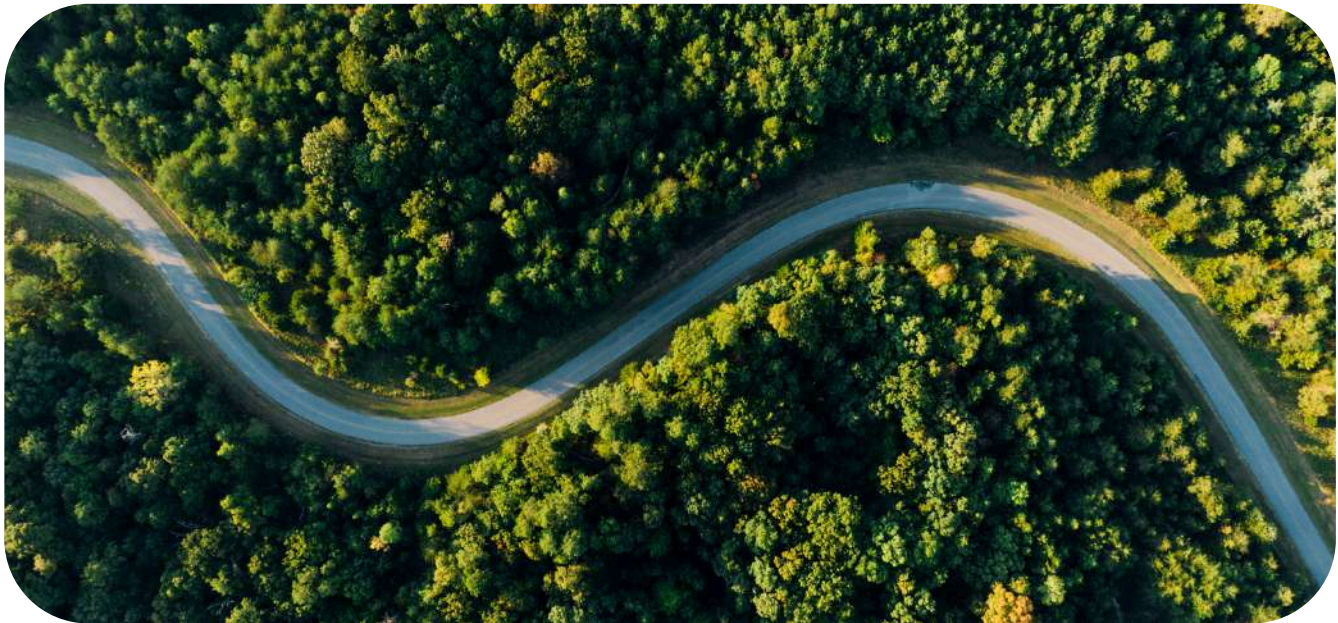


Global Sustainable Tourism Council Annual Report 2024



April 2025

Contents



01 Message from our
Chair and CEO

02 2024 in Numbers

03 Who We Are

- About the GSTC
- Our Strategy
- What We Do
- Our Governance

04 Our Performance
in 2024

- GSTC Standards
- GSTC Membership
- GSTC Sustainable
Tourism Training Program
- Destinations Program
- Assurance
- Working Group Activities
- ISEAL Landscape
- Market Access Program

05 Conferences

06 GSTC-Committed

07 GSTC Sponsors

08 Zero Tolerance
Policy

09 Our Finances

10 Future Directions

Message from our Chair

It is with great pride that we present the GSTC's 2024 Annual Report, a testament to our solid commitment to transparency, accountability, and the promotion of sustainable tourism. Over the past year, we have continued to advance sustainable practices in the travel and tourism sector, addressing emerging challenges while fostering collaboration across the industry.

The growing demand for sustainable travel highlights a positive shift in consumer awareness, yet it also underscores the urgency of addressing systemic challenges. Balancing economic growth with environmental and cultural preservation remains a critical hurdle, requiring bold leadership and collective action.

Equally important is the call for inclusivity and equity. Tourism cannot be truly sustainable if it leaves behind local communities or marginalizes voices that deserve representation. The industry must prioritize models that distribute benefits fairly, celebrate cultural diversity, and empower those who have traditionally been excluded from decision-making processes. Furthermore, as the world grapples with escalating climate impacts, political instability, and technological disruption, tourism must evolve to become more adaptable and resilient.

This transformation calls for embracing innovation, strengthening partnerships, and weaving sustainability into every strand of tourism operations. Each thread—sustainable management, equitable socioeconomic benefits, respect for cultural heritage, and the protection of our environment—is essential in crafting a resilient and inclusive industry. By skillfully intertwining efforts to address the responsible consumption of resources, reduce pollution, conserve biodiversity, and safeguard landscapes, we create a fabric of tourism that is both strong and adaptable. Together, through collaboration and intentional action, we can weave a vibrant tapestry that not only supports but enriches destinations and communities, standing resilient against the challenges of today and inspiring a more sustainable and equitable future for generations to come.

Luigi Cabrini

Chair, Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)



Message from our CEO

As we present the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's 2024 Annual Report, I am filled with a deep sense of satisfaction and optimism about the journey we have undertaken and the road that lies ahead. Our sincere and heartfelt commitment to sustainability has guided each step we have taken, paving the way for a future where tourism thrives responsibly and inclusively.

Since GSTC's inception, our purpose—to drive transformative change by fostering the understanding, adoption, and demand for sustainable tourism practices—continues to shape every aspect of our work. As we look toward the future, the urgency of embedding sustainability at the core of tourism has never been more evident. Climate change, socio-economic inequities, and cultural preservation challenges demand innovative and collaborative solutions. GSTC's focus remains on empowering destinations, businesses, and travelers to align their practices with the GSTC Standards, the global standards for sustainability in travel and tourism, serving as the universal language for sustainability in the sector.

Moving forward, it is essential that we continue walking the path of sustainability together, hand in hand with our dedicated members, sponsors, partners, accredited certification bodies, and the broader tourism community. Each of these stakeholders plays a vital role in advancing our shared mission, weaving their unique contributions into the fabric of a more sustainable future.

So many of our accomplishments and impacts come from volunteer efforts of people around the globe that recognize the value of universal standards in communicating, acting, and inspiring more sustainable practices. We thank those countless people from the bottom of our hearts. By walking this path together, we can ensure that tourism becomes an enduring force for positive change—uplifting destinations, empowering communities, and safeguarding the beauty and diversity of our planet for generations to come.

Randy Durband

Chief Executive Officer, Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)



2024 Year Review

The year 2024 has been a landmark year for the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, marked by **significant advancements in sustainability standards, global collaborations, and policy enhancements**. As the movement for responsible tourism gains momentum, GSTC has continued to lead the way in shaping a more sustainable future for travel and tourism worldwide.

A year of....

Click on the links to read more.



Two New Standard Sets

This year, we launched two new sets of GSTC Standards: the [GSTC MICE Standard](#), designed to elevate sustainability in the Venues, Event Organizers, and Events & Exhibitions sector, and the [GSTC Attraction Standard](#), aimed at fostering responsible management and operation of visitor attractions such as theme parks, museums, national parks, etc. These additions strengthen our globally recognized framework for sustainable tourism development.



IAF Membership and IACC Membership

We achieved significant progress in assurance, highlighted by our two key memberships: being an [Association Member of the International Accreditation Forum \(IAF\)](#) and an [Associate Member of the Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation \(IAAC\)](#).



Zero Tolerance Policy

Our commitment to integrity and ethical practices was further reinforced with the introduction of a [Zero Tolerance Policy](#), a pivotal step to address critical issues impacting the tourism industry, including child labor, human exploitation, discrimination, wildlife abuse, and the unnecessary use of single-use plastics.



GSTC2024 Sweden and GSTC2024 Singapore

This year marked a significant milestone for GSTC as we hosted two global conferences instead of one, expanding our reach and impact. The [GSTC Global Conference in Sweden](#) and the [GSTC Global Conference in Singapore](#) brought together industry leaders globally for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and advancing best practices in sustainable tourism worldwide.



LATAM and the Caribbean

On the global stage, we successfully hosted the [GSTC Latin American and Caribbean Summit](#) in Santa Marta, Colombia, bringing together industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to drive meaningful conversations and action on sustainable tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Yuluca Alliance (AYLAC)

[AYLAC](#) was launched, which marks a significant step forward in addressing sustainable tourism's unique challenges and opportunities within Latin America and the Caribbean. The Alliance is spearheaded by an Executive Committee comprising representatives from the region's nations, all of whom are committed to working together as a unified continent.



New Market Access Program Partner: Example Trip.com

Collaboration with industry leaders remains central to our mission, and 2024 saw major partnerships take shape. [Trip.com's entry into the GSTC Market Access Program](#) is a testament to the growing influence of sustainability in mainstream travel and the commitment of global travel platforms to responsible tourism.



Platinum and Gold Sponsors

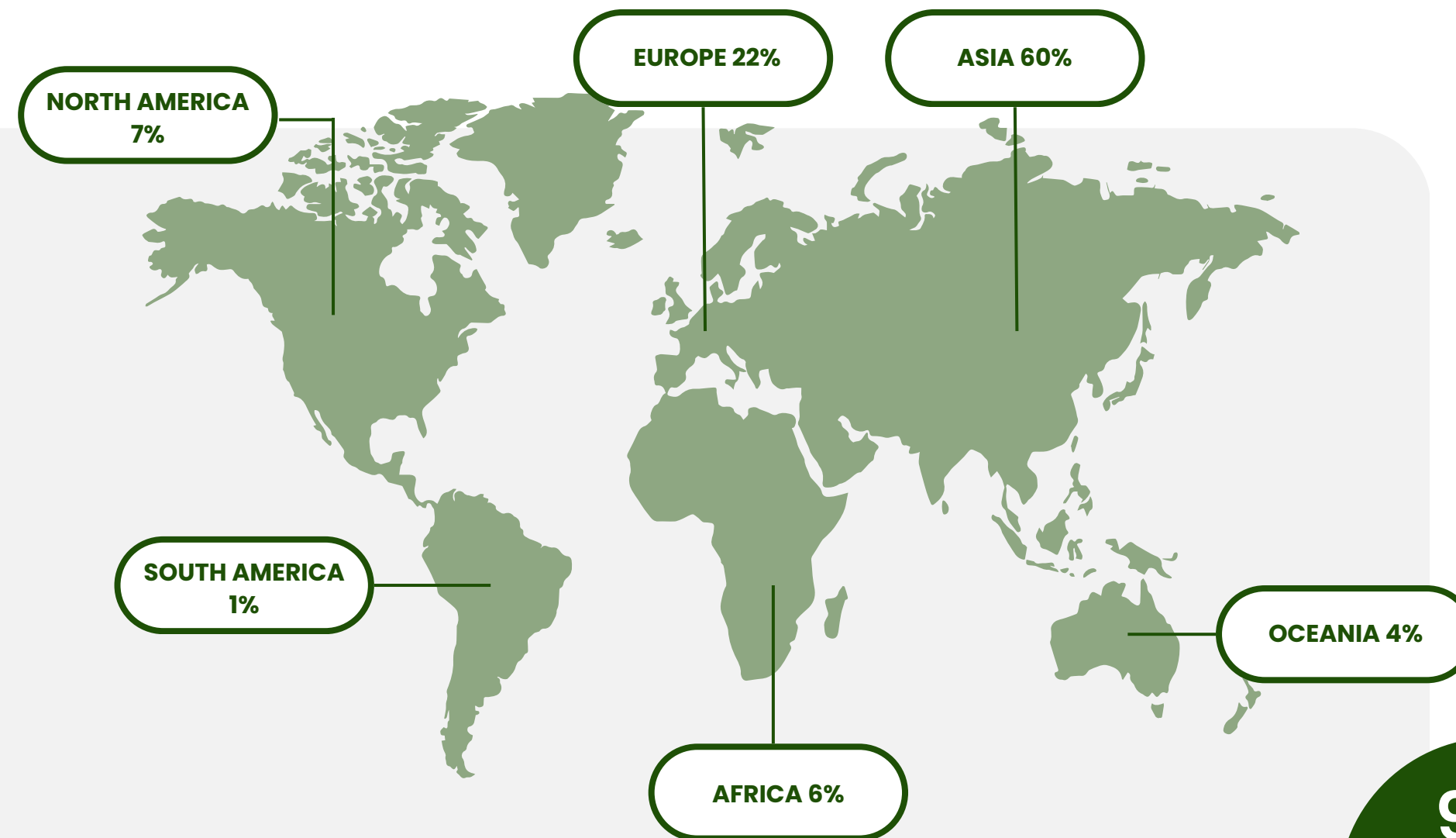
Reflecting on this year's achievements, we extend our gratitude to our Gold Sponsors, Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA), Visit Sweden and Tourism Fiji, with an special mention to Traveloka, GSTC's Platinum Sponsor, whose unwavering support strengthens our ability to drive change. With their continued engagement, we look forward to shaping an even more sustainable future for the travel and tourism industry.

02

2024 in Numbers

2024 In Numbers

Sustainable Tourism Training Program



The geographical scope of public training participants for 2024

2,365

participants in courses in 2024

87.4%

Sustainable Tourism Course participants

7.1%

Tour Operator Course participants

3.9%

Sustainable Hospitality Course participants

1.6%

Accesible & Inclusive Travel Course participants

73

courses done in 2024

49

authorized trainers in 2024

65

Sustainable Tourism Courses

4

Accesible & Inclusive Travel Courses

4

Sustainable Hospitality Courses

1

Tour Operator Course

99%

participants were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the courses in 2024*

81%

attendees passing the exam in 2024

GSTC Standards

4

GSTC Standard sets
in 2024

GSTC Standards, formerly known as GSTC Criteria.

