded the badge based on an independently validated model of sustainability. ⁵¹ |
| Expedia Group Inc. ⁴⁵ | Carbon neutral since 2017. |
| | Awarded LEED Gold Certification in 2021. |
| | Supported the establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Pledge by UNESCO in 2020. |
| | Developed its own set of wildlife guidelines and stopped promoting activities and attractions that involve performances or interactions with wild animals. |
| Skyscanner ^{46,47} | Developed a “Greener Choices” label to highlight flights which have lower than average carbon emissions based on the type of aircraft, capacity of the aircraft and the route and distance. |
| | The company also manages its carbon emissions by purchasing Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) through a partnership with SkyNRG. SAF is a renewable source of energy made from biomass and emits 80% less carbon than jet fuel. |
| Airbnb ⁴⁸ | Driving sustainable tourism by supporting regional initiatives and partnerships, working to reduce mass tourism and enabling sustainable travel. |
| | Launch of flexible search tools, allowing the booking platform to recommend lesser-known tourist spots during different times of the year. Since its launch, the tool has helped divert bookings from peak travel seasons and over-touristed areas in Europe. |
| Travalyst ⁴⁹ | Formulated a holiday rating tool in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The tool “How would your holiday rate you?” draws attention to the impacts of tourism on destinations and communities to encourage consumers to choose sustainable travel. ^{50, 51} |

⁴⁵ Expedia Group. 2021. “Global Impact Report.” Accessed October 18, 2022. [https://s27.q4cdn.com/708721433/files/doc_downloads/2022/07/Expedia_Global-Impact-Report-2021-FINAL-\(1\).pdf](https://s27.q4cdn.com/708721433/files/doc_downloads/2022/07/Expedia_Global-Impact-Report-2021-FINAL-(1).pdf).

⁴⁶ Skyscanner. n.d. “About Us.” Accessed October 18, 2022. <https://www.skyscanner.net/about-us>

⁴⁷ Skyscanner. 2021. “How to make greener choices on your next trip with Skyscanner.” Skyscanner’s Travel Blog. Accessed October 18, 2022. <https://www.skyscanner.net/news/how-you-can-make-greener-choices-with-skyscanner>.

⁴⁸ Airbnb. 2021. “What Makes Airbnb, Airbnb.” Airbnb Newsroom. Accessed October 20, 2022. <https://news.airbnb.com/what-makes-airbnb-airbnb/>.

⁴⁹ Travalyst. n.d. “About.” Travalyst. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://travalyst.org/about/>.

⁵⁰ Travalyst. 2022. “Travalyst - Sustainable Tourism.” Travalyst. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://travalyst.org/how-would-your-holiday-rate-you/>.

⁵¹ Pizza, A. 2022. “How Would Your Vacation Rate You? Prince Harry’s Sustainable Travel Habits Were Put to the Test in This New Video.” Accessed October 20, 2022. <https://brightly.eco/blog/prince-harry-travalyst-sustainable-travel-rating-campaign>

CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INITIATIVES IN SRI LANKA

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA

The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), as the sole regulator of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka, has taken many other initiatives in addition to the NSTC scheme to ensure that the country is on a positive trajectory towards achieving sustainability. The SLTDA works together with branch agencies under the Ministry of Tourism and Lands to develop and promote the tourism industry while also coordinating with other state agencies to develop sustainable tourism. Listed below are a number of such endeavors by other state agencies, done both individually and in coordination with the SLTDA.

- **Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (SLITHM)**

Established in 1964, SLITHM is a training institute managed by the Ministry of Tourism and Lands and offers courses related to hospitality and tourism. Some of the travel and tourism courses include the National Tourist Guide Course (Licensing Program), Community Based Tourism Course and a Hiking and Trekking course.⁵²



- **Development Plans by the Urban Development Authority (UDA)**

Under the 2021 government policy, areas for urban development were declared by the Minister of Urban Development and Housing and area-specific development plans were developed by UDA. The plans target several areas across the nine provinces and are mainly for the period 2021-2030. Based on the National Physical Development Plan developed by the Department of National Physical Planning, the plans broadly cover infrastructure, planning and management of the chosen areas. The potential to support or develop tourism is also integrated into the proposed activities and plans. Notably, the development plans drafted for Ella in the Uva Province (commissioned by the SLTDA) center on the development of Ella as a “Tourist Resort Town based on the conservation of the natural environment of the locality.”⁵³ Similarly, the plan for Hakmana in the Southern Province proposed the development of agrotourism and eco-tourism in the tank and wetland areas.⁵⁴



- **Government Agencies for Tourism at Provincial Level**

Tourism strategy is developed at a national level under the Ministry of Tourism together with authorities such as the SLTDA and Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau (SLTPB). At a regional level, provincial councils have established their own agencies/entities to develop and promote tourism. These entities primarily promote tourism in the region and coordinate programs such as the NSTC Sustainable Destinations program with the SLTDA. However, select provinces, such as the Central Province, function directly under the chief ministry of the province as a department while the Western Province has a tourist board. The main difference in the level of the provincial tourism agencies/entities is the power to make decisions and influence provincial policy.

⁵² Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management. n.d. “Corporate Information.” SLITHM. Accessed November 23, 2022. <https://www.slithm.edu.lk/cooperate-information/>.

⁵³ Urban Development Authority. 2021. *Ella Development Plan*. UDA. Accessed October 11, 2022. <https://www.uda.gov.lk/attachments/dev-plans-2021-2030/Ella%20Development%20Plan%20-%20English.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Urban Development Authority. 2021. *Hakmana Development Plan*. UDA. Accessed November 23, 2022. <https://www.uda.gov.lk/attachments/dev-plans-2021-2030/Hakmana%20Development%20Plan%20-%20English.pdf>.

Table 5. List of government agencies for tourism at provincial level in Sri Lanka.

| Province | Bureau | Board | Department | Authority | Chamber |
|------------------------|---|-------|------------|-----------|---------|
| Northern Province | X | | | | |
| Eastern Province | X | | | | |
| Southern Province | X | | | | |
| Central Province | | | X | | |
| Western Province | | X | | | |
| Northwestern Province | Housed under the Wayamba Development Authority | | | | |
| North Central Province | | | X | | |
| Uva Province | X | | | | |
| Sabaragamuwa Province | Housed under the Ministry of Provincial Road Development, Rural Infrastructure, Tourism, Sports and Youth Affairs | | | | |

Although the registration of tourism operators takes place through SLTDA, area and site guide licenses are provided by the provincial tourism authorities. The main sources of funding for these authorities are funds allocated for provincial development and funds from the Finance Commission under the Provincial Sectoral Development Grant (PSDG).

Parallel to the Sustainable Destination program being conducted in all provinces, individual provinces have taken initiatives at varying levels to promote and develop tourism. Initiatives include campaign programs, donor funded project activities to develop the capacity and livelihoods of those engaged in the tourism industry, infrastructure and tourist site development.

An example of a tourism initiative taken at a provincial level is the Real North Program launched in 2021 by the Northern Provincial Council Tourism Bureau to revive tourism in the Northern Province. The program caters to several niche markets such as agro-tourism, culture and heritage. The website established under the program was developed to not only provide information but also allow visitors to book accommodations, buy tickets to attractions, schedule travel and service providers. This brings together the complete travel experience onto a single platform.

- **Initiatives by the Central Environmental Authority**

Several single-use plastic items were banned in August 2021 by the Central Environmental Authority. These items include plastic drinking straws, spoons, drinking cups, forks, knives, string hopper making trays and garlands made of plastic and polythene. Previously, PET bottles (PolyEthylene Terephthalate) used in the agro-chemical industry, lunch sheets less than 20 microns, sachet packets (non-food and non-pharmaceutical), cotton buds (non-medical), and air-filled plastic toys were also banned. However, the enforcement of this ban for all of the products mentioned above varies due to ground realities and

industry resistance. Nevertheless, the ban has seemingly caused a reduction in the production and use of the banned products overall, which is certainly a positive outcome for the tourism industry.⁵⁵

PROGRAMS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA AND DONOR ORGANIZATIONS

Together with the Ministry of Tourism, and with financial support from international donor organizations such as USAID, the World Bank, UNDP and prominent country-specific government aid organizations, SLTDA has been able to lay the foundation for sustainability through the introduction of policy and legislation that are conducive to sustainability. Several other small-scale programs to ensure sustainability within the industry have been implemented with the assistance of various international parties. Such projects are often supported and complemented by the work of parallel government agencies responsible for the conservation of Sri Lanka's natural resources, namely: the Central Environmental Authority, Department of Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management, Forest Department, and the Department of Wildlife Conservation, among others.

