

Global sustainable tourism: criteria for destinations report sample

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Sustainable tourism and responsible tourism has been a growing industry in recent years, considering the growing environmental problems that are plaguing the world. Sustainable tourism is concerned with environmentally-responsible practices and having as little impact on the local environment and local culture as possible (Pineda and Brebbia, 2004). The Global Sustainable Tourism Council is one of the organizational bodies that is responsible for creating and defining criteria for sustainable tourism. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council has a number of objectives when it comes to sustainable tourism. Notably, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2013) notes that its objectives are to create universal principles for sustainable tourism in a common language, to make destinations sustainable, to promote market access, to increase knowledge, and to create an accreditation process that will provide tourists and programs with the information that they need to ensure that they are participating in sustainable tourism activities.

All of these objectives work in conjunction to form a structure that allows for a culture of sustainable tourism. However, on its face, the objective that seems to be the most important is the development of sustainable destinations. This is because the problem of sustainable tourism is an immediate problem, and without immediate rectification of the problems that the tourism industry causes in tourist destinations, no amount of backtracking will be able to undo the harm that has been done to the local environment and culture. Large, overarching groups as well as niche and geographical-location-specific organizations are necessary for the creation of a sustainable tourism culture in locations where tourism is causing serious

harm to the local culture and environment (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2013). According to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2013), “ Destination stewardship is a process by which local communities, governmental agencies, NGOs, and the tourism industry take a multi-stakeholder approach to maintaining the cultural, environmental, economic, and aesthetic integrity of their country, region, or town.” This multilevel integrative approach to destination stewardship is fundamentally important for preserving existing environments and cultures.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2013) suggests that international standards regarding sustainable tourism programs and sustainable tourism destinations are fundamentally important to the success or failure of the sustainable tourism industry as a whole. Without international standards, there can be no true measure of whether or not a program marketed as a sustainable tourism program is truly sustainable tourism; like the definition of “ organic,” the definition of “ sustainable” may become ephemeral and flimsy (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2013).

Adopting standards will be good for companies and destinations as a whole. Because many tourist destinations are known for either their environmental or cultural treasures, these treasures must be protected. Without protection, cultural and environmental tourist locations begin to erode and break down, subject to the wear and tear of abuse that so many tourists inflict upon fragile sites. In addition, having an accreditation for sustainable tourism can be a selling point for many people who wish to see certain sites, but do not wish to cause harm to these already-fragile locations. The criteria that the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2013) are suggesting as appropriate are

designed to be flexible, so they are not overarching or too broad; they are designed to fit nearly any destination that caters to nearly any industry. Any increase in restriction and change in structure within an industry is going to come with an initial cost. However, this does not necessarily mean that the initial cost-- the cost of cleanup of a location, for example-- will not pay off in spades at a later date. Certain locations may require cleanup to conform to the standards and criteria suggested by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2013), but these changes will, overall, have a positive economic impact on the location and the tourism programs in these locations in the long run. In addition, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2013) considers it part of their task to provide the tools necessary to make appropriate changes to locations that wish to conform to accreditation standards.

Supporting local markets and fair trade is one of the long-term solutions that will have a lasting impact on the state of the environment and the world (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2013). Building up local markets and supporting local entrepreneurs is fundamental to creating a strong local economy that is concerned with the state of the environment and the tourism industry in a location. Creating structures that support local economies and local businesses rather than large, international conglomerates and corporations can also protect the environment; local foods and supplies do not need to be shipped into a location from far away, thus creating less of a carbon footprint.

There are many different objectives that are important when it comes to creating a sustainable tourism industry in a particular location, and many of

these objectives are going to be location-specific. However, providing clean drinking water, supporting the community, and building up the local markets and businesses are all excellent first steps when considering sustainable tourism as a project in a particular location or community.

References

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