GSTC-Recognized

21

GSTC-Recognized
Standards for
Tour Operators

52

GSTC-Recognized
Standards for Hotels

1

GSTC-Recognized
Standards for
MICE

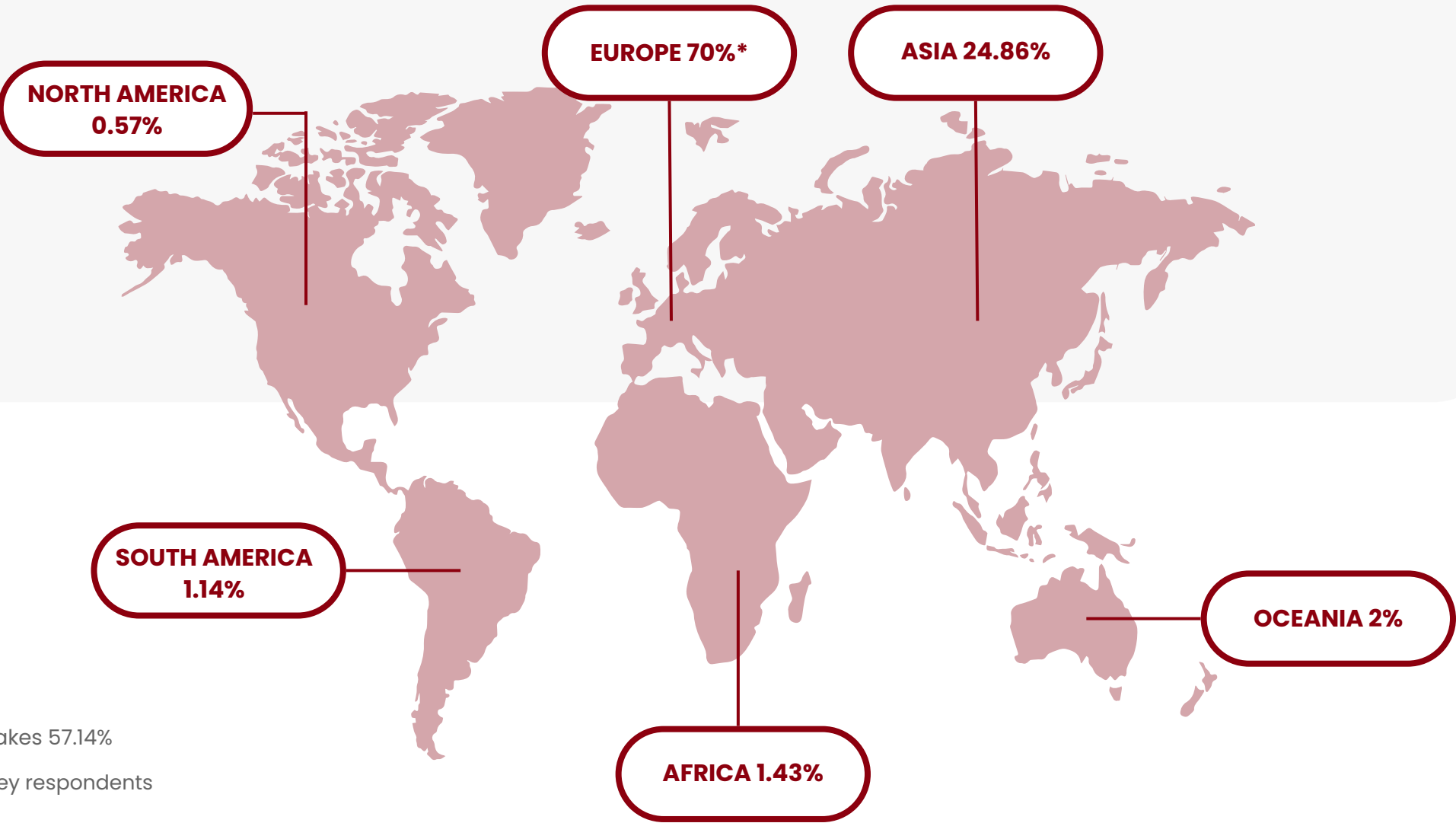
16

GSTC-Recognized
Standards for
Destinations

Note: Number of GSTC-Recognized Standards
that were recorgnized until 2024.

The geographical scope of participants for 2024

Auditor Training



*Türkiye takes 57.14%
**128 survey respondents

350

participants in
auditor training
in 2024

12

courses executed
in 2024

87.14%

attendees
passing the
exam in 2024

89.70%

participants were
"satisfied" with the
auditor training in
2024**

75

qualified auditors for
Hotel scope in 2024

36

qualified auditors
for Tour Operator
scope in 2024

GSTC Global Conferences

2

GSTC Global
Conferences in 2024

1,027

participants

88%

participants were
"very satisfied" or "satisfied"
with their conference
experience

GSTC Members

491

organization
members in 2024

88%

membership renewal
in 2024

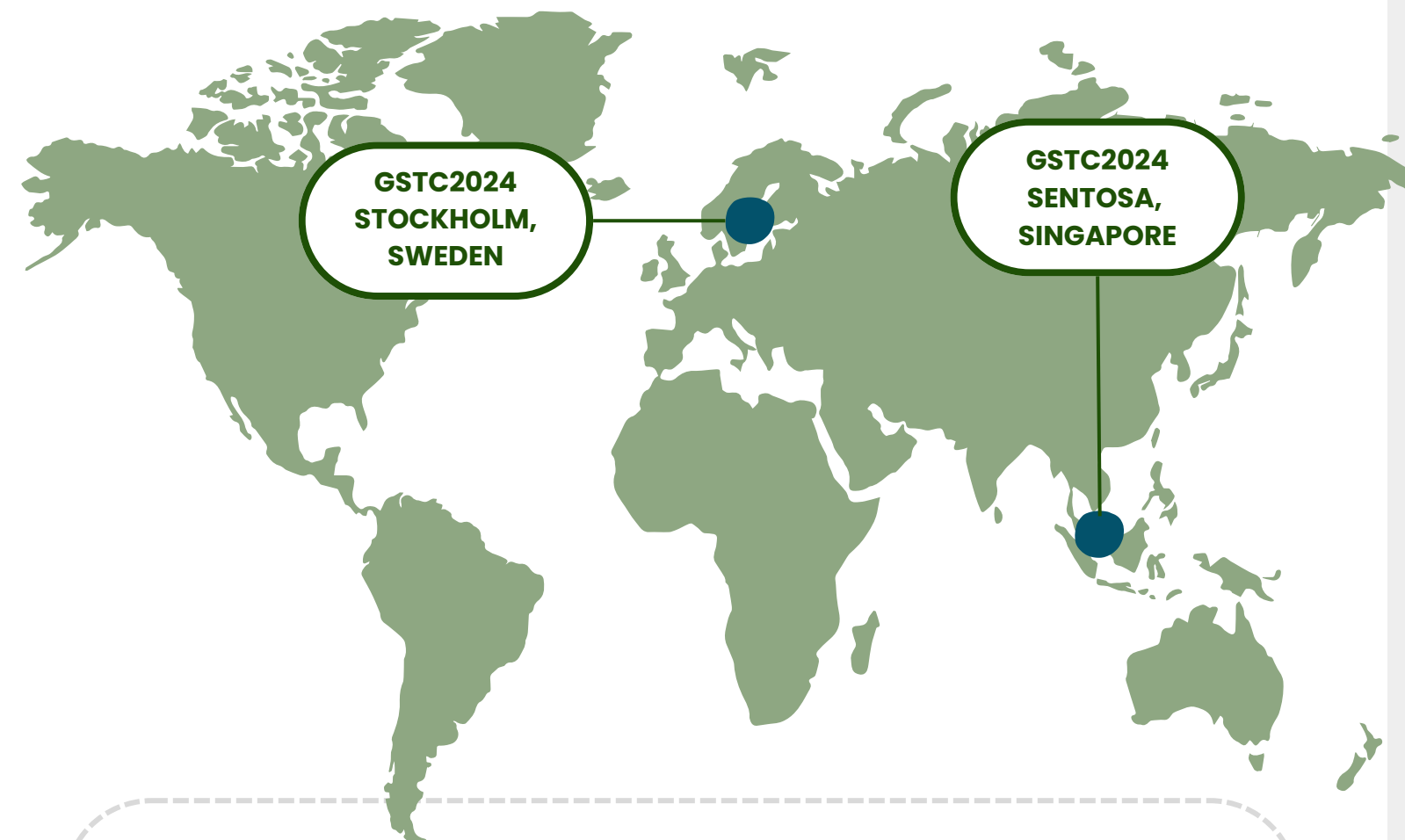
Webinars

28

webinars executed
in 2024

1,261

participants in webinars
in 2024



GSTC Destination program

8

Destination Assessment
in 2024



3 completed
5 in progress

53

Destination Assessment
prior to and including
2024



48 completed
5 in progress

Other Data

276K

web users in 2024

350

articles that
mentioned the GSTC
in 2024

101,944

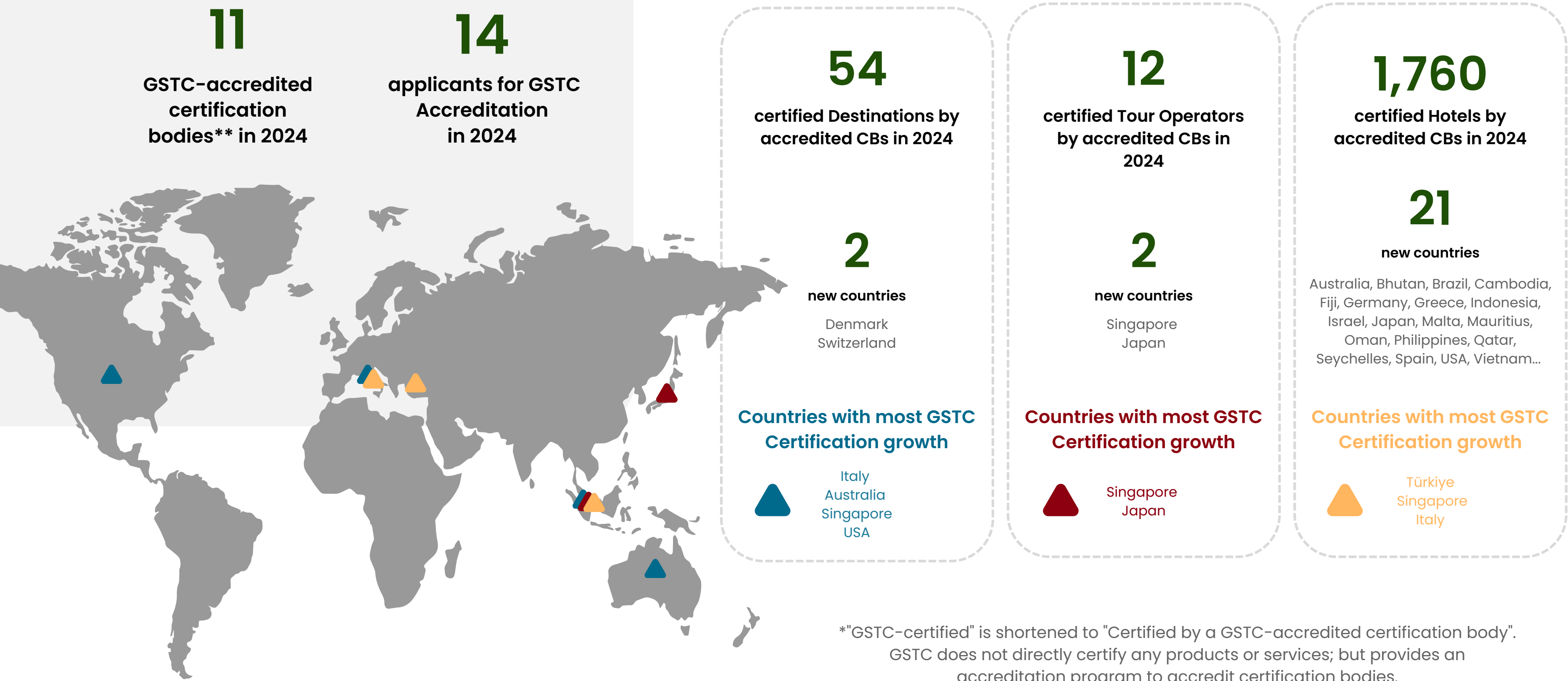
total followers in
GSTC social media
channels in 2024

+12.24%

of social media
followers increase
compared to last year
(2023/2024)

GSTC Accreditation and Certification*

**Certification Body = CB



*"GSTC-certified" is shortened to "Certified by a GSTC-accredited certification body".
GSTC does not directly certify any products or services; but provides an accreditation program to accredit certification bodies.



GSTC at the International MICE Summit in Saudi Arabia



GSTC at COP16 Biodiversity in Cali, Colombia



GSTC at Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo 2024 in Kampala, Uganda



GSTC at World Economic Forum Executive Roundtable on Urban Transformation Through Tourism



Randy Durband was selected to be included in the Climate 100 List of the The Independent (UK).



GSTC at FITUR 2024, Madrid, Spain



GSTC at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan



GSTC at the National Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development in Albania



GSTC at the 10th Peruvian Tourism Congress – Conpetur Cusco 2024



GSTC at India's Sustainability Conclave



GSTC at ITB Berlin 2024



GSTC at ITB Asia 2024



GSTC at Busan's International Tourism City Forum



GSTC at the first GSTC Latin America and the Caribbean Summit (see page 41)

**Some events
GSTC participated
during 2024**

Global Sustainable Tourism Conference 2024

Luigi Cabrini
Chairman, Global Sustainable Tourism Council



About the GSTC

.....

Our Strategy

.....

What We Do

.....

Our Governance

03

Who We Are

About the GSTC

The GSTC is the international body that promotes education, understanding, and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices. The organization brings together businesses, governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, individuals and communities striving to achieve best practices in sustainable tourism.

The GSTC establishes and manages global standards for sustainable travel and tourism, known as the **GSTC Standards** (formerly known as GSTC Criteria). Currently, there are four sets: Destination Standard for public policy-makers and destination managers; Industry Standard for hotels and tour operators; MICE Standard for Venues, Event Organizers, Events & Exhibitions (published February 2024); and the Attraction Standard (published November 2024).

They result from a worldwide effort to develop a common language about sustainability in tourism. The GSTC Destination Standard, Industry Standard, MICE Standard, and Attraction Standard are arranged in four pillars:

- (A) Sustainable Management;
- (B) Socioeconomic Impacts;
- (C) Cultural Impacts; and
- (D) Environmental Impacts.

The GSTC Standards form the basis for the accreditation of certification bodies that certify hotels/accommodations; tour operators/transport providers; venues, event organizers, and events & exhibitions; destinations with sustainable policies and practices in place; and businesses such as theme parks, museums, and national parks.

GSTC does not directly certify any products or services; but provides an accreditation program to accredit certification bodies.



The Global Sustainable Tourism Council® (GSTC®)

Year of Establishment:

2007

Established as a Strategic Coalition of Many Partners:

United Nations Foundation, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism), among others.