Further information on some of the initiatives has been extracted from newspaper articles and direct interviews with key personnel involved.

- **USAID SAIL and USAID PARTNER Projects**

Having identified the need for a more robust system to actively engage the industry and investors with SLTDA, which is also the foundation for sustainability, USAID funded several mechanisms through the Supporting Accelerated Investment in Sri Lanka (SAIL) project and the Partnership for Accelerating Results in Trade, National Expenditure and Revenue Sri Lanka (PARTNER) projects.

Through the SAIL project, the foreign investment process was simplified and streamlined and a handbook for investors was developed. Similarly, through the PARTNER project, a design guideline handbook was produced for the accommodation sector. This is expected to directly contribute towards the sustainability of the accommodation sector. Furthermore, a report titled "Reforms to Sri Lanka's Accommodation Classification Systems" was published to simplify and increase transparency of the system of classification of tourism accommodation facilities in Sri Lanka. If adopted, the reforms would enable proprietors to better understand and meet industry standards while providing accurate and credible information to consumers.

- **USAID IPOPOP - SLTDA**

USAID IPOPOP – SLTDA is a two-year project that assists SLTDA to streamline and implement new policies and procedures to support the development of sustainable niche tourism. To date the project has published a comprehensive report on niche tourism based on the categories developed together with the SLTDA as well as an Impact Assessment of Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka. The project has also supported the development of a Sustainability Framework for Sri Lanka tourism with the involvement of public and private stakeholders. The project is also in the process of conducting knowledge sharing sessions around the country to educate niche tourism businesses on how to develop their brand through digital tools as well the benefits of integrating sustainability into their business practices.

The project is working across three components, namely:

- Component I: Technical support for potential areas of growth for MSMEs in the tourism industry

⁵⁵ Ministry of Tourism Sri Lanka. 2021. "Sri Lanka Tourism Progress Review 2021." Accessed July 26, 2022. https://www.slt-da.gov.lk/storage/common_media/SLT%20Progress%20Review%20English3896573953.pdf.

- Component 2: Technical support for a sustainability framework for tourism and driving sustainable tourism among MSMEs
- Component 3: Technical support to develop a repository of land suitable for tourism development.

- **USAID Sri Lanka Energy Program**

Having commenced in May 2021, the program is designed around the three key objectives of operating electric three wheelers, improving energy efficiency and implementing Demand Side Management (DSM) projects, and increasing the grid-connected renewable energy component within the country's main electricity grid.

Out of these, the DSM project is focusing on large tourist hotels among many other high energy consuming industries where their current energy consumption is assessed, and a gridline is specifically developed for the industry on reducing the energy consumption. Afterwards, a benchmark will be set for other hotels to follow. In addition, the program expects to conduct capacity building initiatives by way of training energy managers and energy modelers and increasing the capacity of the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority's staff to meet growing requirements. Such activities are expected to be supported and strengthened by adding a scoring system for demand response, capacity building in energy efficiency, and building energy modelling in the Green Building Council standards of Sri Lanka.

- **USAID Catalyze Private Sector Development Project**

Through the program, Catalyze hopes to provide better access to finance, technology and management practices to strengthen the competitiveness of MSMEs in Sri Lanka's key growth sectors. The program provides relief grants and adaptation grants to MSMEs. The program has awarded two adaptation grants in tourism: 1) an award to the Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance (SLTA) to develop the Love Sri Lanka Sustainability Program; and 2) a grant to support a scholarship program to encourage women to enter the tourism sector.

Through the Love Sri Lanka Sustainability Program, ten sustainability principles have been developed along with learning programs and a champions recognition program. Launched in October 2022, these principles were developed based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and are intended to guide SMEs on their sustainability journey. Based on these principles, 20 "Sustainable Champions" were chosen to commit to these principles while sharing their knowledge and experience with other tourism businesses. The chosen businesses come from a range of backgrounds such as tour operators, restaurant owners and hoteliers.

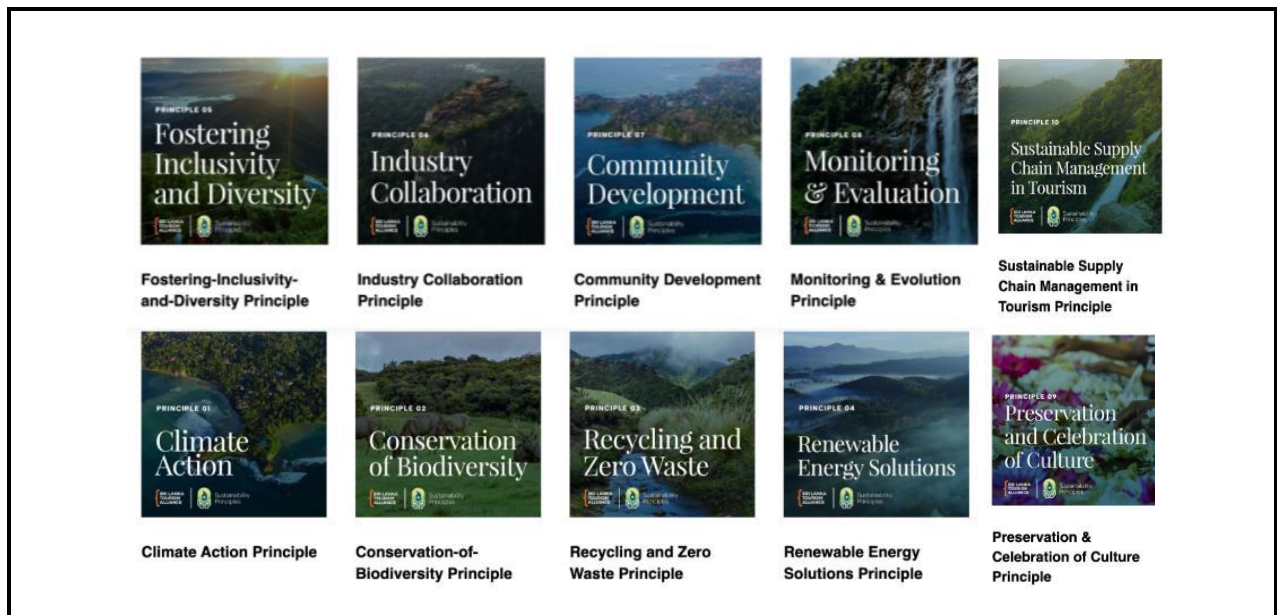


Figure 12. Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance Top 10 Sustainability Principles, SLTA website ⁵⁶

- **USAID Climate Adaptation Project**

This five-year project aims to enhance adaptive capacities of public and private sectors and the local communities in the key economic sectors of agriculture, fisheries, and tourism through increased investment opportunities, technical assistance, and facilitation of partnerships. The tourism sector has broadly chosen adaptation pathways in the areas of promoting sustainable tourism practices including climate resilient infrastructure design, climate responsive land use planning, and raising awareness among the many stakeholders involved. Climate adaptation initiatives in the rest of the identified sectors will also indirectly benefit the tourism industry as it helps maintain sustainability in the various supply chains related to tourism.

