

SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION

**Guide to certifications for accommodation
within the DERTOUR Group portfolio**



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Sustainability Certification

Sustainability certifications can help travellers when choosing accommodation. They indicate that a hotel or other accommodation has met the requirements of a sustainability standard and has undergone independent audits or certification processes. Depending on the standard, these certifications assess a range of environmental, social and economic aspects of business operations.

Together with our data partner Fairweg, the DERTOUR Group has identified around 30 sustainability certifications that are based on transparent standards and include independent auditing and monitoring procedures. Accommodation holding at least one of these established certifications is marked with the **'engage' signet**.

The signet is used to consistently highlight certified accommodation within the DERTOUR Group portfolio and to provide travellers with additional guidance. It is not a certification itself. The underlying certification is clearly indicated in the respective offer.



Further information and descriptions of the selected certifications can be found in the table below.

Certificate	Description
Austrian Ecolabel 	The Austrian Ecolabel is one of the best-known certifications in the travel industry. It is restricted to hotels in Austria that operate more sustainably. Both the criteria list and the assessment process are publicly available. Both impose high standards on participating hotels. Only the long validity period of four years is less stringent compared to other certifications.
Biosphere 	Hotels that meet the certification requirements commit to implementing a comprehensive set of criteria and setting annual objectives to support the continuous development of their sustainability performance. The criteria are based on the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), incorporate ESG criteria (environmental, social and governance) and comply with the relevant international and European standards and guidelines. The certification scheme is a member of the Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance (TSCA).
Certification for ST 	The Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) is a sustainability certification awarded by the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT). It assesses tourism businesses against environmental, social and economic criteria. The certification aims to encourage sustainable practices, support the involvement of local communities and contribute to environmental protection.

Chile Sello S 	The Chile Sello S (SERNATUR) certificate recognises the sustainable efforts of accommodation providers in Chile. This sustainability certification for tourism businesses is verified through independent third-party audits and assesses compliance with sustainability criteria across various areas.
EarthCheck 	EarthCheck is a long-established sustainability certification programme in the tourism sector. The certificate is awarded for two years and involves a comprehensive on-site audit. The criteria that a hotel must meet to obtain the certificate are comprehensive and publicly available. At each audit, which is carried out by an external third party, the accommodation must demonstrate improvement compared to the previous audit.
Ecotourism Australia 	Ecotourism Australia certification recognises accommodation providers in Australia that can demonstrate a convincing and comprehensive commitment to sustainable practices. The certification takes environmental, economic and social sustainability criteria into account and is a member of the Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance (TSCA).
Good Travel 	The Good Travel Seal is a sustainability certification for tourism businesses such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels and holiday accommodation. It recognises accommodation providers that meet environmental, social and economic sustainability standards. The certification is divided into three levels, depending on the scope of the businesses' sustainability efforts. An audit is carried out every two to three years, alternating between an on-site audit and a remote audit. The certification is a member of the Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance (TSCA).
Green Globe 	The Green Globe certification is available to hotels worldwide that meet the certification requirements and is valid for two years. To be eligible to display the seal, a comprehensive questionnaire must first be completed. This questionnaire includes 40 mandatory criteria that must be met in all cases. The information provided is then verified on-site during an audit. The certification scheme is a member of the Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance (TSCA).
Green Growth 2050 	The Green Growth 2050 Global Standard comprises over 400 CSR and sustainability indicators. To be certified under the Green Growth 2050 Global Standard, every hotel must meet all the mandatory indicators. Green Growth 2050 certification is determined through an annual assessment process. Annual on-site audits take place alternately as part of a certification assessment and a surveillance assessment.