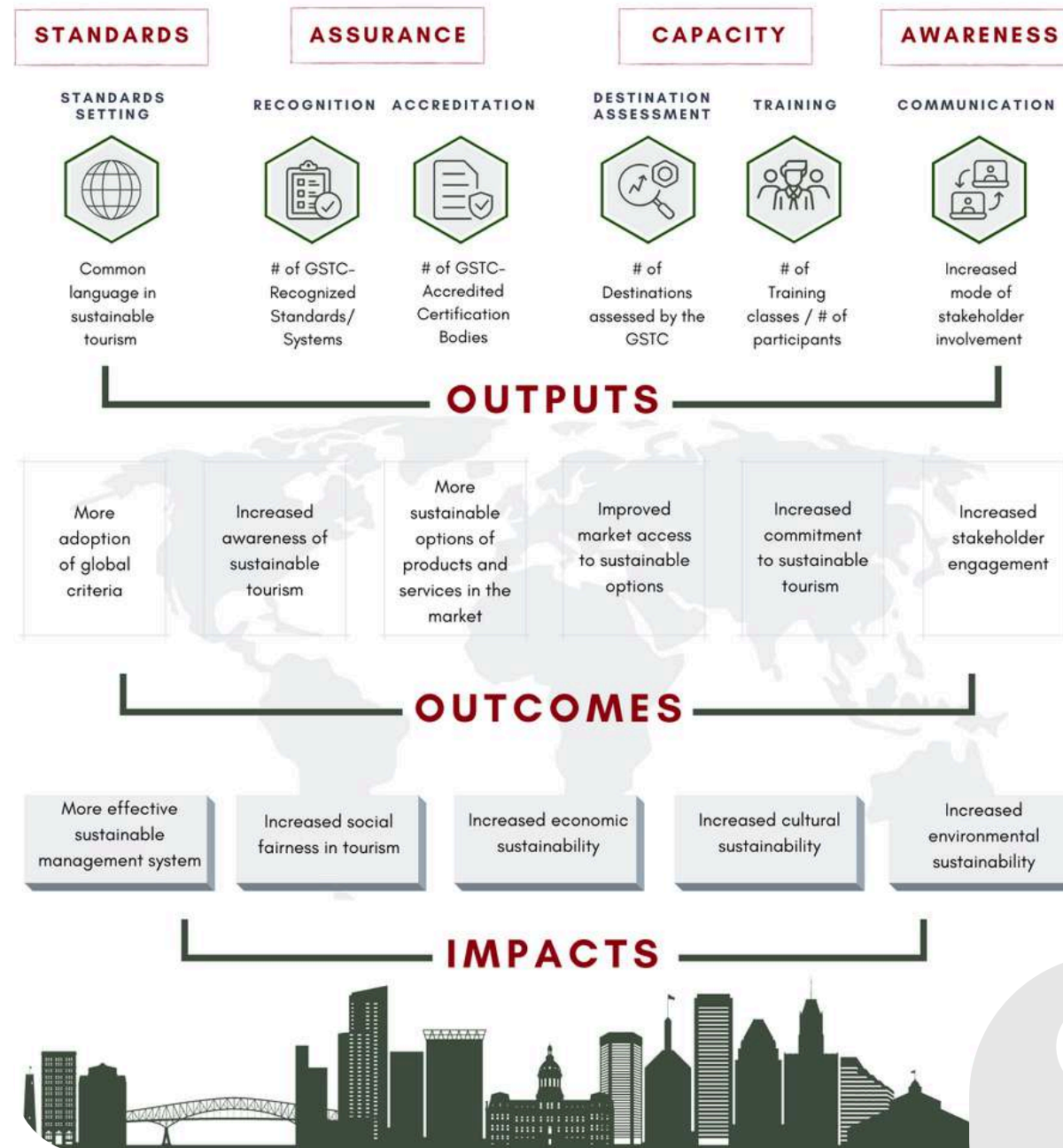
About:

The GSTC, an independent and neutral organization, is legally registered in the USA as a 501(c) non-profit organization. Its diverse and global membership, including national and provincial governments, leading travel companies, hotels, tour operators, NGOs, individuals, and communities, all share a common goal of achieving best practices in sustainable tourism. It is a virtual organization without a main office, with staff and volunteers working worldwide. Financial support from donations, sponsorship, and membership fees allows us to provide services at low costs. This support also allows us to create, revise, and make available the GSTC Standards. The GSTC is an ISEAL Community Member, a global membership organization for ambitious, collaborative, and transparent sustainability systems.

Our Strategy

IMPACT PATHWAYS

STRATEGIES



GSTC Theory of Change

A Theory of Change serves as a comprehensive framework, detailing the desired change an organization or initiative aims to achieve and clarifying the mechanisms by which its efforts facilitate this transformation. This conceptual map traces a causal pathway, linking the strategies employed (the actions taken) to the resulting outcomes (what has been changed), and the underlying assumptions of the process. GSTC's Impact Pathways vividly illustrate these dynamic interconnections.

Intended Impacts & Outcomes

- Provide guidelines for businesses and destinations of all sizes and all over the world to become more sustainable.
- Provide guidance for travelers and travel providers in choosing suppliers and sustainable tourism programs.
- Provide a common denominator for media to recognize sustainable tourism providers.
- Help certification and other voluntary programs ensure that their standards meet a broadly-accepted baseline.
- Governmental, non-governmental and private sector programs have a framework for developing sustainable tourism requirements.
- Provide guidelines for education and training bodies such as hotel schools and universities.

Vision

Tourism fulfills its potential as a vehicle for social, cultural, and economic good while reducing any negative environmental and social impacts from its activities.

Mission

To be an agent of change in the world of sustainable travel and tourism by fostering the increased knowledge, understanding, adoption and demand for sustainable tourism practices.



**Provide Guidelines
Businesses & Destinations**



**Provide Guidance for
Travelers**



**Provide a Common
Denominator**



**Help Certification and
Voluntary Programs**



Provide a Framework



**Provide Guidelines for
Education**

What we do



Developing Global Standards – the GSTC Standards

The GSTC Standards are global standards for sustainability in travel and tourism:

- GSTC Industry Standard – guiding principles for all types of tourism-related business, with detailed guidance for hotels/accommodations and tour operators/agencies.
- GSTC Destination Standard – guidance for policy (national, provincial, etc.) and for destination management.
- GSTC MICE Standard – guidance for venues, event organizers, and events & exhibitions.
- GSTC Attraction Standard – guidance for all types of attractions including, but not limited to theme parks, museums, and national parks.

The GSTC Standards provide a comprehensive definition of sustainable travel and tourism, arranged to support four pillars of sustainability:

- (A) Sustainable Management;
- (B) Socioeconomic Impacts;
- (C) Cultural Impacts; and
- (D) Environmental Impacts.



Providing Assurance for Sustainable Tourism

GSTC Accreditation: The GSTC accredits certification bodies that certify hotels, accommodations, tour operators, and destinations against relevant GSTC Standards or GSTC-Recognized standards and meet international requirements and tourism-specific requirements outlined in the GSTC Accreditation Manuals.

GSTC Recognition: Distinct from accreditation or certification, GSTC provides a formal indication of other standards that align with the GSTC Standards. This designation is made by GSTC's expert, [Recognition Decision-Making Committee](#).

[Read more](#) about the difference between certification, accreditation of certification bodies, and recognition of standards.



Making Destinations Sustainable

"Destination Stewardship" is our description of the framework whereby the public sector, private sector, and the residents of local communities are engaged jointly to preserve, protect, and benefit from visitors to their tourist destination.

The GSTC Destination Standard and our destination programs provide support to destinations seeking to manage and operate genuinely sustainable and responsible forms of tourism.



Promoting Market Access

The GSTC promotes the development of broad market adoption and application of the GSTC Standards. With the ultimate goal of increasing demand for sustainable travel and tourism offerings and building trust amongst travelers, the GSTC works to identify opportunities and solutions for alignment of greater market potential, working closely with prominent Online Travel Agents (OTAs) and large travel providers.



Increasing Knowledge

The GSTC is committed to ensuring that sustainable tourism best practices are adopted and implemented by the industry and the traveling public. The GSTC Sustainable Tourism Training Program (STTP), with the support of the Education and Training Working Group, delivers training to managers and practitioners on use of contemporary tools and resources to facilitate the transition to sustainable practices. Training courses are relevant for a wide range of tourism industry professionals including: hotel managers and staff, tour operator managers and staff, destination managers, government officials, consultants, NGOs, and academic institutions.

Our Governance

The GSTC is a **membership-based, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization** representing diverse tourism stakeholders. As of 2024, its organization and activities are guided by bylaws and are conducted through the following organizational structure:



GSTC Around the World

18

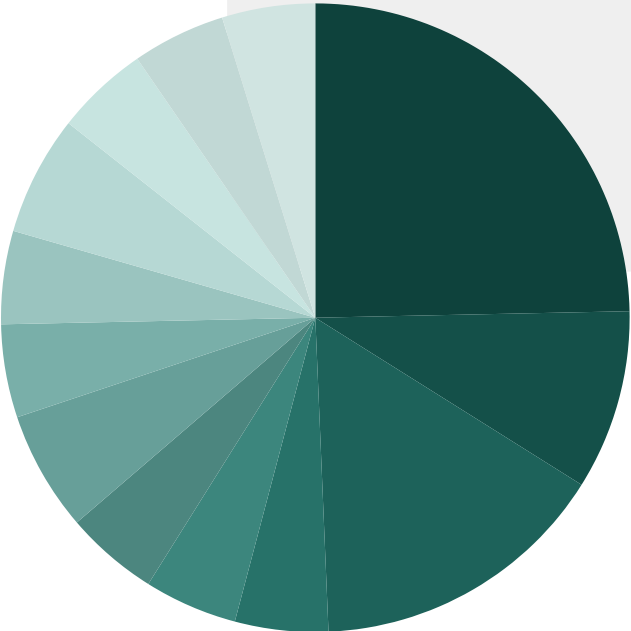
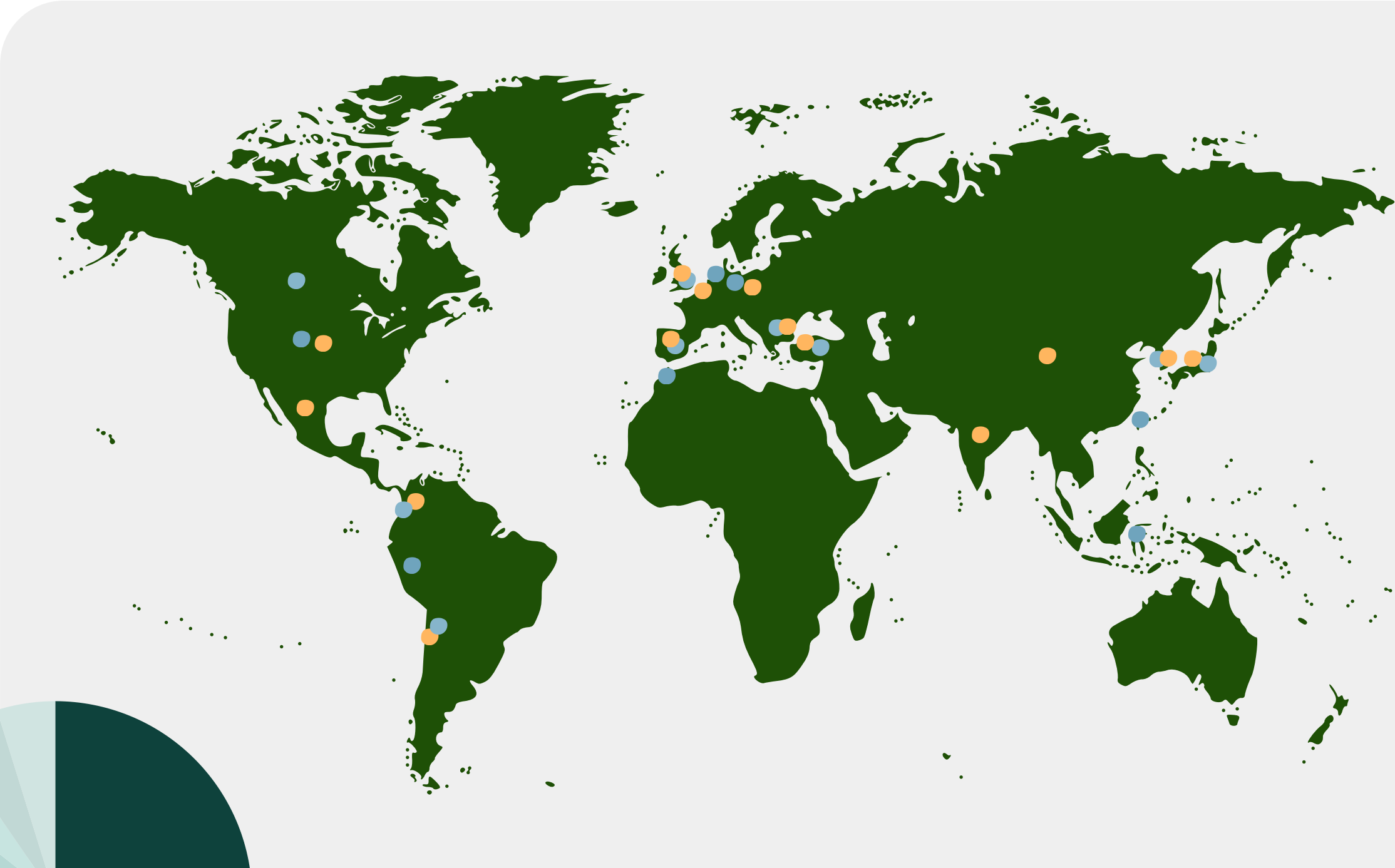
Board of Directors

34

Team Members



GSTC Team Location



- South Korea
- Taiwan
- Japan
- Canada
- UK
- Indonesia
- Colombia
- Morocco
- Spain
- Türkiye
- The Netherlands
- Greece
- Peru



LUIGI CABRINI
Chairman of the Board of Director of the GSTC



DR. KELLY S. BRICKER
Associate Dean of the HNU-ASU Joint International College (HAIC); Vice-Chair, GSTC



CB (RAM) RAMKUMAR
Director, Green Dreams for the Planet; Vice-Chair, GSTC



KOKO TANG
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Vinetree Tourism; Treasurer, GSTC



DR. YASEMIN BIRO KIRTMAN
Knowledge and Learning Coordinator at the Policy, Partnerships and Operations Unit, Global Environment Facility (GEF); Secretary, GSTC



BEATRIZ BARREAL DANEL
Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Sustainable Riviera Maya

GSTC Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for governance and oversight of the organization’s mandate, programming, and operations. GSTC working groups undertake initiatives that support the strategic plan as it relates to their designated program areas and are advisory in nature.

The organization is managed by a Secretariat led by the Chief Executive Officer, Randy Durband, who leads and coordinates the implementation of the organization’s objectives and initiatives. This governance structure is established in detail in the GSTC bylaws.