- **USAID Ocean Plastics Reduction Project**

The five-year project launched in December 2022 aims to reduce plastic in the environment by targeting industrial waste and enhancing solid waste management in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The initiative collaborates with local partners to address operational inefficiencies and reduce dependence on new plastics. Its overarching objective is to encourage greater engagement in waste management and reduction initiatives, thereby averting the release of thousands of tons of plastic into the environment.⁵⁷

- **Pekoe Trail – Joint project by EU and USAID**

The Pekoe Trail is a 300km trail with 22 stages in and around the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka. The trail uses existing roads and paths through tea estates and small localities to provide an immersive experience in Sri Lankan food, culture, history and nature. The development of the trail is funded by the EU and USAID, and the initial stages were officially opened in February 2022. Visitors can choose to do one or several legs at a time and pace it to suit their needs. With little need for new

⁵⁶ Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance. 2022. "Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance Top 10 Sustainability Principles." www.srilankatourismalliance.com. August 22, 2022. <https://www.srilankatourismalliance.com/sri-lanka-tourism-alliance-top-10-sustainability-principles/>.

⁵⁷ USAID. 2022. "USAID Commences 5-Year Ocean Plastics Reduction Project in Sri Lanka and Maldives | Sri Lanka | Press Release." U.S. Agency for International Development. December 22, 2022. <https://www.usaid.gov/sri-lanka/press-releases/dec-07-2022-usaid-commences-5-year-ocean-plastics-reduction-project-sri-lanka-and-maldives>.

infrastructure and transport, the trail will bring tourists to lesser-known towns and communities, supporting local livelihoods.⁵⁸

- **Lanka Rain Water Harvesting Forum (LRWHF)**

With the assistance of USAID, LRWHF initiated a three-year initiative to offer secure and resilient sources of drinking water through rainwater collection to regions susceptible to floods and droughts in three districts of the island. The primary goal of the project was to enhance water supply in disaster-prone areas, empower vulnerable communities, and establish policies and practices for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) concerning flood and drought management.

The project successfully delivered safe drinking water to nearly 17,900 individuals across 391 households, 48 educational institutions, and 10 rural medical facilities through rooftop rainwater harvesting systems within the three project districts. Notably, households equipped with rainwater harvesting setups demonstrated enhanced resilience during recent droughts and floods.⁵⁹

- **National Tourism Policy**

Supported by the UNDP and EU, the National Tourism Policy was drafted by SLTDA in consultation with various industry stakeholders. After rounds of reviews and validation, the document the Ministry of Tourism has presented the policy to the Cabinet of Ministers for approval. The policy document prioritizes sustainability and lays the foundation for a sustainable industry where protection of natural assets from over-tourism is highlighted. It further stresses the need to conduct capacity assessments for fragile destinations where tourism is intended to prevail.

- **Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) National Policy for Sri Lanka by SWITCH Asia**

Launched in 2007, SWITCH Asia is a sustainable consumption and production program by the European Union (EU) to support countries in Asia and Central Asia to transition to low-carbon and resource efficient economies that are sustainable. The national policy was developed in 2019 and covers various sectors, including tourism, with the objective of improving economic development, social welfare and environmental conservation through Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) of goods and services.⁶⁰ The policy statements made under the tourism sector outlines SCP best practices in tourism-related products, mainstreaming climate and disaster resilience in the development of tourism and the use of tourism as a tool for conservation of natural resources, among others.⁶¹

- **Tourism infrastructure development by Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

ADB's most recent engagement started in 2019 with the goal of providing technical assistance and advisory services to build a more resilient tourism sector. The three focus areas under this engagement are standardizing the requirements for home stay accommodation, increasing awareness about tourism workforce participation among women and youth, and assisting SLITHM with the development of the first degree program in hospitality.

⁵⁸ NewsWire. 2022. "Sri Lanka unveils first ever long distance walking trail." NewsWire. Accessed October 3, 2022. <https://www.newswire.lk/2022/02/02/sri-lanka-unveils-first-ever-long-distance-walking-trail/>.

⁵⁹ Global Water Partnership. 2020. "Lanka Rain Water Harvesting Forum (LRWHF) - GWP." Wwww.gwp.org. 2020. <https://www.gwp.org/en/partner/existing-partners/meet-our-partners/lanka-rain-water-harvesting-forum-lrwhf/>.

⁶⁰ Government of Sri Lanka. 2019. *National Policy on Sustainable Consumption & Production for Sri Lanka*. Accessed September 10, 2022. https://www.switch-asia.eu/site/assets/files/2159/scp_national_policy_sl.pdf.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Furthermore, ADB is assisting SLTDA with the development of a mobile tourism application. In 2020, ADB reacted to a request from SLTDA to help further diversify Sri Lanka's tourism product offering and identify niche tourism products such as Digital Nomads for further development and promotion. ADB plans to carry out infrastructure development programs such as the development of a digital nomad visitor engagement center along with a promotional campaign as a part of this initiative. It also hopes to carry out capacity building workshops among MSMEs on sustainability.

Additionally, ADB is investing in developing the infrastructure facilities in four destinations, including Sigiriya and Gangewadiya, which includes the provision of signage and other improvements as well as the development of content for the website.

- **Technical assistance to tourism enterprises through Market Development Facility (MDF)**

The Market Development Facility is an Australian Government funded multi-country initiative which promotes sustainable economic development through higher incomes for women and men. MDF is providing technical assistance to SLTDA to enhance the institution's research capabilities to improve tourism data collection, analysis and usage. This will pave the way for understanding trends around visitors to Sri Lanka and assisting the public and private sectors in making evidence-based decisions and investments in tourism.

- **S4IG Tourism Project**

Skills for Inclusive Growth (S4IG) is an Australian government funded project to support the tourism industry concerning several sub areas that also connect to sustainability. The key strategic initiatives to be implemented through this project are revitalizing national tour guides operations, developing destinations to increase engagement between visitors and local communities, improving MSME performance through enhanced human resources skills, and raising awareness on the safety and security of staff and visitors. Moreover, many training programs have been scheduled in these areas including marketing and promotion. Most of these initiatives help ensure sustainability in the long run.

CSR INITIATIVES AND SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SRI LANKA

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization defines Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a management concept through which *"companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders."* Unlike charity, CSR goes beyond philanthropy to encompass the expectations of stakeholders and shareholders and achieve a balance between economic, social and environmental imperatives.⁶²

In Sri Lanka, a study done in 2018 found that the overall rate of CSR reporting among companies was low and current CSR practices tend to focus on socio-economic issues more than environmental issues.⁶³ The tourism sector voluntarily practices CSR through projects, often partnering with environmental or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to fund an initiative or project, especially on days of global importance such as World Environment Day or World Ocean Day.

⁶² UNIDO. 2021. "What Is CSR." United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Accessed October 14, 2022. <https://www.unido.org/our-focus/advancing-economic-competitiveness/competitive-trade-capacities-and-corporate-responsibility/corporate-social-responsibility-market-integration/what-csr>.

⁶³ Fernando, A.A.J. 2018. *Environmental and Socially Related CSR practices in Sri Lanka: Insights from Annual Report Disclosures*. Accessed October 12, 2022. <http://dr.lib.sjp.ac.lk/handle/123456789/8510>.

There is a new positive trend among accommodations and service providers to practice more robust CSR activities focusing on sustainable tourism by incorporating better practices into their daily operations. This includes waste segregation, recycling, composting, energy and water conservation, rainwater collection and replacing single-use plastics with re-usable alternatives.

Some examples of sustainability initiatives in the private sector are described here, although this by no means represents all the initiatives happening in the country today.

- **Sea Turtle Conservation project by Anantara Peace Haven - Tangalle Resort**

In line with Anantara's sustainability initiatives in other countries, Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle and IUCN Sri Lanka partnered together in 2017 to support the conservation of sea turtle habitats surrounding the hotel. Biodiversity and turtle nesting site surveys were conducted along the shoreline and a landscaping plan was developed to enhance and maintain the coastal habitat of sea turtles. The project also conducted capacity building of hotel staff, guests, and officials from the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC).⁶⁴



- **Beach Cleaning programs by Aitken Spence Travels (Pvt) Ltd**

Aitken Spence Travels and Turyaa Kalutara team up each year for an annual beach cleaning program in Kalutara and to provide education for the local coastal communities on sustainable livelihoods.