Green Key 	Green Key operates worldwide as a certifying body for sustainable tourism businesses. The assessment process involved in obtaining certification is complex and comprehensive for a hotel. It begins with a situation analysis and the formulation of a strategy to achieve sustainability targets. These are reviewed and, where necessary, expanded during each on-site audit, which takes place annually at the outset and then every three years. The aim is for every certified hotel to improve steadily over the years. The certification scheme is a member of the Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance (TSCA).
Green Key Global 	The Green Key Eco-Rating Programme is one of the leading certification schemes for sustainable hotels in North America. It was developed specifically for the hotel and events sector and has been recognising establishments in Canada and the USA for their commitment to sustainability for over 30 years. Green Key Global is a member of the Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance (TSCA). The Green Key certificate (see above) is responsible for certifications outside Canada and the USA.
Green Star 	The Green Star Hotel Programme is a national certification scheme specifically tailored to the Egyptian hospitality sector. It supports Egyptian hotels and resorts in making all aspects of their operations more sustainable. This applies to environmental, social and economic aspects alike.
GreenSign 	The GreenSign certificate is valid for three years. Its comprehensive criteria catalogue is publicly available. During the assessment, areas for improvement are identified and targets are set from the first certification onwards. To retain the GreenSign seal, hotels must achieve these targets by the latest certificate renewal.
GreenStep ST 	GreenStep Sustainable Tourism offers an assessment and verification programme for sustainable businesses in North America through its standards. It provides various tools and advisory services to support tourism businesses in their sustainability initiatives. The GreenStep standards are based on the four pillars of environment, social, culture and management principles.
GSTC by Bureau Veritas 	Bureau Veritas offers businesses a clear pathway to demonstrate compliance with GSTC standards and sustainability practices. Through consultancy, training and certification based on the renowned GSTC criteria, Bureau Veritas supports businesses in implementing responsible and environmentally friendly practices.

GSTC by Control Union  	Control Union is a GSTC-accredited certification body for tourism organisations. The criteria set out in the GSTC standards are mandatory and must be met to achieve certification. GSTC accreditation plays a key role in ensuring the impartiality, quality, competence and credibility of the process and the certification itself.
GSTC by DCA  	DCA (Dream&Charme) is a GSTC-accredited certification body for hotels worldwide (excluding China). The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) administers the GSTC criteria – the global standards for sustainable travel and tourism – and acts as an international body. DCA guarantees the highest levels of impartiality and independence when assessing certified accommodation in accordance with its own established regulations (Standard D&C 2023).
GSTC by GCL  	GCL International Ltd is a GSTC-accredited certification body based in the UK. The aim of GSTC accreditation is to ensure a higher level of assurance and to recognise organisations that are actively committed to more sustainable tourism. GCL specialises in the assessment, inspection, training and certification of various product and management systems.
GSTC by RoyalCert  	RoyalCert is a GSTC-accredited certification body for tourism businesses. RoyalCert carries out an on-site audit to verify the company's compliance with the GSTC criteria. Businesses must demonstrate their sustainable practices as part of this two-stage audit. The first stage of the audit consists of a document review, followed by an on-site certification audit.
GSTC by TÜV Rheinland  	TÜV Rheinland's GSTC accreditation confirms that, as a certification body, it has demonstrated its competence and impartiality in certifying organisations and/or destinations, whilst adhering to the processes and procedures set out in the GSTC Accreditation Manual. This includes adherence to a transparent and impartial certification process and the use of qualified personnel to assess compliance in the field of sustainable tourism.
GSTC by UCSL  	UCSL (United Certification Systems Ltd) is a GSTC-accredited certification body and offers GSTC certification worldwide for hotels, accommodation providers and tour operators. UCSL supports organisations on their journey towards GSTC certification, which is recognised as the global benchmark for sustainable tourism and is supported by UNEP and UNWTO.