DR. ELIF BALCI FISUNOĞLU
Vice General Manager, Tourism Operations and Development, Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA)



GLENN MANDZIUK
Chief Executive Officer, World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance



INGE HUIJBRECHTS
Chief Sustainability & Security Office, Radisson Hotel Group (RHG)



DR. IOANNIS PAPPAS
Chief Executive Officer, Green Evolution SA



JORGE MOLLER
Director, Regenera



JULIÁN GUERRERO FLS
Lawyer. Policy and Strategy Expert on Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism



KATE HEINY
Vice President, Sustainability, Booking Holdings



KATHRIN MÖLLERS
Director, Sustainability & ESG, TUI Group



KUNIKO TAKASAKI
Managing Executive Officer, Chief DEIB Officer, JTB Group



MATT CALLAGHAN
Chief Operating Officer, easyJet holidays



MATTHIAS BEYER
Chief Executive Officer, Mascontour



RANDY DURBAND
Chief Executive Officer, GSTC

GSTC Team Members



RANDY DURBAND

Chief Executive Officer



DR. MIHEE KANG

Chief Assurance Officer



ROI ARIEL

General Manager



EMI KAIWA

Asia Pacific Manager



JORGE MOLLER

Program Director – Latin America



DR. IOANNIS PAPPAS

Program Director – Mediterranean Region



KATHLEEN PITTMAN

Program Director – Caribbean, and Special Projects



CB RAMKUMAR

Program Director – South Asia



ESTEFANÍA DEL AZAR

Communications Manager



ANE DE MIGUEL

Communications Specialist



ADRIANA PIZZI

Membership Manager



MEI-HAN FENG

Membership Coordinator



TATIANA AGUDELO MONGUÍ

Membership Coordinator



RITA KUAN

Market Development Manager



DR. SOOHYUN KWON

Asia Market Development Manager



NAOMI OIWA

Japan Market Development Manager



JULIETA BATTILANA

Market Access & Events Coordinator



DR. JISUN KIM

Training Program Manager



AYAKO EZAKI

Online Training Manager



YUNA JEON

Training Program Coordinator



YOKO UEKI

Japan Training Coordinator



TIFFANY CHAN

Destinations Program Manager



JESÚS MENA

IT Manager



DR. SO YOUNG LEE

Project Manager



SERGIO AJA

Accreditation Senior Manager



NATALIA SANIN

Assurance Measurement & Reporting Analyst



JOONSIK SON

Assurance Communication Manager



MUSTAFA SÖĞÜT

Assurance Strategy Manager, Lead Assesor



HERDI ANDRARILACHI

Assurance Strategy Manager, Lead Assesor



ÖYKÜ ÖZTÜRK

Assurance Strategy Manager



BAŞAK ILGIN

Assurance Coordinator



MARIA LIONTAKI

Lead Assesor



EMILY CHO

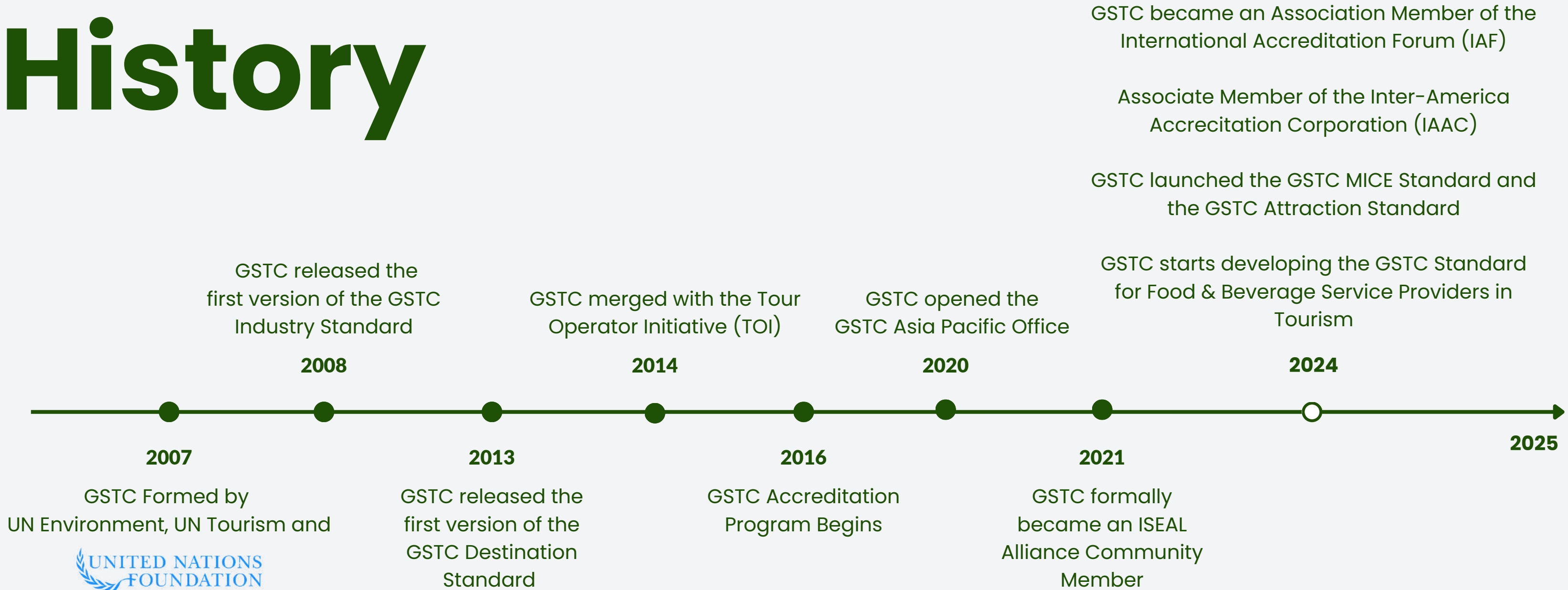
Administrative Coordinator



SARA BAIK

Operations Coordinator

Our History



For more detailed information, visit [History of GSTC](#).

Our Alignment to the SDGs

There is a strong relationship between the GSTC Standards and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

By taking the GSTC Standards, you are helping to meet the UN SDGs. Economic, environmental, and societal dimensions are all addressed by the GSTC Standards. Destinations and organizations looking to contribute to the SDGs will find that the GSTC Standards and other GSTC-Recognized Standards provide effective tools to help them rise to the challenge.

Application of the GSTC Standards will help destinations and businesses contribute towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Against each of the criterion, one or more of the 17 SDGs is identified, to which it most closely relates.



1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





THE GLOBAL GOALS

GSTC Standards

GSTC Membership

GSTC Sustainable
Tourism Training Program

Destinations Program

Assurance

Working Group Activities

ISEAL Landscape

Market Access Program

04

Our Performance

GSTC Standards

Overview of the GSTC Standards

The GSTC Standards (formerly known as GSTC Criteria) were created to provide a common global understanding of sustainable tourism and are the minimum that businesses, governments, and destinations should achieve to approach social, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability.

The GSTC Standards indicate **what should be done, not how to do it** or whether the goal has been achieved. Performance indicators, associated educational materials, and access to tools for implementation fulfill this role, all of which are an indispensable complement to the GSTC Standards.

The GSTC Standards are based in 4 pillars:

(A) Sustainable Management

(C) Cultural Impacts

(B) Socioeconomic Impacts

(D) Environmental Impacts

"This year represents a significant advancement for the organization, marked by the introduction of the GSTC MICE Standards and the GSTC Attractions Standard. These developments are the result of extensive collaboration and dedicated efforts with our valued contributors. By broadening the scope of our criteria to encompass additional segments of the tourism sector, we reaffirm our ongoing commitment to promoting global sustainability standards," says **Randy Durband, CEO of GSTC**.

The GSTC MICE Standard and the GSTC Attraction Standard followed an **inclusive and rigorous development** process including two public consultations and one feasibility assessment period, each.

Two New GSTC Standard Sets in 2024!



GSTC Destination Standard

Designed for destinations, relating to the sustainable management of tourism destinations and intended for public policy-makers and destination managers.

[For Destinations Available here](#)



GSTC Industry Standard

Designed for the industry, relating to the sustainable management of the private sector travel industry, focusing currently on Hotels and Tour Operators.

[For Hotels Available here](#)

[For Tour Operators Available Here](#)



GSTC MICE Standard

Designed for players in the MICE Industry, especially those who are involved in Venues, and Event Organizers.

Published in March 2024.

[For Venues Available Here](#)

[For Event Organizers Available Here](#)

[For Events & Exhibitions Available Here](#)



GSTC Attraction Standard

Designed for all types of attractions including, but not limited to theme parks, museums, and national parks.

Published at the GSTC Global Conference in Singapore in November 2024.

[For Attractions Available Here](#)

Serve as basic guidelines for businesses of all sizes to become more sustainable, and help businesses choose sustainable tourism programs that fulfill these global standards

Help consumers identify sound sustainable tourism programs and businesses

Help certification and other voluntary programs ensure that their standards meet a broadly accepted baseline

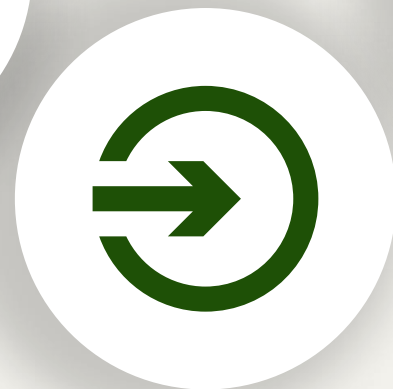
Serve as basic guidelines for education and training bodies, such as hotel schools and universities



Serve as the basis for certification for sustainability



Provide greater market access in the growing market for sustainable products, serving as guidance both for travelers and for travel agencies in choosing suppliers and sustainable tourism programs



Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize sustainable tourism providers



Offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programs a starting point for developing sustainable tourism requirements



Demonstrate leadership that inspires others to act

Uses of the Standards

With the four standard sets, the GSTC intends to raise awareness and education levels of all travel and tourism players of sustainable tourism concepts to support sustainable consumption and production. Therefore, the **GSTC Standards are publicly available** on the website and have been translated into many languages. They are available for the public to download from the GSTC website.

Translations of the GSTC Standards in other languages [here](#)



Standards Development & Revision Process

The **GSTC Standards** are built on decades of prior work and experience around the world. They take into account the numerous guidelines and standards for sustainable tourism from every continent.

During the development process, standards were widely consulted globally, in developed and developing countries and several languages. They reflect our goal of attaining a global consensus on sustainable tourism. Potential indicators were screened for relevance and practicality, as well as their applicability to a broad range of destination types. They were field-tested around the world.

GSTC Standards development and revision follow the GSTC Standard Setting Manual version 3.0, where the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems is used as a reference.

The ISEAL is the global membership organization for ambitious, collaborative and transparent sustainability systems. ISEAL advocates for the development and adoption of credible, effective sustainability systems, and works to promote the conditions for their uptake. ISEAL members are sustainability systems and accreditation bodies dedicated to delivering benefits for people and the planet. ISEAL's goal is to support ambitious sustainability systems and their partners in addressing the world's most pressing challenges, such as the climate emergency, biodiversity crisis, human rights issues, and persistent poverty. By fostering credible practices and driving impactful changes, ISEAL aims to make markets a force for good, helping companies and governments meet their sustainability commitments and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Stakeholder Engagement in GSTC MICE Standard Development During 2024

Advisory Group:

The Advisory Group provided high-level inputs to the Standard draft. The Group not only participated in the official public consultation but also provided continuous comments to the Standard draft, gave recommendations on relevant publications and reports, was responsible for promoting the first public consultation of the GSTC MICE Standard, and gave recommendations on which organizations could be suitable for the feasibility assessment. GSTC had online meetings every four months to discuss and update important timelines while addressing questions or concerns.

The advisory Group members were Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (Global), Visit Berlin (Europe), Visit Oslo (Europe), Green Key Global (America), Osaka Convention Bureau (Asia), Suwon Convention & Visitor Bureau (Asia), and Singapore Tourism Board (Asia).

Key Stakeholders group:

Experts with strong background in MICE and key industry players currently in the MICE business. They are responsible for giving feedback on the Standard draft and participating in the feasibility assessment.

The key Stakeholders group members were American Express Global Business Travel (Global), Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (Costa Rica Tourism Board)/ (America), International Congress & Convention Association (Global), Meeting Select (Europe), The Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (Europe-Asia), and Japan Convention Service (Asia).

GSTC Conference workshop:

Workshops during GSTC Conferences were held in Gunsan, Korea, and Seville, Spain, in 2022 and Antalya, Türkiye, in 2023.

Public Group Workshop:

With the destination members' support, two public workshops were conducted—at Bestival in Berlin, Germany, in July 2023 and Malta in September 2023. GSTC staff attended the Berlin festival by creating a standing booth with the first GSTC MICE Standard draft printed. It included a voting system for participants to vote on the most relevant and least relevant criterion and/or indicator of the MICE industry. Approximately 1,000 people participated in the Bestival, and they freely dropped by the workshop.

Feasibility Assessment:

With the destination members' support, two public workshops were conducted—at Bestival in Berlin, Germany, in July 2023 and Malta in September 2023. GSTC staff attended the Berlin festival by creating a standing booth with the first GSTC MICE Standard draft printed. It included a voting system for participants to vote on the most relevant and least relevant criterion and/or indicator of the MICE industry. Approximately 1,000 people participated in the Bestival, and they freely dropped by the workshop.

Feasibility Assessment:

Organizations, including Travel Unity and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism), provided their comprehensive feedback.



GSTC Sustainable MICE
Standard Development
Workshop during GSTC
2024 Global Conference
in Singapore

Stakeholder Engagement in GSTC Attraction Standard Development During 2024

Advisory Group:

The Advisory Group members were Association of Singapore Attraction (Asia); US National Park Service (America); Singapore Tourism Board (Asia); International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (Global); The Royal Djurgården Society (Europe).

Key Stakeholders group:

The Key Stakeholders were City of Dubrovnik (Europe); Ecotourism Australia (Australia); Mandai Wildlife Group (Asia); The Blue Lagoon Island (The Caribbean).

GSTC Conference workshop: Workshops during GSTC Conferences were held in Gunsan (South Korea) and Seville (Spain) in 2022 and Antalya, Türkiye, in 2023.

Feasibility Assessment:

Participants in the Feasibility Assessment were Alliance of Marine Mammals Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA); Ayuntamiento de Tegui (Municipality of Tegui, Spain); Ayuntamiento de Tías (Municipality of Tías, Spain); Biosphere Reserve del Cabildo Lanzarote; Bounce Singapore; Centros de Arte, Cultura y Turismo de Lanzarote; City of Dubrovnik; Fundación Iguaraya; Global Humane; Lanzarote Tourist Board; Liseberg; Madame Tussaud Singapore; Mandai Wildlife Group; Resorts World Sentosa; Royal Djurgården; Singapore Tourism Board; Swedish National Maritime and Transport Museum; Tayrona National Park; and The Blue Lagoon Island.

Stakeholder Engagement in GSTC Food & Beverage Standard Development During 2024

First onsite engagement was during the GSTC Global Conference in Singapore in November 2024. A workshop was held with more than 25 participants on the first-ever draft of the Standard. Stakeholders gave deep insights and exchanged experiences in the workshop that shed light into the Standard draft.

Advisory Group:

The Advisory Group members were Association of Singapore Attraction (Asia); US National Park Service (America); Singapore Tourism Board (Asia); International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (Global); The Royal Djurgården Society (Europe).



GSTC Sustainable Attractions Standard Development Workshop during the GSTC 2024 Global Conference in Sweden



GSTC Food & Beverage Standard Development Workshop during GSTC 2024 Global Conference in Singapore



GSTC Membership

What is a GSTC Member?

Becoming a GSTC Member means joining a global community dedicated to advancing sustainable tourism. It is an opportunity to actively contribute to the important work of promoting the widespread adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles.

GSTC Membership is a program designed to provide **tourism businesses, destinations, and organizations** with opportunities to learn more about sustainable tourism practices, engage with like-minded peers, and collaborate on fostering sustainability in the tourism industry.

For more information, read [here](#).

Types of GSTC Memberships



Destination Members

GSTC Destination Membership offers destinations and public agencies a pathway to deeper engagement with global sustainable tourism principles. Read more [here](#).



Organization Members

GSTC Organization Membership showcases commitment to sustainable tourism for private-sector and non-profit organizations of all sizes. Read more [here](#).



Individual Members

GSTC Individual Membership supports sustainable tourism practices globally. Read more [here](#).

Available publicly

GSTC Webinars 2024

GSTC offers a diverse range of webinars for its members each month. These webinars serve as a platform for experts to share their expertise while fostering engaging discussions on various aspects of sustainability in tourism.