Aitken Spence has also worked with TUI Destination Services on a beach cleaning program in Ahungalla with the theme of "Make Holidays Greener" as part of a world series by TUI Travel PLC. The campaign aimed to create awareness among local communities on coastal and marine pollution and build support to conserve coastal environments.⁶⁵

- **Nurdle Free Lanka and other CSR initiatives by Walkers Tours**

Walker Tours is a destination management company engaged in several CSR projects such as the Nurdle Free Lanka and Plasticcycle. Nurdle Free Lanka was a volunteer campaign to clean up plastic pellets from the X-Press Pearl disaster in 2021. Plasticcycle is a social entrepreneurship project which works towards reducing single-use plastic and responsible plastic disposal and recycling by John Keells Group. Walkers Tours contributed to the project by collecting over 4000kg of plastic waste for recycling in August 2021 and sponsoring plastic bins at entry and exit points of the Southern Expressway.⁶⁶



The company also holds several sustainability certifications, including TourCert CSR Certification of Commitment to Responsible Tourism, Travellife Certification Stage I-Travellife engaged, and has a CarbonNeutral certified fleet of nearly 600 vehicles for which registered carbon credits are purchased to offset emissions annually. The company complies with ISO 14001:2015 (Environmental Management

⁶⁴ IUCN. 2017. "Anantara Peace Haven -Tangalle Resort and IUCN to support sea turtle conservation." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.iucn.org/news/sri-lanka/201705/anantara-peace-haven-tangalle-resort-and-iucn-support-sea-turtle-conservation-0>.

⁶⁵ Aitken Spence Travels. n.d. "Corporate Social Responsibility." Accessed October 9, 2022. <https://www.aitkenspencetravels.com/sustainability/csr.html>.

⁶⁶ Walkers Tours. n.d. "Eco Tours Sri Lanka." Accessed October 9, 2022. <https://www.walkerstours.com/sustainability>

System) and is working towards a paper free work environment by 2025. Walker Tours is also a member of Flockeo, an online travel platform that connects travelers to environmentally conscious service providers and maintains a satellite map of the environmental footprint of tourist destinations around the world, making sustainable travel more accessible for tourists.⁶⁷

- **Jetwing Hotels Sustainability Policy**

The sustainability policy of Jetwing Hotels covers six focus areas: energy and carbon, water and waste, biodiversity, community and culture, family and sourcing and production. It also works to align its business actions and initiatives with the seventeen UNSDGs. Sustainable measures adopted by Jetwing include use of renewable energy such as biomass and solar, onsite wastewater treatment plants, and onsite glass water bottling plants. Similarly, at an operational level, energy is conserved through the use of LED lighting and water is conserved through low flow shower heads and dual flush cisterns.



Not all properties practice all of the measures listed above but, rather, do what they can based on the availability of resources and supplies in the specific region. Similarly, properties hold different types of certifications at varying levels. Nine properties of Jetwing hold ISO 14064 certification, which provides a framework for quantifying and reporting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and reductions at an organizational level.⁶⁸

- **Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts Sustainability Policy**

The hotel chain has taken several measures to practice sustainability across all their properties, such as re-use of food waste for biogas, solar heaters, use of bio-degradable products and décor, and support for community and conservation projects. CSR is considered a component which is informed by the strategy, in addition to other initiatives that work towards the company's 2025 Sustainability Goals. The goals include quantitative targets for responsible consumption of resources, responsible supply chain, biodiversity conservation, responsible spaces, empowerment of women, youth and disadvantaged groups and community awareness. Its CSR projects include Rainforest Restoration Project, EmpowHer Network Launch and Meals that Heal. ⁶⁹



The Cinnamon hotel and resort chain committed to the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge in February 2022⁷⁰ and has a Utility Management System (UMS) that monitors the utility consumption of the group alongside a Groupwide Online Sustainability System that tracks GRI based sustainability indicators. Several properties under the group hold silver and bronze NSTC certification and some properties are also ISO 14001:2015 (Environmental Management System) certified. In addition, Cinnamon Beach Beruwala holds a Gold LEED Certification. ⁷¹

⁶⁷ Flockeo. n.d. "Home." Accessed October 8, 2022. <https://flockeo.com/en/>.

⁶⁸ Jetwing Hotels. 2017. "Jetwing Hotels Receive Carbon Footprint Certification." Accessed September 16, 2022. <https://www.jetwinghotels.com/press/jetwing-hotels-receive-carbon-footprint-certification/#gref>.

⁶⁹ Cinnamon Hotels. n.d. "Cinnamon CSR & Sustainability." Accessed September 25, 2022. <https://www.cinnamonhotels.com/cinnamon-csr-sustainability>

⁷⁰ Daily FT. 2022. "Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts first to partner with UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge." Accessed November 23, 2022. (Accessed 23 Nov. 2022).

⁷¹ John Keells Hotels PLC. n.d. *Sustainability Report 2021-22*. Accessed October 4, 2022. <https://cinnamonweb.blob.core.windows.net/cinnamonweb-prd/brochures/Cinnamon%20Hotels%20%26%20Resorts%20-%20Sustainability%20Report%202021%3A2022.pdf>.

INITIATIVES BY MSMEs IN THE TOURISM SECTOR OF SRI LANKA

Examples of outstanding voluntary sustainability initiatives by three small businesses have been listed below and descriptions are based on information provided by the businesses. This is just a small example of the many steps small businesses are taking to be more sustainable.

- **Kitesurfing Lanka**

Kitesurfing Lanka is a kite surfing camp and accommodation provider in Kalpitiya overlooking a lagoon. Being the pioneer in the country to introduce kitesurfing, the owners have ensured that the business runs hand-in-hand with the community and environment. Under the Kite Green Initiative, the business has implemented several programs targeted at nature conservation and community development.

Being located next to a lagoon, the mangrove planting program is one of the signature projects that the enterprise is running with the involvement of locals and guests. Regular beach clean-ups are also organized to ensure the surrounding beaches are free of litter. Managing their waste in a responsible manner and cutting down on single-use plastics is also a voluntary initiative taken within the premises. Most of the staff are from the local area and all transport services have been outsourced to the local community. The hotel does not own a single vehicle. Community projects like helping the village school with infrastructure facilities and many other projects involving the community have been planned. Moreover, the staff are continuously trained in sustainability initiatives.⁷²

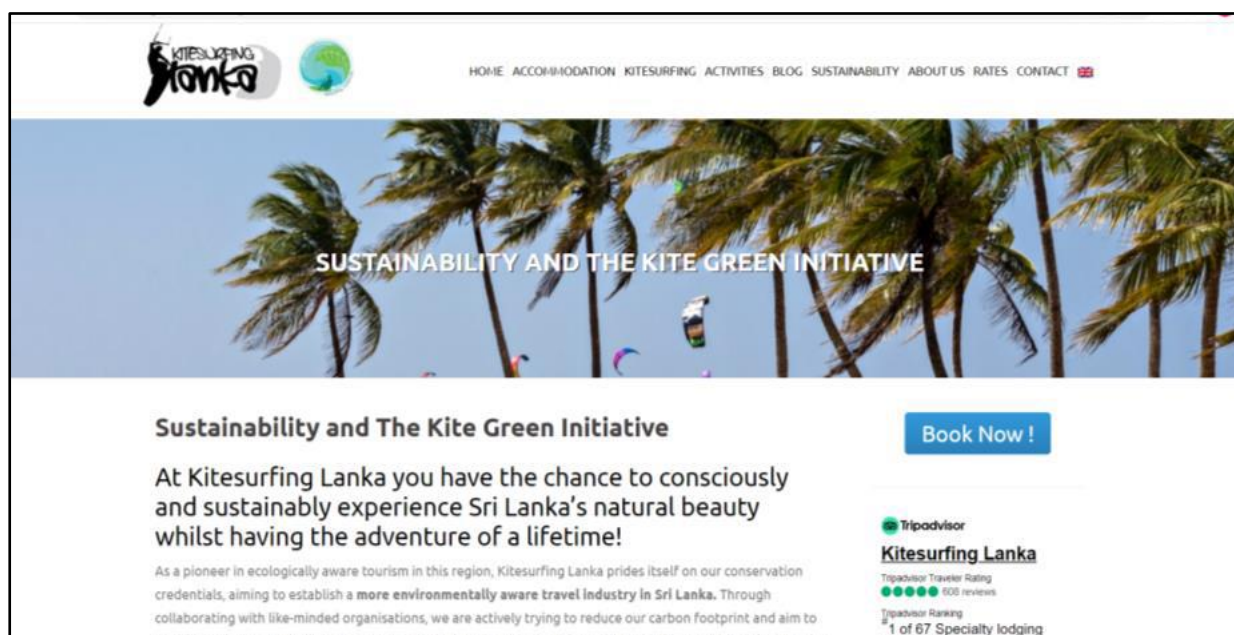


Figure 13. "Sustainability and the Kite Green Initiative". Kite Surfing Lanka⁷³

- **Galkadawala Forest Lodge**

Situated in Habarana, this eco lodge consists of six rooms built on a barren land that was later reforested to create a forest environment. The building itself uses locally sourced material with minimal impact to the surrounding natural environment. Its operations are conducted in an eco-friendly manner, using minimal energy throughout the property and locally sourced food ingredients. The lodge also is sensitive to birdlife within the premises by using dimmed yellow lighting/candlelight

