

International Tourism Partnership presents

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## Know How Guide: Sustainable Hotel Certification Schemes

By the International Tourism Partnership, via Green Hotelier

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**BUSINESS  
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International Tourism Partnership

The voice for social and environmental responsibility in the hotel industry

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## Introduction

This Know How Guide offers an introduction to sustainability certification for hotels. It will help you understand why you might seek certification and the key performance areas for sustainable hotel certification, as well as giving an overview of some of the most common certifications. In addition, this guide includes a spreadsheet overview of the key facts, and individual listings of the criteria and key details for each certification scheme .

Hotel certification schemes vary in application, region, complexity, price and more. Most include — to a greater or lesser degree — some focus on energy, water, waste, community engagement, heritage and biodiversity conservation, sustainable procurement, accountability and human resources practices, architecture and design, and some incorporate all these areas.

Certification schemes can be developed by non-profit organisations, private tourism organisations, governments or through multi-stakeholder groups. There are many certifications available, and as such there is debate around which of two methods of ‘performance-based’ and ‘process-based’ is the most effective way to measure impact:

- **Performance-based** certification schemes focus on progress and compliance with internal and external goals. Businesses are awarded and benchmarked based on their performance rather than their intent to improve.
- **Process-based** certification schemes are more procedural, focusing on setting up management systems that monitor and improve practices that relate to sustainability impact.<sup>1</sup>

Some schemes identified in this Know How Guide incorporate both of these approaches.

In July 2015 GreenHotelWorld.com<sup>2</sup> published a report on the proportion of hotels with ‘green’ certification. Based on a study of 130,000+ hotels worldwide. 6.2% were certified. The concentration by continent was:

North America 10.1%	Africa 3.7%
Europe 6.1%	South America 2.7%
Oceania 4.8%	Asia 0.9%

With over 140 certification labels globally, it is impossible to summarise all the schemes. This Know How Guide outlines the key points from nine of the most commonly used global certification schemes, and outlines the value of seeking certification.

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1. From ‘A Simple User’s Guide to Certification for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism, Centre for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development,  
2. From GreenHotelWorld.com, ‘Certified Green Hotel Density’ report, 2015

## Why get certified?

Certification may help a hotel to:

- Independently assess its environmental and social impact
- Identify ways to improve internal management processes
- Shift toward the use of cost saving sustainable technologies or practices
- Gain a competitive advantage through improving efficiencies and reducing operating costs
- Demonstrate compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements
- Satisfy corporate customers who are increasingly requesting information about their suppliers social and environmental initiatives
- Increase sales by appealing to environmentally conscious customers

The benefit of certification depends upon the scheme pursued. For example, some emphasise environmental resource use, others focus on cultural heritage impact.

In order to help you get to grips with the basics of some of the different certification schemes available, see our handy matrix which details costs, the process of certification and other useful information.

Below follows a short overview of some of the most popular certification schemes for hotels. We do not intend to recommend one certification scheme over another, but rather to offer a flavour of the different schemes. As such, we hope that this Know How Guide will help you decide which certification scheme would fit your business and sustainability goals.

# Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators

The [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#) (GSTC) has developed criteria that provide a baseline standard for certification schemes. In October 2016 GSTC will be publishing revised criteria after a public consultation. Until then, the [criteria](#) consider the following themes to be the minimum that any tourism business should aspire to:

- Effective sustainability planning
- Maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community
- Enhancing cultural heritage
- Reducing negative impacts to the environment

GSTC either 'approves' or 'recognises' certification schemes by these standards. Approval means that the criteria, processes and procedures meets the GSTC as well as other international standards of competency and transparency (which is currently under review) This has been applied to two global and one regional certification scheme to date:

- EarthCheck Company Standard
- Biosphere Responsible Tourism
- Ecotourism Australia

Hotels that are approved by the above standards are able to use the GSTC-Approved logo along with the awarded certification scheme's logo.