Most Popular Webinars

- 1

Integrating Sustainability into Design, Construction, and Operations: The Six Senses Approach

163 participants
- 2

Mastering Sustainability Metrics: Resorts World Sentosa's Approach to GSTC Standards and KPIs

Participants: 103
- 3

Greenview: Climate Crisis and the Tourism Industry

Participants: 88
- 4

[Pathways to Compliance to the GSTC Standards](#)

Public Webinar
Participants: 82
- 5

[Parques Nacionales de Latinoamérica y el Caribe; planificando la conservación de la biodiversidad a través del Turismo Sostenible y Regenerativo](#)

Public Webinar
Participants: 78

GSTC Organization Members in 2024

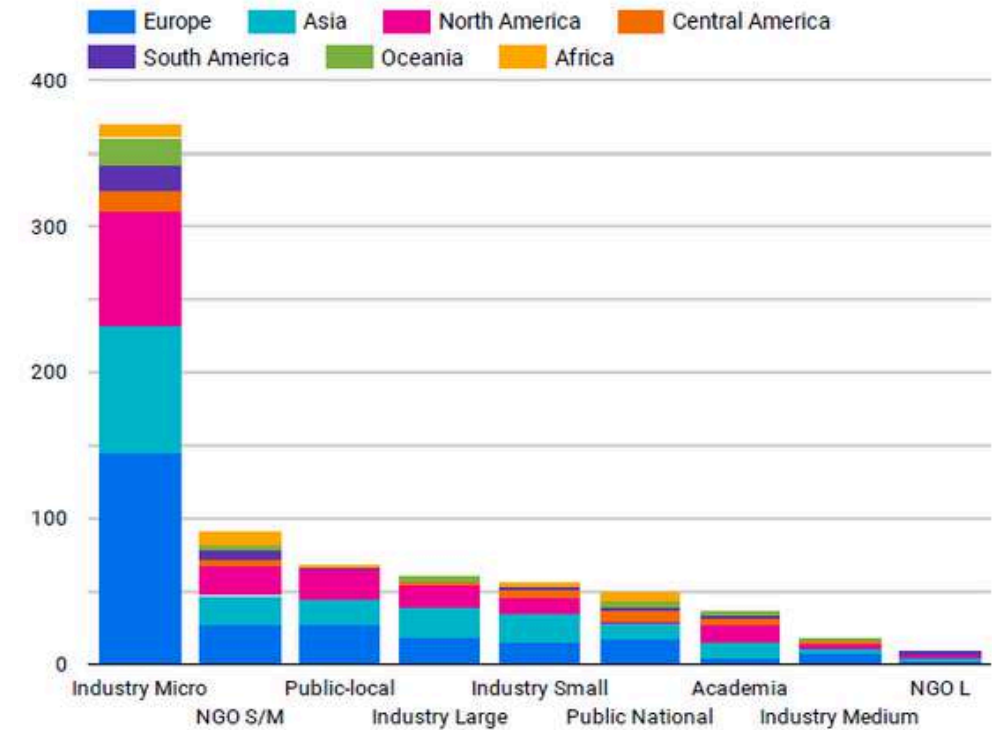
The graphs show the total GSTC Membership until 2024 per category and per sector. In addition, the continents are also differentiated, with Europe, Asia and North America being the territories with the largest GSTC Members.

The **categories** with the highest number of GSTC Members are industry micro, NGOs and public local. Concerning the **sectors**, consultancy and NGOs remain the ones with the highest number of GSTC Members until 2024.



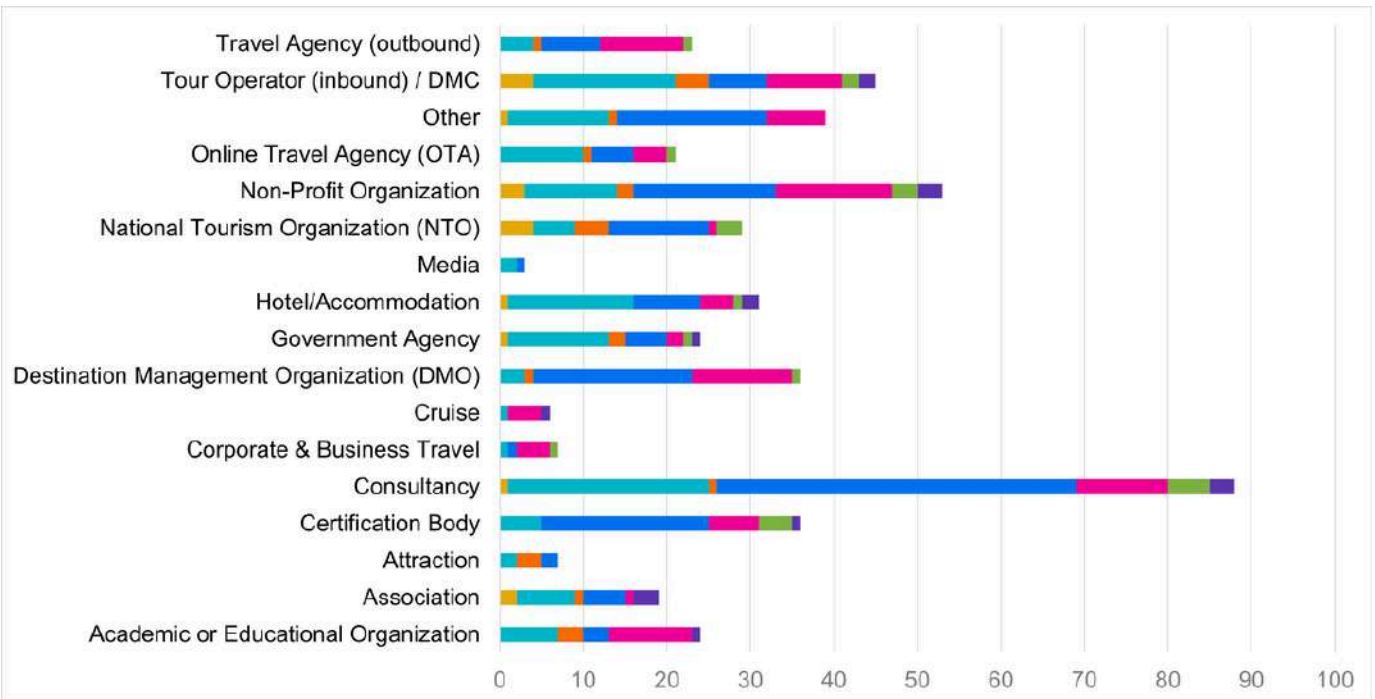
Number of total Members in 2024: **491**
An increase of **17%** compared to 2023

Total Membership by Category by 2024

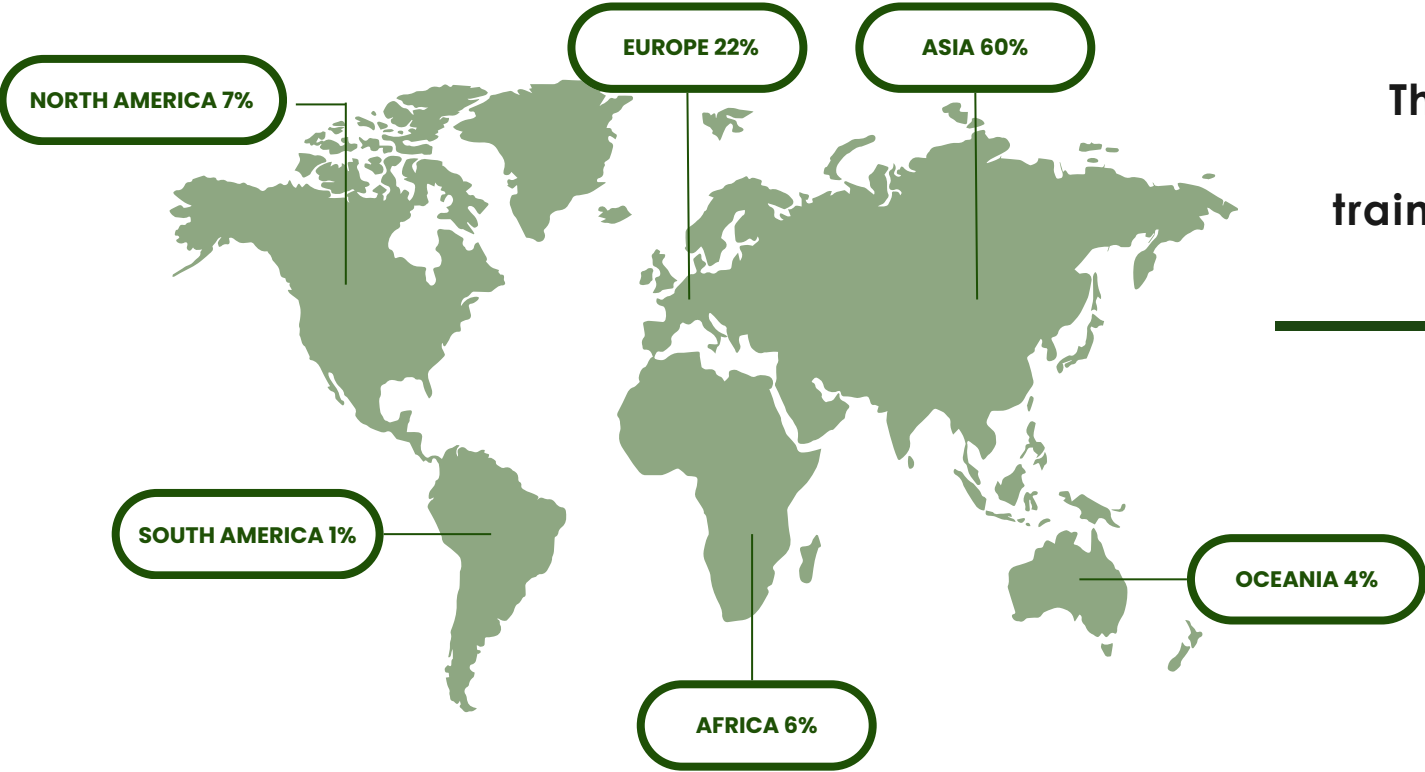


"The strength of our membership community lies in its diversity and global reach. With growing representation across key sectors like consultancy, NGOs, micro industries, and the public sector, GSTC continues to empower members to drive sustainable practices worldwide. This vibrant community reflects not only the increasing demand for responsible tourism but also a powerful force for change in the industry," says **Adriana Pizzi, Membership Manager at GSTC**

Total Membership by Sector by 2024



GSTC Sustainable Tourism Training Program



GSTC Sustainable Tourism Training Program (STTP) provides the knowledge and tools needed to improve sustainability practices in travel and tourism with GSTC-authorized trainers worldwide.

The GSTC STTP offers various specialized courses, including the flagship **GSTC Sustainable Tourism Course, Sustainable Hospitality Course, Accessibility and Inclusive Travel Course, Applied DEI in Travel Course, and Sustainable Business Travel Course**. Additionally, private and/or customized training is available to meet specific needs.

In 2024, two new courses have been under development: the GSTC Sustainable MICE Course and the GSTC Sustainable Tour Operators Course, with a planned launch scheduled for early 2025.



The GSTC STTP is based on the GSTC Standards and is available in 17 languages:
Arabic, Indonesian, Malaysian, Mandarin Chinese, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, Turkish, and Vietnamese.



Training Courses during 2024

Sustainable Tourism Course



The course provides a comprehensive understanding of both the GSTC Industry Standard and the GSTC Destination Standard, along with the best practices for businesses and destinations. This course aims to help companies and destinations make informed decisions about sustainability practices and develop tourism policies focusing on sustainability.

[About Sustainable Tourism Course](#) 🔍

Sustainable Hospitality Course



The course is aimed at hospitality and accommodation professionals and offers practical insights on implementing sustainable hotel practices. This course provides industry practitioner examples and insights based on real-life experience to help with self-assessment when applying the GSTC Hotel Standard to own situations.

[About Sustainable Hospitality Course](#) 🔍

Sustainable Business Travel Course



The course provides knowledge and tools to improve corporate and business travel sustainability practices. This course examines how to establish a new business travel model that harnesses the value of a sustainable business travel program while respecting the latest travel requirements, using the four pillars of GSTC Industry Standard.

[About Sustainable Business Travel Course](#) 🔍

Applied DEI in Travel Course



The course provides an excellent opportunity to gain knowledge about the best practices in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and engage in meaningful discussions with colleagues globally. This course provides how these terms are related to the specific GSTC Standards in social sustainability, incorporating a practical application component, enabling trainees to delve deeper into how DEI can be implemented within their organizations and job roles.

Accessible and Inclusive Travel Course



It is designed to help individuals develop a deeper understanding of how to deliver experiences that are accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities and other access needs. This course provides valuable insights into the size and potential of the accessible and inclusive travel market segment. It offers practical guidance on how to better attract, serve, and retain customers with access needs.

[About Accessible and Inclusive Travel Course](#) 🔍

Sustainable Tour Operator Course



This course offers tour operators and DMCs a practical guide to sustainable operations, focusing on minimizing environmental impacts, boosting social and economic benefits, and aligning with global sustainability standards.

[About Sustainable Tour Operator Course](#) 🔍

Sustainable MICE Course



The GSTC MICE Course equips MICE industry professionals with essential sustainability practices for venues, event organizers, and exhibitions. It covers the GSTC MICE Standard, real-world examples, and links to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, helping participants create more eco-friendly and socially responsible events.