⁷² Kitesurfing Lanka. 2011. "Kitesurfing in Sri Lanka." Kitesurfing Lanka. Accessed September 25, 2022. <https://www.kitesurfinglanka.com/>.

⁷³ Kite Surfing Lanka. "Sustainability." www.kitesurfinglanka.com, September 10, 2018. . Accessed May 25, 2023. <https://www.kitesurfinglanka.com/kite-green-initiative/>.

at night, among many other initiatives. Practicing minimalism, the founder and owner of the lodge believes that a sustainability certification is unnecessary for her business venture as it's already rooted in the middle path as explained in Buddhist teachings that ultimately leads to sustainability.⁷⁴

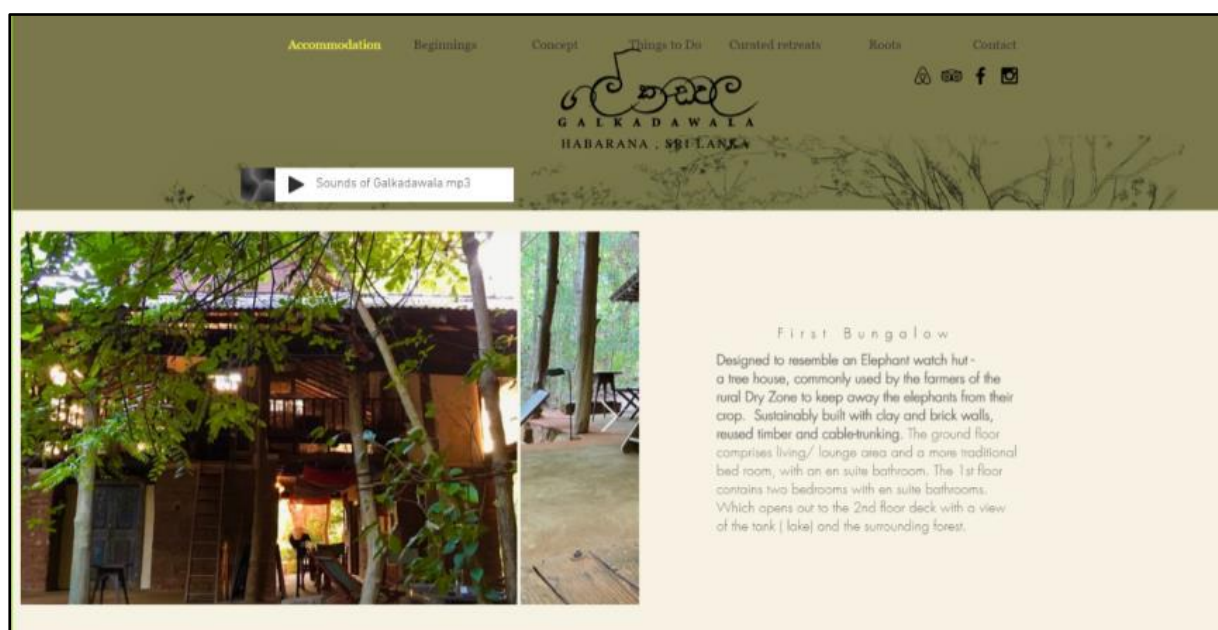


Figure 14. Homepage of Galkadawala Forest Lodge ⁷⁵

- **Back of Beyond**

With the philosophical approach of “touch gently,” Back of Beyond’s main aim is to tread as lightly as possible to create harmony between the community, guests and the environment. The company has a group of five eco-lodge styled properties situated in wilderness areas of the country such as Sigiriya, Yala and Anuradhapura. This ensures low density of buildings, which were built with primarily locally sourced building material such as spear grass, talipot and bamboo. Most of the natural environment is left untouched while rainwater harvesting, organic gardening and use of sustainable sources of energy are commonplace. All properties engage locals from the respective areas in the construction and operational phases. Ancillary services such as tour guiding, jeep rides, etc. are outsourced to the villagers and the company runs several programs for the communities to uplift education amongst the village children.

⁷⁴ Galkadawala Forest Lodge. n.d. “Galkadawala - Concept.” Galkadawala. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://www.galkadawala.com/>.

⁷⁵ Galkadawala Forest Lodge. “Galkadawala, Habarana, Sri Lanka.” Galkadawala. Accessed May 28, 2023. <https://www.galkadawala.com/>.



Figure 15. "About Us". Back of Beyond ⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

Sustainability in tourism ranges from small actions to large corporate social responsibility programs, and from certification to building an entire business on the concept itself. Nevertheless, it is key that all businesses are aware and are consciously working on their sustainability journey, whatever level it may be. At both the international and national levels, sustainability in tourism is a trend that is quickly becoming the norm.

One dark side of the sustainability trend is the concept of "greenwashing"; that is, misinformation on the actual sustainability of businesses, misleading tourists and sometimes having harmful impacts on the community and environment. To avoid this harm, it's critical that tourism service providers distinguish their businesses by going beyond CSR and one-off activities to voluntarily commit to standards and certification. This will not only show transparency and commitment to sustainability to travellers but also give a competitive advantage to businesses.

Likewise, for state agencies tasked with guiding the industry, knowledge of global standards and certification programs is essential to guiding the industry and implementing measures at the national level. The information on the current sustainability certification landscape in Sri Lanka allows the governing institutions to understand the depth of the industry and how it has and can further develop through certification programs to make Sri Lanka a sustainable destination. The information on the many programs conducted by the state and donor organisations also exhibits ways in which sustainable initiatives of MSMEs can be supported and what opportunities may exist for fruitful intervention in the future.

Moving forward, both the state and private sectors will need to collectively work to identify and address gaps at both the local and national levels. This could range from incentive schemes for micro and small businesses to begin their sustainability journey to collaborative action between state agencies to drive the sustainability agenda. It is also vital that the baseline provided by this guide is kept up to date through data collection and maintenance by the national regulator. This will support Sri Lanka in evolving alongside the global landscape while developing its unique brand of sustainable tourism.

⁷⁶ Back of Beyond. "About Us." www.backofbeyond.lk. Accessed May 28, 2023. <https://www.backofbeyond.lk/about/index.html>.