GSTC by Vireo Srl 	The GSTC by Vireo certificate is based entirely on the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's (GSTC) criteria for sustainable accommodation. Unlike other certification schemes, Vireo does not offer any consultancy services either before or during the audit, which must be carried out by an external independent body. This ensures a high degree of independence. Vireo analyses the audit report and, if the audit is successful, issues the certificate for a period of three years. Two follow-up audits take place during this three-year period.
Hoteles más Verdes 	The 'Hoteles más Verdes' standard is a sustainability programme for hotels developed by the Asociación de Hoteles de Turismo de la República Argentina (AHT).
ibex fairstay 	ibex fairstay is an independent Swiss sustainability label for tourism and accommodation businesses. It certifies hotels and other accommodation providers across five areas (management, ecology, regional focus, social responsibility and finance). Certification is awarded in four tiers, depending on the business's sustainability performance. The criteria catalogue is publicly available and comprehensive.
Preferred by Nature 	Preferred by Nature is one of the most rigorous certification schemes in the tourism sector. The scheme's criteria are comprehensive and include numerous mandatory requirements. These are thoroughly assessed on-site by an independent body as part of an audit. A hotel that receives the certification must agree to undergo annual inspections. Since May 2026, Preferred by Nature has been officially recognised as a GSTC-accredited certification body.
Sakura Quality 	Sakura Quality An ESG Practice is an ESG certification for accommodation providers originating in Japan. The certification aims to maintain and improve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in areas such as social engagement, cultural preservation and environmental practices within the hospitality industry. The certification process involves on-site inspections by experienced auditors, followed by a review by an independent and impartial third-party audit body.

Seychelles ST 	The Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label, rebranded as 'Sustainable Seychelles' in 2023, is a certification programme for sustainable tourism in the Seychelles. It was introduced in 2012 and aims to mitigate the negative economic, environmental and social impacts of tourism on the destination. The label is awarded to accommodation providers, restaurants and tour operators that implement sustainable practices in their operations.
Sustainable Berlin 	visitBerlin promotes the sustainable development of Berlin's tourism and events sector through the "Sustainable Tourism Berlin" programmes for providers in the leisure tourism sector. The 65 process-oriented criteria for the standards were developed based on internationally recognised frameworks such as ISO standards, the German Sustainability Code and the GSTC industry guidelines.
TourCert 	TourCert is one of the most rigorous certification schemes in the travel industry. Both the assessment process and the criteria assessed are publicly available. When a hotel is awarded the certificate, it undertakes not only to publish a comprehensive sustainability report, but also to demonstrate progress in its annual updates and during the next audit. TourCert is a member of the Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance (TSCA).
Travelife 	The Travelife certificate is one of the most widely recognised certificates in the tourism industry. It is awarded for a period of two years following an on-site audit, which must be carried out by an independent, expert body. The certificate's criteria catalogue is very comprehensive and sets out key priorities in all areas of sustainability, which must be met through clearly defined mandatory criteria. Travelife is a member of the Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance (TSCA).

Abbreviations used

- **ST** stands for 'Sustainable Tourism'.
- **GSTC** stands for 'Global Sustainable Tourism Council'. The GSTC is an international organisation that develops global criteria for more sustainable tourism and serves as a reference framework for sustainability certifications.
- **TSCA** stands for 'Tourism Sustainability Certifications Alliance'. The TSCA is an industry initiative comprising leading tourism certification bodies, with the aim of enhancing transparency, quality and comparability of sustainability standards in tourism.

Explanations regarding the selection of certificates

Not all sustainability certifications are based on the same requirements and assessment procedures. Therefore, only certifications that meet defined criteria relating to transparency, independent auditing and regular monitoring are considered.

Among other requirements, compliance with the certification criteria must be verified by independent auditors, and the underlying standards must be publicly accessible. Certification is generally based on on-site audits. In addition, certification schemes must be open to all accommodation providers that meet the relevant requirements, include regular re-certification procedures, and define clear rules for the suspension or withdrawal of certification.

The standards underlying these certifications cover various environmental, social and economic aspects of accommodation management and operations. Depending on the certification scheme, these may include areas such as energy and water consumption, working conditions, employee training, cooperation with local partners, and management and governance processes.

Certifications are renewed at regular intervals, typically every two to three years, and require continued compliance with the applicable criteria. This helps ensure that the certifications considered are based on transparent and verifiable requirements and can provide travellers with additional guidance when identifying accommodation that holds recognised sustainability certifications.

Contact

If you have any questions or comments regarding the list of certifications, please do not hesitate to contact the Corporate Responsibility Team at cr@dertour.com.