[About Sustainable MICE Course](#) 🔍

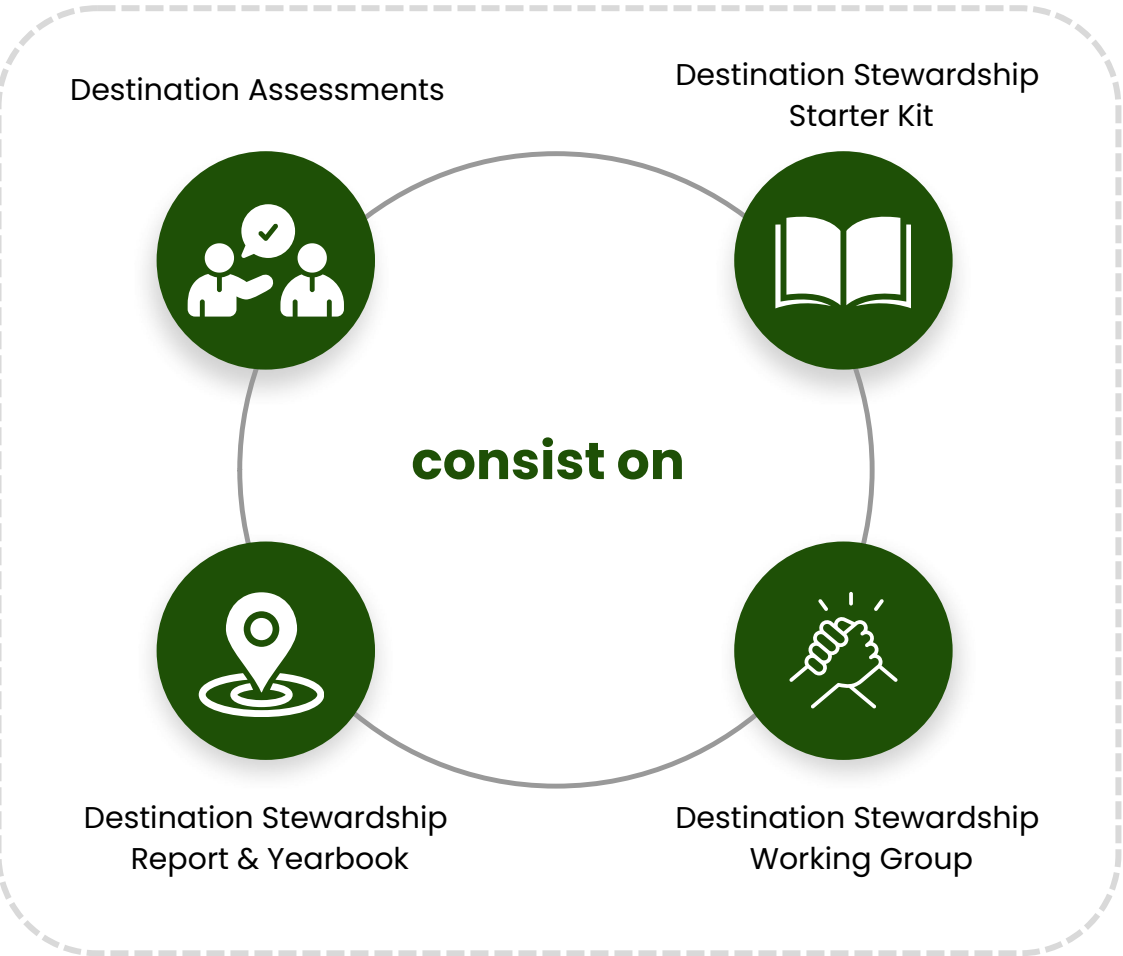


Destinations Program

53
Destination
Assessments
in 2024

Through the GSTC Destinations Program, the GSTC continues to foster collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and sustainable practices within our network of destination members and across our global network of partners and stakeholders, driving positive impacts for the communities and environments they serve.

The GSTC actively engaged with all 82 destination members, ensuring at least two interactions per member each year. In 2024, two destination member meetings were held, with 82 attendees in Sweden and 37 in Singapore.



Destination Assessments

The GSTC Destination Assessment is designed to introduce the destination management team to the core elements required to develop sustainable policies and practices by applying the GSTC Standards to the specific destination.

The assessment process allows a destination to participate directly in applying the GSTC Destination Standard, to understand its sustainability status against the world’s leading standards, and to identify areas for improvement based on the standards.

As of 2024, the GSTC has assessed 53 destinations, with 48 completed and 5 in progress. The latest destinations to undergo a destination assessment include the Cook Islands, Los Angeles County (USA), Birgi and Side (Türkiye) and Phuket (Thailand).



New In 2024

The GSTC conducted a Destination Assessment of The Cook Islands from September 2024 to January 2025. GSTC expert assessors Dr. Kelly Bricker and Dr. Deb Kerstetter led the assessment of the Cook Islands, including a 10-day on-site visit by Dr. Bricker.

The GSTC conducted a Destination Assessment of Los Angeles County from June 2023 to January 2025, led by Dr. Kelly Bricker, Dr. Kathleen Andereck, and Dr. Megha Budruk with the full support of the LA County Tourism & Convention Board.

The GSTC Destination Assessments of Birgi and Side in Türkiye took place between June and December 2024, led by GSTC Lead Assessor Dr. Mihee Kang.

The GSTC Destination Assessment of Phuket, Thailand is underway. The 5 day onsite assessment took place in November 2024, led by Dr. Mihee Kang.



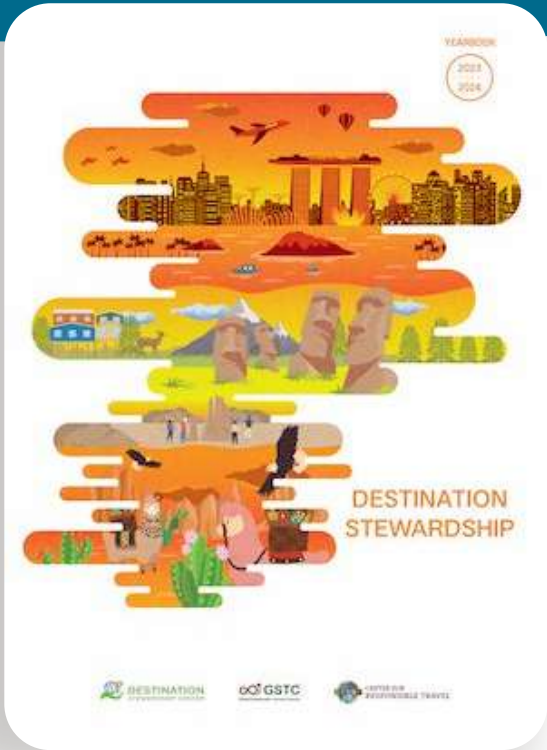
Engaging Governments

GSTC assists the government in effectively utilizing GSTC Standards through online and offline workshops, training sessions, or high-level meetings. In 2024, destinations like **the Bahamas and Albania formally engaged the GSTC for guidance** on implementing standards and training.

2024

The Bahamas partnered with GSTC to provide structural support and training to establish Destination Stewardship Councils (“DSCs”), following GSTC Destination Criterion A1. GSTC continued working with the Bahamas to build capacity for the launch of an additional four DSCs, and committed to another two moving forward into 2025.

The GSTC, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania, and RisiAlbania/Helvetas signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in August 2024 to elevate sustainable tourism initiatives in Albania with a National Framework for Sustainable Tourism, which will encourage the tourism industry to achieve certification by GSTC-accredited certification bodies.



Destination Stewardship Report & Yearbook

In partnership with the **Destination Stewardship Center (DSC) and Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)**, **one Destination Stewardship Yearbook and three Destination Stewardship Reports (DSR) were published**, containing 21 insightful stories.

The DSR provides practical information and insights that are useful to anyone whose work or interests involve improving destination stewardship in a post-pandemic world. It is published every four months. In each issue, the DSR features destinations that have embraced effective and holistic management, best practices in sustainable tourism, and insights from tourism leaders on better destination stewardship and development.

The Destination Stewardship Yearbook is a comprehensive compilation of articles from the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Destination Stewardship Reports, curated into a single document. It celebrates the efforts and accomplishments of the people behind these destinations. Collectively, their stories showcase how properly managed tourism can be constructive rather than destructive.

The DSR received significant online engagement. The reports were opened 2,302 times on Mailchimp and viewed 1,349 times on the GSTC website*.



- [Destination Stewardship Report – September – December 2024 \(Volume 4, Issue 2\)](#)
- [Destination Stewardship Report – May – August 2024 \(Volume 5, Issue 1\)](#)
- [Destination Stewardship Report – January – April 2024 \(Volume 4, Issue 3\)](#)
- [Destination Stewardship Yearbook 2023–2024](#)
- [Destination Stewardship Yearbook 2022–2023](#)

The Destination Stewardship Reports are publicly available on our website

*Numbers were collected on April 29, 2025.

Assurance

Accreditation in 2024

Accreditation is the independent evaluation of a Certification Body (CB) by an Accreditation Body to ensure compliance with internationally recognized standards.

Through the GSTC Assurance Program, Accreditation confirms that CBs assessing businesses or destinations against sustainability standards meet rigorous third-party scrutiny. This guarantees that certified entities adhere to high sustainability standards, enabling them to display the GSTC logo and enhance their credibility in global markets.

GSTC accredits CBs for certifying hotels, tour operators, and destinations as sustainable. In Europe, GSTC collaborates with national accreditation bodies like ACCREDIA to streamline the process and ensure alignment with European Union (EU) regulations. In 2024, the number of GSTC-accredited certification bodies grew to nine, with the addition of three new CBs. This reflects the increasing interest in GSTC's Accreditation Program, and further growth is expected in the coming years.

Accreditation Bodies for Hotel/Accommodations

- Bureau Veritas
- Control Union
- Dream&Charme
- FQC Certification
- Mauritius Standard Bureau
- RoyalCert
- TRB
- United Certification Systems Limited
- Vireo Srl

Accreditation Bodies for Tour Operators

- Bureau Veritas
- Control Union
- Mauritius Standards Bureau
- RoyalCert
- United Certification Systems Limited
- Vireo Srl

Accreditation Bodies for Destinations

- EarthCheck
- Green Destinations
- Vireo Srl

New In 2024

GSTC joined the Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC) as an Associate Member, strengthening global conformity assessment and credibility in certified processes as an accreditation body.

GSTC became an official Associate Member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), reinforcing global standards of quality and reliability as a scheme owner.

GSTC Accreditation Manual for Certification Bodies – Industry: Hotel/Accommodation & Tour Operator – has been revised to reflect industry needs, with Version 4.0 taking effect from November 1, 2024, after a comprehensive stakeholder review.

Revision of Accreditation Manual for Destination Certification Bodies, incorporating stakeholder feedback, with the updated version set to take effect in 2025.

The number of GSTC-accredited certification bodies increased to eleven in 2024.

The revision of the GSTC Accreditation Manual for the certification of hotels, accommodations, and tour operators has been completed to ensure alignment with the dynamics of the industry and stakeholders' feedback. Version 4.0 of the Accreditation Manual, titled GSTC Accreditation Manual for certification bodies – Industry: Hotel/Accommodation & Tour Operator, was approved on November 1, 2024, following a thorough public consultation and review process. The updated manual took effect with a one-year transition period, allowing for smooth integration into the assessment process for certification bodies. In May 2024, GSTC launched a 100-day public consultation to revise the GSTC Accreditation Manual for Destination Certification Bodies v.2.0. This update introduces fundamental changes, reflecting stakeholder input gathered throughout the process. The revised manual is expected to be finalized and take effect in 2025.

In 2024, GSTC became an Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC) Associate Member. This membership underscores GSTC's commitment to upholding rigorous standards and building trust in its certification and accreditation programs. Additionally, in November 2024, GSTC was granted official Association Membership status in the International Accreditation Forum (IAF). This membership further strengthens GSTC's role in advancing global conformity assessment practices, enhancing credibility in certified processes worldwide.

GSTC Auditor Training

As the demand for GSTC Certification continues to rise, ensuring a steady supply of qualified auditors remains a priority. The GSTC Auditor Training plays a critical role in maintaining the credibility of the GSTC Certification by equipping auditors and certification decision-makers with the necessary knowledge and competencies in sustainable tourism practices.

Certification bodies seeking GSTC Accreditation must comply with the GSTC Accreditation Manual, which mandates auditors to have specific expertise in GSTC Standards and auditing procedures. To meet this requirement, GSTC requires auditors to complete the Auditor Training and pass a rigorous evaluation designed to assess their competence in auditing against the GSTC Standards.

To better support the expanding certification ecosystem, GSTC has enhanced its training arrangements, enabling certification bodies to promptly supplement their regional auditor workforce. With Europe accounting for the majority of training participants (70.57%), particularly with Türkiye representing 57.14% of the total, our efforts ensure a well-distributed and capable auditor network worldwide. Additionally, GSTC continues to refine its database management and assessment procedures to further elevate the effectiveness and reliability of the training program.

The Auditor Training remains a cornerstone of the GSTC Certification Program, reinforcing the high standards necessary for sustainable tourism practices and ensuring the integrity of the GSTC Standards in the global certification process.

GSTC Recognition

GSTC Recognition is a designation granted to sustainable tourism standards that align with the GSTC Standards, ensuring a globally accepted baseline for sustainability practices in tourism. It confirms that a standard is equivalent to the GSTC Standards and is administered by a standard owner that meets GSTC requirements. However, Recognition applies solely to the standard itself—not to the organization, certification process, or verification methods. The Recognition process promotes transparency and credibility by assessing that sustainability standards within a standard do not contradict the GSTC Standards. While the program supports sustainable management, local community benefits, and cultural heritage preservation, Recognized Standards will have the opportunity to gain visibility through GSTC’s Market Access Program and promotional channels. Additionally, it provides a pathway for certification programs to pursue GSTC Accreditation.

Along with the end of 2024, significant updates were implemented to clarify the role of GSTC Recognition and address market confusion. Notably, GSTC introduced new eligibility standards in 2023, requiring standards used for certification to transition into GSTC-accredited certification bodies (CBs) or establish a Certification Scheme with GSTC by December 31, 2024. This change ensures that Recognition does not imply certification quality or oversight but rather confirms alignment with the GSTC Standards. Additionally, GSTC continues to allow national programs endorsed by legitimate public authorities to maintain their Recognition status, acknowledging the role of public policy in sustainable tourism governance.

Many existing Recognized Standard Owners have committed to becoming GSTC-accredited or conducting certification only in collaboration with GSTC-accredited certification bodies, adopting the new eligibility that came into force by December 31, 2024.

Highlights 2024



In 2024, GSTC hosted 12 Auditor Training sessions, with a total of 350 participants from across the globe.

In 2024, 87.14% of participants successfully passed the written exam, further strengthening the auditor pool for GSTC Certification.



The GSTC announced that sustainable tourism standards for the MICE sector can now apply for GSTC Recognition in May 2024.

Working Group Activities

The Working Groups are made up of **GSTC Members working together** with a focus on an area that needs special attention. Their efforts are vital to the organization as they prepare an annual action plan, which is followed by actions by the members of the Working Group.

Destination Stewardship Working Group (DSWG)

The Destination Stewardship Working Group aims to assist destinations in maintaining their cultural, environmental and socio-economic integrity through the implementation of the GSTC Destinations Program. The overall goal is to ensure that destinations retain and enhance their distinctive attributes that make them attractive to beneficial tourism and competitive. See current DSWG members [here](#).

In 2024, the DSWG hosted expert speakers, discussed measurement and monitoring tools, provided feedback on the development of a self-assessment tool and case study knowledge management, created a survey to gather exemplary examples of Criterion A1 Destination Management Responsibility, and held discussions on other key topics related to destination stewardship globally.

Research & Academic Working Group (RAWG)

The Research & Academic Working Group supports the GSTC’s activities concerning internal and external communications, content curation, knowledge management, and networking. See current RAWG members [here](#).

MICE Working Group (MICE WG)

The MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Events) Working Group’s focus in 2023 was to support the GSTC MICE Standard development process. The expertise of its members is significant to the process. Other goals are to reach new audiences and attract membership from the MICE world. See current MICE WG members [here](#).

Business Travel Working Group (BTWG)

The Business Travel Working Group (BTWG) seeks to reach new audiences and attract membership among Corporate Travel Managers (CTM), Corporate Travel Program (CTP), and suppliers. While most destinations and hotels accommodate tourists and business clients, it is important to acknowledge the specialized needs and opportunities in the business market. The BTWG enables GSTC to address these better and ensure sustainability standards are relevant in the corporate and business travel sector. See current BTWG members [here](#).

Italy Working Group (Italy WG)

With many GSTC Members active in Italy working together to promote the GSTC framework, a dedicated working group focused on activities in Italy. See current Italy WG members [here](#).