ANNEXES

Annex I. Table of international standards recognized by the GSTC

| Country/ region | Name of standard | Destinations | Hotels | Tour Operators |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------|--------|----------------|
| Global | TourCert | | x | x |
| | Travelife | | x | x |
| | GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Standard | x | x | x |
| | Green Destinations Standard | x | | |
| | EarthCheck Evaluate and Company Standard | x | x | x |
| | Biosphere Standard for Tour Operators | x | x | x |
| | Green Key Criteria | | x | |
| | Green Key Eco-Rating | | x | |
| | Green Globe Standard | | x | |
| | Green Growth 2050 Standard | | x | |
| | Preferred by Nature Sustainable Tourism Standard for Tour Operators and Hotels | | x | x |
| | Green Tourism Active Standard | | x | |
| Argentina | Hoteles más Verdes (AHT) Standard | | x | |
| Asia/Pacific | Asian Ecotourism Standard for Accommodations (AESA) | | x | |
| Australia | Ecotourism Australia's ECO Certification Standard | | x | x |
| Austria | Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism | | x | |
| Chile | Chile Sistema de Distinción en Turismo Sustentable (SERNATUR) | | | x |
| Chile | Chile Sello S (SERNATUR) | | x | |
| Costa Rica | Costa Rica Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) | | x | x |
| Egypt | Green Star Hotel Standard | | x | |
| Europe | European Ecotourism Labeling Standard (EETLS) | | x | |
| Guatemala/C.America/Caribbean | GREAT Green Deal Certification | | x | x |
| India/Nepal/SA | TOFTigers Initiative's Pug mark Eco Certification | | x | x |
| Indonesia | Indonesia Sustainable Tourism Destination Standard | x | | |
| Ireland | Sustainable Travel Ireland | | x | x |
| Japan | Japan Sustainable Tourism Standard for Destinations (JSTS-D) | x | | |
| Japan | Sakura Quality An ESG Practice Standard | | x | |
| Kenya | Ecotourism Kenya Standard for Tourism Accommodation Facilities | | x | |

| | | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|---|
| Korea | Korea Sustainable City Tourism Destination Standard | | | |
| Malta | Eco-Certification Malta Standard | | x | |
| Mauritius | Mauritian Standard on Sustainable Tourism: Blue Oasis | | x | x |
| Norway | Innovation Norway Sustainable Destination Standard | x | | |
| Seychelles | Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL) Criteria | | x | |
| Thailand | Criteria for Thailand's Community-Based Tourism Development | x | | |
| Thailand | Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration | x | | |
| USA | Actively Green Standard | | x | x |
| USA | Adventure Green Alaska Standards | | x | x |
| USA | Mountain IDEAL Destinations Standard | x | | |

Annex 2. Summary of some of the key global certification schemes

| Name of Standard: Travelife Country/region of origin - Europe | | Certification/audit frequency: 2 years | |
|--|-------------------------|--|--|
| Offered Categories | Levels of certification | Description and criteria to be met | Cost (as of July 2022) |
| Tour operators | Travelife Engaged | In the first stage the company commits itself and introduces the appropriate management procedures. An appointed Sustainability Coordinator obtains the personal Travelife certificate and elementary steps and good practices are implemented. During this 'engagement' stage the company itself is not rewarded yet. | Small companies (< 25 full time employees), € 200 per year. Medium companies (≥ 25 full time employees), € 300 per year. Large companies (> 100 full time employees), € 400 per year. |
| | Travelife Partner | Based on a sustainability report and compliance with basic requirements assessed by Travelife, the company will reach the Travelife Partner status. This status enables the company to communicate its sustainability commitment and achievements with the support of the Travelife Partner logo. The company is now qualified to work step-by-step towards the final stage. | Small companies (< 25 full time employees), € 200 per year. Medium companies (≥ 25 full time employees), € 300 per year. Large companies (> 100 full time employees), € 400 per year. |
| | Travelife Certified | In the third stage, the company's compliance with the international Travelife Certified standard for travel companies will be evaluated by an independent auditor based on an on-site assessment. The requirements are stronger than the basic requirements of the Travelife Partner standard and are in line with GSTC Criteria and formally recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. Successfully completing the third stage will be awarded with the Travelife Certified status. | Depends on the country and the size of the company. Ranges between € 400 for smaller and € 2000 per year for very large companies. Includes the costs of an independent auditor. |
| Accommodation | | Three sets of standards inclusive of 163 criteria to be met per size of the enterprise (1-micro, 2-small, 3-medium, large and mega) | Year 2 to subsequent years Micro (Maximum nightly occupancy between 1 and 30 guests) €640- €620 Small (Maximum nightly occupancy between 31 and 160 guests) €860- €830 Medium & Large (Maximum nightly occupancy between 161 and 1,000 guests) €1,490- €1,450 Mega (Maximum nightly occupancy 1,001+ guests) €2,150- €2,100 |
| Name of Standard: TourCert Country/region of origin - Germany | | Certification/audit frequency: Yearly | |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Tour Operators and other Tourism Businesses | TourCert Qualified (TourCert Check) | It's the first step that has been developed in obtaining the TourCert qualification. The qualification with TourCert Qualified is valid for one year. A requirement for continuation is the regular updating of the self-check and the improvement program me. There are mandatory criteria that a company should fulfill in order to begin the process. | Year 1 to subsequent years <10 employees-€250-€225 11-50 employees €350-€325 >51 employees €450-€425 |
| | TourCert Certified | Central features of certification are its long-term orientation and a focus on the process. For the implementation, the TourCert system relies on the empowerment of participating companies and on the involvement of all partners along the supply chain. | Introductory cost - €1200-€6000, Audit and Certification - €900-€2250, Annual costs - €750-€2150 |
| Accommodation | TourCert Qualified (TourCert Check) | It's the first step that has been developed in obtaining the TourCert qualification. The qualification with TourCert Qualified is valid for one year. A requirement for continuation is the regular updating of the self-check and the improvement program. There are mandatory criteria that a company should fulfill in order to begin the process. | Year 1 to subsequent years <34 guestrooms-€250-€225 35-100 guestrooms €350-€325 >101 guestrooms €450-€425 |
| | TourCert Certified | Central features of certification are its long-term orientation and a focus on the process. For the implementation, the TourCert system relies on the empowerment of participating companies and on the involvement of all partners along the supply chain. | Introductory cost - €3200-€8750, Audit and Certification - €1350-€2700, Annual costs - €750-€2900 |
| Destinations | TourCert Certified | Central features of certification are its long-term orientation and a focus on the process. For the implementation, the TourCert system relies on the empowerment of participating companies and on the involvement of all partners along the supply chain. | Introductory cost - €19350, Audit and Certification - €4500, Annual costs - €4050 |
| Name of Standard: EarthCheck Country/region of origin - Australia (Standards need to be purchased for viewing) | | Certification/audit frequency: For hotels and tour operators-Frequency of audits determined by level of impact. High Impact = Yearly, Low Impact = Every 2 years. For hotels-Yearly | |
| Hotels and Tour Operators | EarthCheck Certified | The impact of the organization is measured first through a self-assessment checklist. Subsequent to this step only can the company pursue to comply with the standard that is based on 10 key performance areas. | Membership Fee: AUD\$400 per member, per month Independent Audit Fees: AUD\$2,420 1st Day, AUD\$1,650 subsequent days |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Destinations | EarthCheck Sustainable Destination (<i>Consistent commitment to Certification offers Destinations Silver Status (1-4 years), Gold Status (5-9 years), Platinum Status (10-14 years) or Master Status (15 years and over)</i>) | Twelve Key Performance Areas (KPAs) are addressed in this Standard. The Standard requires participating Destinations to measure performance using quantitative benchmarking indicators. The Standard provides the opportunity for a Destination to identify and establish supplementary indicators. These can be selected by the community to assist benchmarking and measurement of locally appropriate key performance areas. | Annual Membership Fee: Small Destination: AUD\$10,000 (150,000, 500,000 in population) Independent Audit Fees: AUD\$2,420 1st Day, AUD\$1,650 subsequent days |
| Name of Standard: Green Globe Country/region of origin - USA | | Certification/audit frequency: Alternate years | |
| Attraction, Business (Supply Chain), Congress Centre, Meeting Venues, Cruise Ships (River & Ocean), Golf Course, Hotel & Resort, Organisation, Restaurant, Spa, Health Centre, Transportation (Mass Transportation, Bus Company, Limousine Service, Car Rental), Travel Industry (Tour Operators, Destination Management Company, Meeting & Incentive Industry) | Certified Member | Certified Member status is awarded to Green Globe members that are certified against all requisite criteria within the Green Globe Standard for Travel & Tourism (or their sectorial Standard). Certification is confirmed annually when more than 50% of the criteria's related indicators are achieved. Green Globe certification criteria are organized into key themes: Sustainable Management; Social/Economic; Cultural Heritage; Environment. Certified Members must also complete independent and mandatory onsite and desktop audits in alternate years. | Hotel & Resort-per year 0-19 rooms (US\$750.00 / € 650.00) 20-59 rooms (US\$1,450.00 / € 1,200.00) 60-99 rooms (US\$2,500.00 / € 2,000.00) 100-249 rooms (US\$3,800.00 / € 2,900.00) 250 rooms and up (US\$5,000.00 / € 4,500.00) Business or Organization-per year 1 to 9 employees (US\$750.00 / € 650.00) 10 - 19 employees (US\$1,450.00 / € 1,200.00) 20 - 69 employees (US\$2,500.00 / € 2,000.00) 70 - 119 employees (US\$3,800.00 / € 2,900.00) 120 employees and up (US\$5,000.00 / € 4,500.00) |
| | Gold Member | Gold Member status is awarded to members that are certified for 5 consecutive years. This prestigious designation is only possible when a member meets all requisite criteria within the Green Globe Standard for Travel & Tourism (or their sectorial Standard) and have completed the independent and mandatory onsite and desktop audits in alternating years. Gold membership is not automatically granted upon completion of these requirements, but awarded after a review of overall member performance during the 5-year period to ensure that continuous effort has been made in key themes | |
| | Platinum Member | Platinum Member status is awarded to members that are certified for 10 consecutive years. This is the highest-level designation offered by Green Globe and is only possible when a member meets all requisite criteria within the Green Globe Standard for Travel & Tourism (or their sectorial Standard) and have complete the independent and mandatory onsite and desktop audits in alternating years. Platinum membership is not automatically granted upon completion of these base requirements but is awarded after a review of overall member performance during the 10-year period to ensure continuous efforts have been made in the key themes. | |

| Name of Standard: Green Destinations Certification Country/region of origin – The Netherlands | | Certification/audit frequency: Alternate years * The Green Destination online assessment and reporting system is available to countries, regions, sustainability certification schemes and development projects to brand as their own (“powered by Green Destinations”) | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Destinations: Municipalities, cities, islands, regions, protected areas and private destinations (e.g.: game reserves, private islands, resorts, eco lodges) | Destination Certification | The standard is recognized by GSTC and acts as a tool to measure, monitor and develop sustainability in destinations. 84 criteria (75 mandatory, 9 optional) covering 6 major themes (Destination Management, Nature & Scenery, Environment & Climate, Culture & Tradition, Social Well-being, Business & Communication). Certification valid for 3 years | From € 5.250 (depending on destination size) * • Excluding audit costs (depending on size) • Including GD Training for DMO Staff |
| Businesses | Good Travel Seal | Consists of 57 general criteria which cover 67% of the GSTC Industry Criteria. The Good Travel Seal + also provides the option of 14 additional criteria for businesses to strive to higher standards of sustainability. Certification is valid for 2 years. | Varies according to the number of employees or size of establishment |
| Tourism related businesses | Good Travel Scan | Targeting SMEs, the tool uses 10 criteria to measure the sustainability of small businesses in a simple manner. Certification is valid for 2 years. | Not available online |
| | Climate Action Standard Recognition | Criteria is based on the four themes of the Good Travel Seal, namely: Energy and climate; purchasing, sales, F&B; waste and pollution. Certification is valid for 2 years. | Varies according to the number of employees or size of establishment |
| Name of Standard: Biosphere Sustainable Certification Country/region of origin - Europe/Spain | | Certification/audit frequency: Subsequent to the first yearly audit, random audit to be held for non-destinations and yearly for destinations | |
| Accommodation – Hotels and Apartment hotels, Holiday rentals, Hostels, and Rural accommodation, Tourist sites and centers – Museums, Interpretation centers, Active and adventure tourism – Active sports tourism, Active nature tourism, Sport and | Committed Badge | Upon joining Biosphere Sustainable and starting to work on a sustainability plan, a Committed badge can be earned. It recognizes commitment to this first step towards sustainability. As work progresses with the Biosphere plan, assigning activities and evidencing them, the next step will be moving towards being audited and earning the Certified badge | Depends on the plan chosen and agreed upon |

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|---|
| wellness – Spas, Marinas, Ski resorts, Golf Amusement parks – Amusement and water parks, Aquariums and zoos, Events – Convention centers, Events, Transport – Car rental, Mobility, Restaurants – Bars and coffee shops, Restaurants (including cafeterias, catering services), Other services – Tour operators (including tour operators, travel agencies, tourism offices), Shopping (including shops and stores) | Biosphere Certified | Biosphere develops a “private, voluntary and independent certification system” in consultation with the client. | Depends on the plan chosen and agreed upon |
| Destinations | Biosphere Certified Destination | Biosphere Destination is the distinction that recognizes the efforts made by a Destination in its public tourism policies, once they are aligned with the 2030 Agenda and after having established an action plan for continuous improvement. | The price of this certification, both for the first year and annual renewals, depends on the number of inhabitants of the destination, as well as the services that the destination wishes to contract. |
| | Biosphere Golden Destination | Being a Biosphere Gold destination means going one step further, encouraging the business community to make sustainable efforts, carrying out joint communication actions between the administration and companies and having access to real-time information on the global state of sustainability of the destination and its business community. | |
| | Biosphere Platinum Destination | In order to become a Biosphere Platinum destination, in addition to encouraging companies to make sustainable efforts, the destination's administration itself must ensure that it promotes activities that make its participation in the sustainable commitment acquired by the destination effective. In addition to being able to visualize and monitor the overall state of sustainability of the territory and its business fabric, these destinations exercise greater control over the sustainable activities and actions carried out by their companies. | |

Annex 3. Tourism related ISO standards adopted by the SLSI

| | SLS Number | Year | ISO Standard Numbers | Title | Price (LKR) |
|----|---------------|------|----------------------|---|-------------|
| 1 | SLS ISO 14785 | 2021 | ISO 14785:2014 | Tourist information offices - tourist information and reception services - requirements | 4400 |
| 2 | SLS ISO 18065 | 2021 | ISO 18065:2021 | Tourism and related services — tourist services for public use provided by natural protected areas authorities — requirements | 6700 |
| 3 | SLS ISO 17680 | 2022 | ISO 17680:2015 | Tourism and related services - thalassotherapy - service requirements | 9000 |
| 4 | SLS ISO 21103 | 2022 | ISO 21103:2014 | Adventure tourism — information for participants | 2900 |
| 5 | SLS ISO 22876 | 2022 | ISO 22876:2021 | Tourism and related services — bareboat charter supplementary charter services and experiences | 4400 |
| 6 | SLS ISO 21620 | 2022 | ISO 21620:2021 | Tourism and related services-heritage hotels – equipment and service requirements | 6700 |
| 7 | SLS ISO 21621 | 2022 | ISO 21621:2021 | Tourism and related services traditional restaurants- visual aspects, decorations and services | 6700 |
| 8 | SLS ISO 21406 | 2022 | ISO 21406:2020 | Tourism and related services yacht harbours – essential requirements for luxury harbours | 9000 |
| 9 | SLS ISO 21902 | 2022 | ISO 21902:2021 | Tourism and related services accessible tourism for all – requirements and recommendations | 15000 |
| 10 | SLS ISO 23405 | 2022 | ISO 23405:2022 | Tourism and related services sustainable tourism – principles, vocabulary and model | 4400 |
| 11 | SLS 1709 | 2021 | ISO 13293:2012 | Recreational diving services- requirements for gas blender training programmes | 4400 |
| 12 | SLS 1710 | 2021 | ISO 20410:2017 | Tourism and related services - bareboat charter - minimum service and equipment requirements | 6700 |
| 13 | SLS 1711 | 2021 | ISO 20611:2018 | Adventure tourism - good practices for sustainability - requirements and recommendations | 4400 |
| 14 | SLS 1712 | 2021 | ISO 21102:2020 | Adventure tourism - leaders - personnel competence | 4400 |
| 15 | SLS 1713 | 2021 | ISO 24803:2017 | Recreational diving services- requirements for recreational diving providers | 4400 |
| 16 | SLS 1714 | 2021 | ISO 13970:2011 | Recreational diving services - Requirements for the training of recreational snorkeling guides | 4400 |