India Working Group (India WG)

As the name suggests, the GSTC is truly global. We have a dedicated Director and working group focused on India. More information about India WG India [here](#).

Greece Working Group (GWG)

Given our global reach, the GSTC is committed to addressing the unique needs of various regions. To this end, we have a specialized Working Group focused on Greece. Find out more about GSTC’s initiatives in Greece [here](#).

New in
2024

ISEAL Landscape Project

The **GSTC has been an ISEAL Community Member since 2021**. Years of dedicated effort have been directed towards aligning with ISEAL's principles and applying them within the travel and tourism industry. Continuous references in GSTC's bylaws underscore this commitment. ISEAL works in partnership with associations and organizations to support their sustainability systems and tack some of the practices in terms of credibility.

In 2022, GSTC participated in a project to re-evaluate two key destinations—Dubrovnik, Croatia, and Sukhothai Historic Park, Thailand—to measure changes since previous assessments and improve data verification processes.

The reassessments provided insights into refining indicators, ensuring data reliability, and addressing challenges such as stakeholder knowledge gaps and language barriers. GSTC highlighted the importance of timely stakeholder engagement and proposed a post-assessment monitoring tool to support ongoing improvements in destination sustainability.

Main Goal

The main goal of the research was to find ways to create a data system that could enhance the credibility, validity, and transparency of the data collected on the field. An ongoing evaluation method including proactive and consistent stakeholder engagement can strengthen the robust verification process across the multiple sources of data.

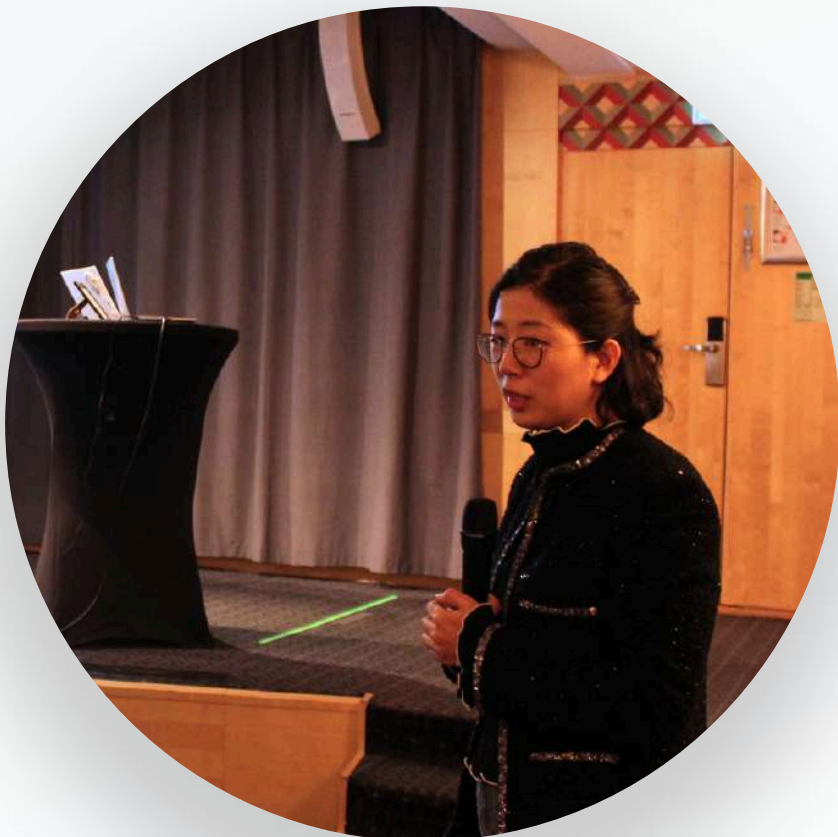
GSTC's Destination Assessment Program was used as the primary methodology to devise a mechanism for verifying the data collected. A reassessment was conducted on the socio-economic and environmental impacts of two destinations. Re-assessment are an instrumental tool in evaluating processes, substantiated by empirical evidence.

This ongoing evaluation method ensures for a consistent quality data collection.

This pilot project allowed GSTC to improve the data verification process for destination assessments. Key findings were included in ISEAL's Pilot Project Learning Report 2024, and the research was presented at the GSTC Academic Symposium in Stockholm, Sweden in April 2024. Overall, re-assessments are an instrumental tool in evaluating progress, substantiated by empirical evidence.

The implication of the research is to see how re-evaluation can contribute to verification of data. Secondary data collection; review of initial assessments; identifying gaps; interview with stakeholders and in-depth interviews with professional destination assessors concluded that the collection process in order to receive verified data needs an evaluation method that does not conclude with a one-time assessment. This ongoing evaluation method ensures for a consistent quality data collection. The points highlighted from the research are:

- 1 having more measurable and objective indicators;
- 2 liaising of the destination stakeholders and the assessor in advance of field trips;
- 3 collaborative efforts across the entities at the destination; and
- 4 implementing a monitoring tool for post-assessment that the destination stakeholders can use for continuous improvement.



Market Access Program

The GSTC Market Access Program (MAP) is a key initiative designed to promote certified sustainable businesses by enhancing their visibility to travelers and major travel platforms, such as Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and buyers of hotel space.

This program aims to **provide travelers with transparent access to sustainable choices**. For certified hotels, the program actively promotes certified hotels through leading OTAs, enhancing their visibility in the market. Regular updates on certified properties are provided to OTA partners to facilitate this promotion.

How the Market Access Program Works

Through the MAP, GSTC collaborates with OTAs and buyers of hotel space to integrate a filtering system that highlights sustainable hotels based on reliable certifications. This system prioritizes accommodations with an accredited certification, reinforcing the credibility of sustainable tourism practices and meeting the growing demand for responsible travel options. Additionally, a secondary filter allows for temporary inclusion of accommodations verified to GSTC-Recognized Standards, supporting the transition toward full accreditation in the near future.

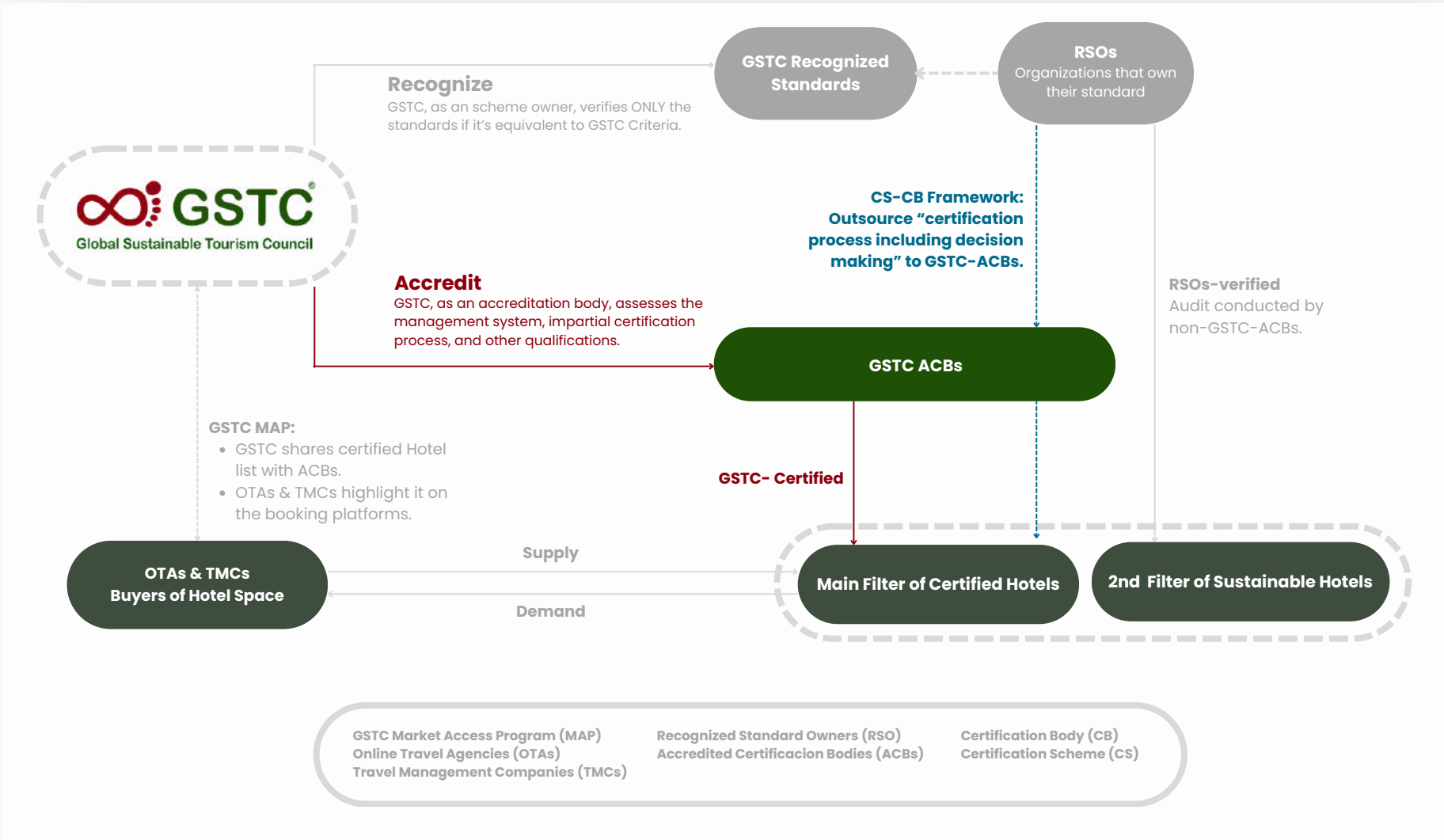
Some of the Market Access Program participants include Hotelbeds/HBX, Traveloka, Trip.com, Hostelworld, Klook, Amex GBT, BCD Travel, EasyJet Holidays, TUI, and more.

"The Market Access Program continues to strengthen the position of GSTC-certified hotels by increasing their visibility in key markets. Our OTAs and partners play a key role in showcasing these hotels, further strengthening their credibility and presence in the global market," says **Julieta Battilana**, **Market Access & Events Coordinator at GSTC**.

 For more information about MAP, find [here](#).

New In 2024

As part of the GSTC Market Access Program, Trip.com, one of the world’s leading online travel platforms, has introduced a new feature that highlights hotels and accommodations certified by a GSTC-accredited certification body. This initiative enhances visibility for certified sustainable businesses, allowing travelers to easily identify and book accommodations that meet the highest standards of sustainability. By displaying "Certified Sustainable" labels, Trip.com empowers consumers to make responsible travel choices while encouraging more hotels to pursue accredited certification.



05

Conferences

Since 2011, GSTC has been organizing Global Sustainable Tourism Conferences in various locations worldwide, bringing together tourism stakeholders to advance sustainability in the travel and tourism industry. Previous conferences have been held in destinations such as [Antalya \(Türkiye, 2023\)](#), [Seville \(Spain, 2022\)](#), [Azores \(Portugal, 2019\)](#), and [Maun \(Botswana, 2018\)](#), among many others.

In 2024, GSTC hosted two Global Conferences: [GSTC2024 Sweden](#) in Stockholm and [GSTC2024 Singapore](#) in Sentosa, both of which attracted worldwide participation and addressed key topics in sustainable tourism.



GSTC2024 Sweden

When: April 23rd to April 26th, 2024.

Where: Stockholm, Sweden.

Participants: 500+ delegates from more than 50 countries, with additional participants joining via live broadcast.

Venues: The conference was held at Royal Djurgården, utilizing multiple venues, including Cirkus, Hasselbacken, the Museum of Technology, the Maritime Museum, and the Museum of Ethnography.

About:

Her Royal Highness of Sweden, Crown Princess Victoria, attended the opening ceremony alongside prominent speakers, including former Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, Visit Sweden CEO Susanne Andersson, and GSTC Chair Luigi Cabrini. Discussions covered essential topics such as biodiversity conservation, food waste reduction, sustainable mobility, accessibility, and innovation in tourism.

As part of the event, four GSTC Training programs were conducted, including the GSTC Sustainable Tourism Course, GSTC Accessibility and Social Impact in Tourism Course, and GSTC Auditor Training. Additionally, the II GSTC Academic Symposium provided a platform for researchers to present the latest developments in sustainable tourism. A total of 90 industry professionals joined the training from across Europe and globally.

Sustainability was at the core of the conference operations. Visit Sweden sponsored the event's carbon footprint calculation and offsetting. Single-use plastics were eliminated, and all meals served were strictly vegetarian, with many vegan options. Digital solutions replaced printed materials, and public transportation was encouraged.

The largest GSTC Conferences to date

GSTC2024 Singapore

When: November 13th to November 16th, 2024.

Where: Sentosa, Singapore.

Participants: 500+ delegates from 55 countries, with additional viewers joining via live broadcast.

Venues: Equarius Hotel, Resorts World Sentosa.

GSTC-certified Hotel

About:

Key speakers included Mr. Alvin Tan, Minister of State for Trade and Industry & Culture, Community and Youth, who announced the new GSTC Attraction Standard alongside GSTC Chair, Luigi Cabrini. Industry leaders from organizations such as Traveloka, Resorts World Sentosa, and the Singapore Tourism Board contributed insights on sustainable tourism practices, innovation, and collaboration.

Preceding the conference, GSTC conducted four training sessions, covering topics such as the GSTC Sustainable Tourism Course for Industry Professionals, GSTC Accessibility and Inclusive Travel Course, and a GSTC Auditor Training.

A strong focus on sustainability was integrated throughout the event. Green Evolution sponsored carbon footprint calculation and offsetting, while other innovative sustainability measures included eliminating single-use plastics, using recyclable TESLIN badges and biodegradable bamboo lanyards, and implementing upcycling and recycling programs in collaboration with Cloop, a circular fashion enterprise. The event also featured eco-friendly materials such as foldable cardboard furniture, honeycomb cardboard backdrops, and PVC-free banners. Additionally, locally sourced, plant-based catering was provided, and digital materials replaced printed ones to minimize paper waste. To further encourage sustainable travel, the Singapore Tourism Board provided e-cards for attendees who chose to offset their flight emissions.

First GSTC Latin American and Caribbean Summit

First LATAM & Caribbean GSTC Summit

When: May 27th to May 29th, 2024.

Where: Santa Marta, Colombia.

Participants: 150 attendees from over 25 countries.

About:

In May, the GSTC hosted its first GSTC Latin American and Caribbean Summit in Santa Marta, Colombia, marking a major milestone in our mission for sustainable tourism. The invitation-only event gathered 150 attendees from over 25 countries, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange on sustainability, climate action, and conservation.

Key highlights included panel discussions, workshops, and the signing of a regional declaration on sustainable tourism at the historic Quinta de San Pedro Alejandrino. This Summit strengthened regional cooperation reinforcing participants' commitment to a more sustainable and regenerative tourism industry in the region.



Born In 2024

Yuluca Alliance

Advancing Sustainable Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Yuluca Alliance (AYLAC), an initiative launched by the GSTC in 2024, is a milestone for sustainable tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Established following the First GSTC Latin American and Caribbean Summit in Santa Marta, Colombia, the Alliance works under a shared commitment to promote sustainable practices in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Named after the indigenous Kogui word “Yuluca”, symbolizing unity and the connection between people and nature, the Yuluca Alliance is structured to tackle tourism challenges and advance sustainability in the continent. To achieve this, the AYLAC has established three key working groups in alignment with the 2030 Agenda:

Tourism, Conservation, and Climate Change

Focused on the development of sustainable tourism that conserves ecosystems, mitigates climate change and promotes environmental adaptation.

Hosts: Local Communities and Tourism Service Providers

Focused on developing cooperation to strengthen sustainable tourism, support communities and promote responsible practices among service providers.

Purposeful Travel: Lessons Learned

Focuses on developing experiences and learning about how travel can have a positive impact through community engagement, combining sustainability, education and purpose.

Since its launch, AYLAC has held key meetings to define objectives, methodology, and work processes, paving the way for collaborative action and long-term impact in the region.



06

GSTC-Committed

New In 2024

In 2024, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, Booking.com, and Ascott Limited gained GSTC-Committed status. Gaining GSTC-Committed status confirms that tourism entities have adopted the GSTC Standards with a clearly documented plan and implementation that the GSTC reviewed. The purpose of this program is to reward genuine practitioners of sustainable tourism, which builds confidence and credibility with consumers.

What is GSTC-Committed?

GSTC-Committed refers to an organization's pledge to fully implement the GSTC Standards in its policy and operational guidelines. This process involves engaging with their stakeholders, including staff, partners, suppliers, or members. By committing to the GSTC Standards, an organization can plan and implement internal improvements while also influencing its stakeholders and supply chain.

GSTC-Committed Status

Gaining GSTC-Committed status confirms that an organization has adopted the GSTC Standards with a clearly documented plan and implementation, which the GSTC reviewed. GSTC-Committed does not ensure certification, accreditation, or recognition, but only that the GSTC Standards are implemented to the organization's policy, plan, and operation.

GSTC-Acknowledged Organizations

The GSTC Acknowledges the commitment of Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA) to the adoption of the GSTC Standards.

For more information, visit [GSTC-Committed](#)

*"GSTC-Committed refers to the company's long-term commitment to GSTC Standards and sustainability, not just the sustainability section of the company or a one-time commitment. We appreciate GSTC-Committed members' long and serious commitment to GSTC Standards," says **Emi Kaiwa, Asia Pacific Manager at GSTC.***



07

GSTC Sponsors

GSTC Platinum Sponsor



GSTC Gold Sponsor



The GSTC is supported by various sponsors committed to promoting sustainable tourism. Traveloka, Southeast Asia's leading travel platform, became **GSTC's first-ever Platinum Sponsor in May 2024**. This partnership underscores Traveloka's dedication to enhancing sustainability standards within the travel and hospitality industry.

Traveloka first joined GSTC in 2022, where it pledged to foster a more sustainable and responsible global tourism ecosystem. Since becoming a member, Traveloka has led by example and driven multiple regional initiatives, such as sponsoring sustainable tourism courses for hotels and government agencies across Southeast Asia. Traveloka also introduced features to enable users to identify and book hotels with sustainability certifications aligned with GSTC Standards.

"As Traveloka strives to connect more Southeast Asian travelers with global tourism destinations, we are solidifying our commitment to responsibly managing the sustainability impact of our business and travelers who use our platform," said Caesar Indra, President of Traveloka. "By becoming GSTC's first-ever Platinum Sponsor, we are strengthening our pledge to foster a more responsible global tourism industry so that future generations can continue to experience the joys and pleasures of travel."

GSTC Gold Sponsors were the Türkiye Tourism Promotional and Development Agency (TGA), Tourism Fiji, and Visit Sweden, whose generous support and commitment to sustainable tourism aligns with GSTC's mission to drive positive change in the global travel industry.

08

Zero Tolerance Policy

In 2024, the GSTC reinforced its commitment to ethical tourism by introducing a Zero Tolerance Policy to address critical issues affecting the industry.

This policy takes a firm stance against child labor, human exploitation, discrimination, wildlife abuse, and the excessive use of single-use plastics. This zero-tolerance policy represents the GSTC's unwavering commitment against these harms. By implementing this policy, GSTC calls upon all tourism stakeholders—including businesses, governments, certification bodies, and individuals—to adopt aligned measures and take concrete action to eliminate these harmful practices from their operations and destinations.

The policy reinforces GSTC’s global Standards, which demand ethical business practices, protection of human rights, and environmentally responsible tourism. GSTC’s enforcement framework requires strict compliance, and it expects accredited and recognized certification schemes to rigorously evaluate practices linked to these issues and report occurrences without delay.

The GSTC aspires for this policy to inspire all tourism stakeholders to embrace a culture of prevention and continuous improvement, actively reporting any cases. This initiative is willing to ensure that the industry contributes positively to both people and the planet. By promoting best practices and fostering accountability, the Zero Tolerance Policy is a significant step toward building a fair, ethical, and sustainable future for global tourism.

🔍 For more information, read [here](#).

"Since the inception of the GSTC Standards the GSTC has maintained a strict zero-tolerance policy. Achieving sustainability requires protecting people, animals, and their environments. We aim to make a better world through sustainable tourism, to the extent that highlighting this policy becomes unnecessary," says **Dr. Mihee Kang, Chief Assurance Officer at GSTC.**



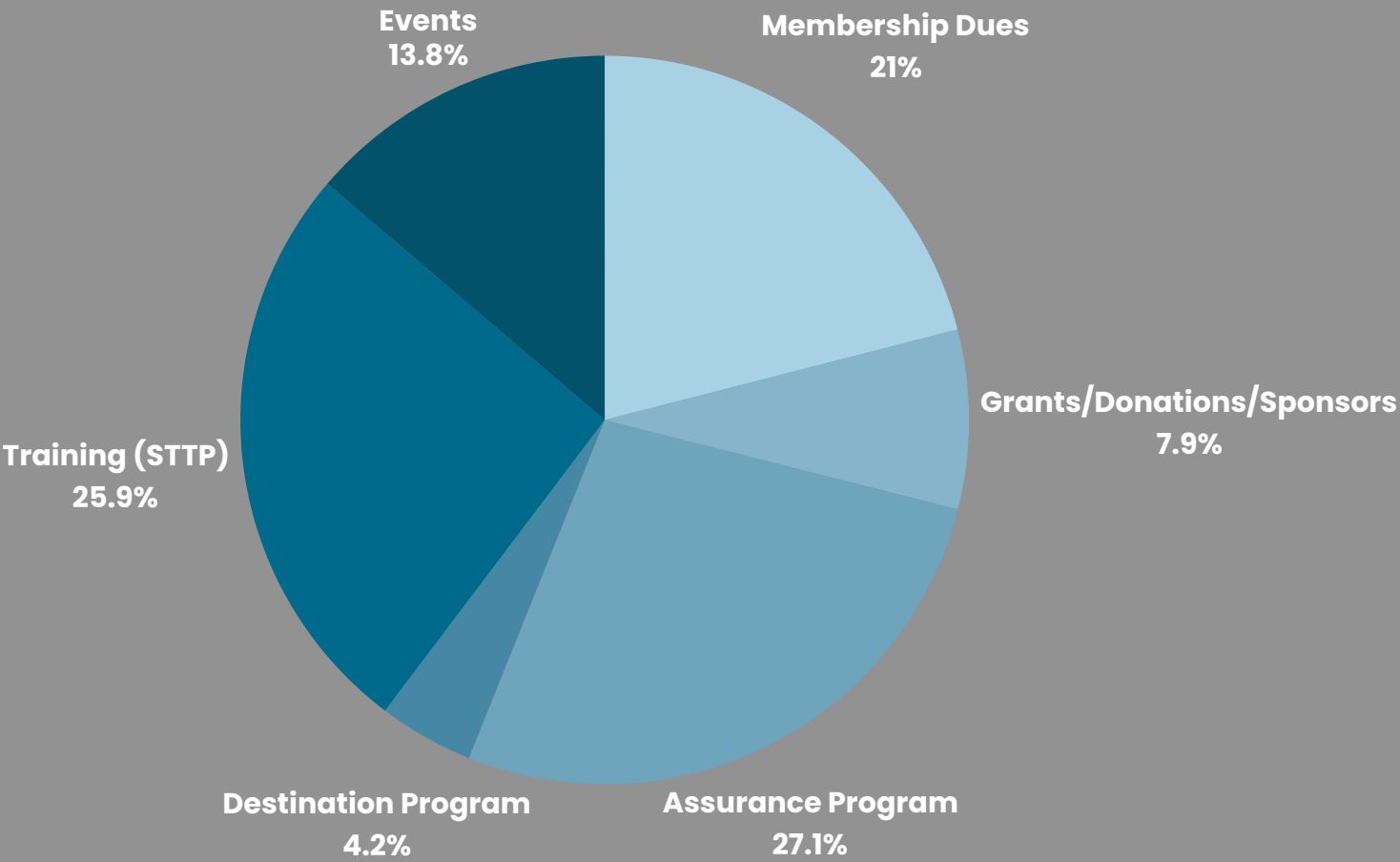
09

Our Finance

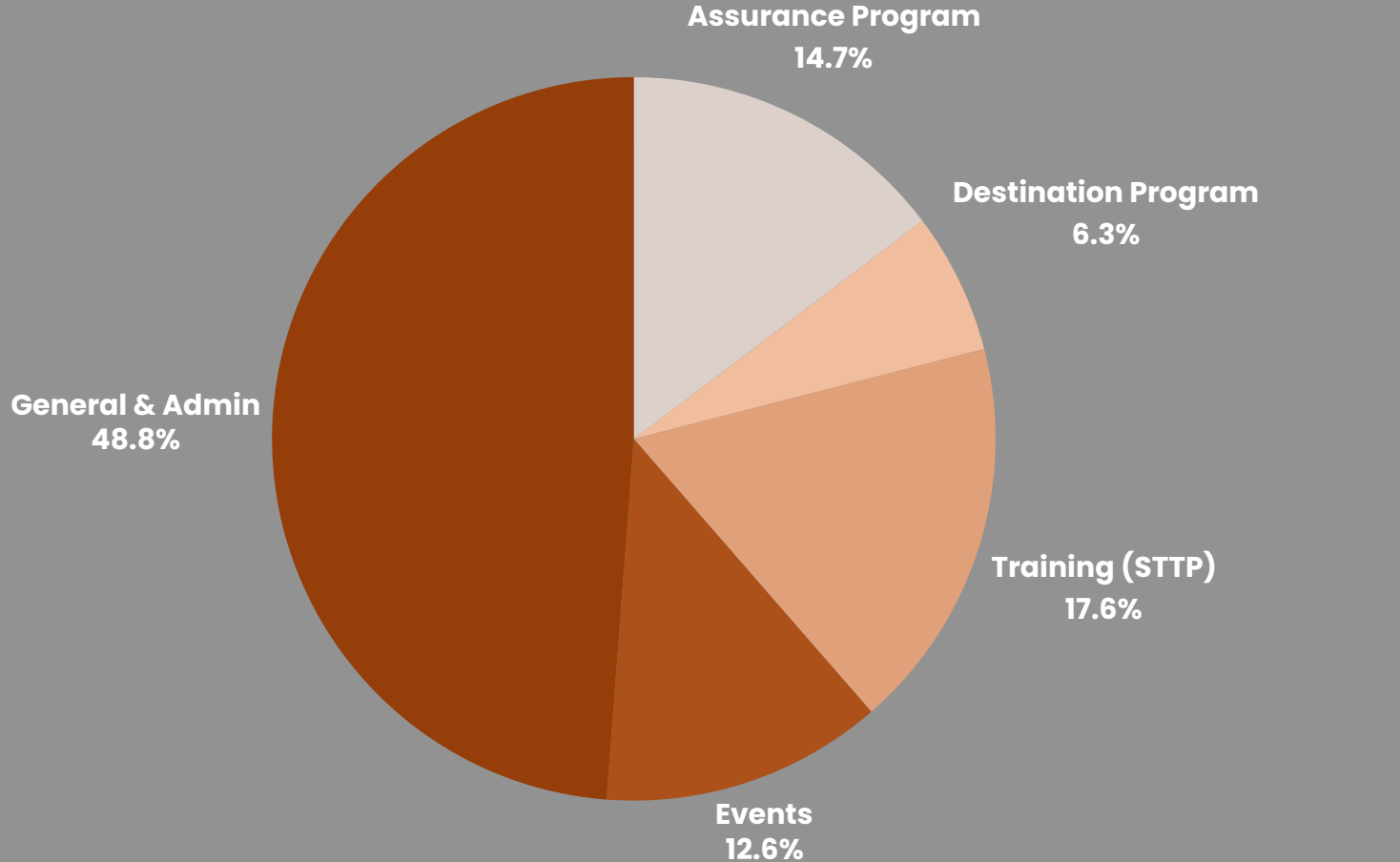
The Training Program, Assurance Program, and Membership continued to experience steady revenue growth, contributing to a total revenue of \$2.4 million USD—1.5 times higher than in 2023.

With the in-house accreditation operations launched on October 1st, 2023, we made significant investments in human resources to support this transition. Notably, the Assurance Program generated the highest revenue in 2024, including multiple revenue streams such as accreditation fees, assurance programs, auditor training, and license fees. This growth reflects the increasing demand for high-quality accreditation services, reinforcing our commitment to maintaining rigorous standards and supporting industry professionals worldwide.

Revenue 2024 – \$2.4 million



Expenses 2024 – \$2.2 million



09

Future Directions

As we conclude the GSTC Annual Report for 2024, we build upon a year characterized by significant achievements and renewed dedication to our vision: tourism realizing its potential as a **force for social, cultural, and economic good** while removing and avoiding any adverse environmental and social impacts.

Building on our core activity of developing international standards, GSTC will continue this work. The development and publication of the GSTC Food & Beverage Standard will be prioritized in 2025. Revision of the GSTC Industry Standard for Hotels and Tour Operators will continue in 2025, setting the stage for widespread adoption of these updated standards in the second half of 2025 and beyond. We will also launch a comprehensive revision of the GSTC Destination Standard in 2025, ensuring its continued relevance and impact. Through these efforts, and our ongoing core activities of **providing assurance for sustainable tourism, making destinations sustainable, promoting market access, and increasing knowledge**, we are poised to make even greater strides in fostering a more sustainable and responsible travel industry.

Looking ahead and recognizing the diverse needs of tourism businesses and governments, we are committed to deepening our regional engagement through customized training programs, language adaptations of our tools and resources, and strategic partnerships with local organizations.

We remain steadfast in our dedication to this journey, working in close collaboration with our members, partners, and stakeholders to drive positive change. Our mission to be an agent of change in the world of sustainable travel and tourism continues to inspire our efforts to enhance the knowledge, understanding, adoption, and demand for sustainable tourism practices globally. We will persist in our pursuit of making an impact, ensuring that tourism not only meets but exceeds its potential as a force for global good. **We extend our gratitude for your unwavering support and commitment to our shared objectives.**

GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2024



April 2025