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------|------|------------------|---|-------|
| 17 | SLS 1715 | 2021 | ISO 13687-3:2017 | Tourism and related services - Yacht harbours - Minimum requirements for high service level harbours | 4400 |
| 18 | SLS 1716 | 2021 | ISO 13810:2015 | Tourism services - industrial tourism - service provision | 6700 |
| 19 | SLS 1717 | 2021 | ISO 17679:2016 | Tourism and related services - wellness spa – service requirements | 6700 |
| 20 | SLS ISO 13009 | 2021 | ISO 13009:2015 | Tourism and related services - requirements and recommendations for beach operation | 10500 |
| 21 | SLS ISO TS 13811 | 2021 | ISO 13811:2015 | Tourism and related services - guidelines on developing Environmental specifications for accommodation Establishments | 4400 |
| 22 | SLS ISO 22483 | 2021 | ISO 22483:2020 | Tourism and related services - hotels - service requirements | 10500 |
| 23 | SLS ISO 22525 | 2021 | ISO 22525:2020 | Tourism and related services - medical tourism - service requirements | 9000 |
| 24 | SLS ISO 13289 | 2021 | ISO 13289:2011 | Recreational diving services - requirements for the conduct of snorkeling excursions | 4400 |
| 25 | SLS ISO 24801-2 | 2022 | ISO 24801-2:2014 | Recreational diving services - requirements for the training of recreational scuba divers - autonomous diver | 6700 |
| 26 | SLS ISO 24801-3 | 2021 | ISO 24801-3:2014 | Recreational diving services - requirements for the training of recreational scuba divers - dive leader | 4400 |
| 27 | SLS ISO 11121 | 2021 | ISO 11121:2017 | Recreational diving services - requirements for introductory programmes to scuba diving | 4400 |
| 28 | SLS ISO 18513 | 2021 | ISO 18513:2021 | Tourism services - hotels and other types of tourism accommodation – vocabulary | 2900 |
| 29 | SLS ISO 21101 | 2017 | ISO 21101:2014 | Adventure tourism safety management systems requirements | 9000 |
| 30 | SLS ISO 21426 | 2021 | ISO 21426:2018 | Tourism and related services - medical spas - service requirements | 10500 |
| 31 | SLS ISO 24801-1 | 2021 | ISO 24801-1:2014 | Recreational diving services- requirements for the training of scuba divers part 1: level 1-supervised diver | 4400 |
| 32 | SLS ISO 24802-1 | 2021 | ISO 24802-1:2014 | Recreational diving services - requirements for the training of scuba instructors Part 1: level 1 | 4400 |
| 33 | SLS ISO 24802-2 | 2021 | ISO 24802-2:2014 | Recreational diving services requirements for the training of scuba instructors Part 2: level 2 | 4400 |

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------|------|-------------------|--|-------|
| 34 | SLS ISO 21401 | 2021 | ISO 21401:2018 | Tourism and related services – sustainability management system for accommodation establishments - requirements | 10500 |
| 35 | SLS ISO 21417 | 2021 | ISO 21417:2019 | Recreational diving services – requirements for training on environmental awareness for recreational divers | 4400 |
| 36 | SLS ISO 21416 | 2021 | ISO 21416:2019 | Recreational diving services – requirements and guidance on environmentally sustainable practices in recreational diving | 4400 |
| 37 | SLS ISO PAS 5643 | 2021 | ISO PAS 5643:2021 | Tourism and related services – requirements and guidelines to reduce the spread of covid-19 in the tourism industry | 12000 |
| 38 | SLS ISO 11107 | 2022 | ISO 11107:2009 | Recreational diving services — requirements for training programmes on enriched air nitrox (ean) diving | 2900 |
| 39 | SLS ISO 13687-1 | 2022 | ISO 13687-1:2017 | Tourism and related services — yacht harbours — minimum requirements for basic service level harbours | 6700 |
| 40 | SLS ISO 13687-2 | 2022 | ISO 13687-2:2017 | Tourism and related services — yacht harbours — minimum requirements for intermediate service level harbours | 4400 |

Annex 4. List of certified tourist businesses in Sri Lanka (available publicly online)

| Certification name | Sub-sector | Enterprise name |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Travelife for tour operators | Travelife Certified | Go Vacation Lanka Co. (Pvt) Ltd. |
| | | Aitken Spence Travel (Pvt) Ltd. |
| | | Khiri Travel Sri Lanka |
| | Travelife Partner | Travel Design by CDC |
| | | Jetwing Eco Holidays |
| | | Sri Lanka Tailormade |
| | | Jetwing Adventures |
| | | Jetwing Events |
| | | Eco Team (Pvt) Ltd |
| | | Wayfarers Limited |
| | | Paradise Holidays |
| | | Sunway International (Pvt) Ltd / Sunway Holidays |
| | | Heritage Expeditiones (Pvt) Ltd. |
| | | Connaissance De Ceylan |
| | | The Fabulous Getaway |
| | | Pan Lanka Travels & Tours (Pvt) Ltd |
| | | Jetwing Travels (Pvt) Ltd |
| Travelife for Accommodation | | The Wallawwa, Kotugoda |
| | | Nine Skies, Ella |
| | | Goatfell, Nuwara Eliya |
| | | The Fort Bazaar, Galle |
| | | Camellia Hills, Hatton |
| | | Lunuganga, Bentota |
| | | Kumu Beach, Balapitiya |
| TourCert Accommodation | TourCert Qualified | Singharaja Garden AGRO & ECO-Lodge |
| | | Thaulle Resort |
| TourCert Tour operator | TourCert Qualified | Walkers Tours |
| | | Whittalls Travels |
| EarthCheck | Accommodation – Vacation Rental - Platinum certified | Vivanta Colombo Airport Garden |
| | | Taj Samudra, Colombo |
| | | Taj Bentota Resort and Spa |
| | Accommodation – Business Hotel -Platinum certified | Taj Samudra, Colombo |
| Green Globe | Gold Member | Cinnamon Bey Beruwala |
| | | Cinnamon Lodge Habarana |
| | Certified Member | Trinco Blu by Cinnamon |
| | | Hikka Tranz by Cinnamon |

| | | |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| | | Habarana Village by Cinnamon |
| | | Cinnamon Citadel Kandy |
| | | Cinnamon Wild Yala |
| | | Mövenpick Hotel Colombo |
| | | The Fortress Resort and Spa |

Annex 5. Number of NSTC certified Tourist Accommodation Providers in Sri Lanka

| Platinum Certified | Heritage Kandamala |
|------------------------------|---|
| Gold certified | Jetwing Light House, Galle |
| | Heritage Tea Factory, Nuwara Eliya |
| | The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya |
| | Anantara Peace Haven, Tangalle |
| Silver certified | Cinnamon Wild, Yala |
| | Jetwing Yala |
| | Barberyn Ayurveda Resorts, Weligama |
| | Cinnamon Lodge, Habarana |
| | Habarana Village by Cinnamon |
| | Hikka Tranz by Cinnamon |
| | Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy |
| Bronze certified | Amaya Hills, Kandy |
| | Jetwing Blue, Negombo |
| | Eden Resort & Spa, Beruwala |
| | Hotel Blackpool, Nuwara Eliya |
| | Jetwing Sea, Negombo |
| | The Fortress, Koggala |
| | Hotel Movenpick, Colombo |
| | Heritage Ayurveda Maha Gedara, Beruwala |
| | Cinnamon Bay, Beruwala |
| | Trinco Blu by Cinnamon |
| | Jetwing Vil Uyana, Sigiriya |
| | Jetwing Lake, Dambulla |
| | Jetwing Beach, Negombo |
| | Goldi Sands Hotel, Negombo |
| | Heritage Ahungalla |
| | Taj Bentota Resort & Spa |
| | Shangri la, Hambantota |
| | Aliya Resort & Spa, Sigiriya |
| | The Hilton, Colombo |
| Certificate of participation | Paradise Beach, Negombo |
| | Villa Safari Weerawila |
| | Hotel Sapphire Colombo |