Recognition means that the certification scheme meets or aligns with the GSTC standard. Many more schemes have achieved this with the following at global level:

- Green Globe
- Green Growth 2050
- Rainforest Alliance
- Travelife Sustainability System
- Green Key
- Green Key Global
- Green Tourism Active

And these at a regional level:

- EU Ecolabel or Eco Flower
- Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) for hotels – Costa Rica
- Chile Sistema de Distinción en Turismo Sostenable – Chile
- Eco-Certification Malta
- Ecotourism Ireland Certification Programme
- European Ecotourism Labeling Standard (EETLS)
- Fair Trade Tourism – South Africa
- GREAT Green Deal Certification Program – Central America
- Green Star Hotel Certificate – Egypt
- Hoteles + Verdes (AHT) – Argentina
- Japan Environmentally Sustainable Accommodations International Standard (ESAIS)

## Certification schemes overview

### EarthCheck



**Number of questions by compliance area:**

**Environment – 66**

**Social – 19**

**Management – 30**

**Quality – 16**

**Ethics - 37**

EarthCheck Certified describes itself as the world's leading scientific environmental benchmarking and certification programme designed specifically for the travel and tourism industry. The EarthCheck programme is built on Agenda 21 principles and is currently used by 1,500 members, in 6 languages, across 32 sectors in more than 70 countries across the globe. The scheme is approved by GSTC.

The criteria for certification are publicly available against a fee of AUD175. With a total of over 160 questions and more than 450 data points to complete, the scope and depth of EarthCheck's assessment demonstrates that the certification is a sign of a robust sustainable business strategy and operations. As a performance based scheme, EarthCheck's process begins with benchmarking before certification. This involves analysing the business's sustainability performance quantitatively against a sector baseline and highlighting areas for improvement.

**Criteria questions for the programme range across the following areas:**

- Corporate governance details
- Activities, services and facilities
- Environmental, social and economic sustainability criteria
- Benchmarking data inclusive of: activity measures, energy consumption (grid electricity, stationary fuels, mobile fuels (air, road and water), onsite waste water treatment, water consumption (potable, recycled, water saving devices), waste production, waste incinerated, waste recycled, chemical usage, pesticide usage, community contributions, CO2 emissions, corporate social responsibility, energy per source and total costs, water per unit and total costs, waste per unit and total cost
- Risk management and action planning
- Communication

Questions assess the environmental and social sustainability policy and management systems to achieve best practice results in the key performance areas (outlined below) as well as return on sustainability investment.

## Key Performance Areas:

Greenhouse gas emissions	Land use planning and management
Energy efficiency, conservation and management	Air quality protection
Management of freshwater resources	Wastewater management
Ecosystem conservation and management	Solid waste management
Social and cultural management	Environmentally harmful substances

Applicants have to demonstrate how their employees and senior managers engage with the sustainability policy and whether it is communicated to all stakeholders. The company is expected to record data on the key performance indicators and demonstrate that the business is addressing their baseline performance. Environmental performance is assessed through energy, carbon, water, waste, CSR & community as well as supply chain calculators that are based on accepted methodologies, regulations and international standards, as for example the carbon calculator which is aligned to the IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories and ISO 14064. The system can produce GHG reports that align with HCMI (Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative).

Hotels develop or demonstrate the existence of a sustainability approach that addresses the key performance areas, based on the risk assessment of their setting – location, local impacts and size as measured through staff members and room numbers. Consideration must be demonstrated for potential impacts and planned responses to these to benefit the development of an environmental action plan. High-risk hotels require an Environmental Management System that serves to improve performance. EarthCheck assesses the hotel's environmental and social performance based on the key performance areas, with particular emphasis on energy efficiency and water stewardship.

By placing an emphasis on policy and management systems, the scheme encourages a business to put in place the foundations for efficient sustainability practice. EarthCheck's assessment of risk by local context gives relevance to a business's impacts. Certification is given to members when 100% compliance to the EarthCheck company standard is met and third party auditors have reviewed the verified the data submitted. Non-conformances need to be addressed within 90 days for certification to be awarded.

Membership to EarthCheck is paid annually and includes access to the cloud-based platform, a dedicated relationship manager, performance report and sustainability tools, guides and tips.

## Process of certification

1. Registration and payment to become EarthCheck member.
2. Collection and submission of benchmarking data to receive performance report.
3. Based on performance results, completion of self-assessment checklist with help of a dedicated Relationship Manager, the My EarthCheck online platform and available resources.
4. Independent third party verification from an EarthCheck approved auditor.
5. When certified, businesses must benchmark annually, maintain the self-assessment checklist and receive an on-site certification audited at least every 2 years. Audit duration is dependent on the size, scope and risk level of a property.

## Levels of assessment

*Bronze* - Benchmarked not certified

*Gold* - 5 to 9 years of continuous certification

*Silver* – Certified

*Platinum* - more than 10 years of continuous certification

*Master* – more than 154 years of continuous certification.

## Certified hotels include:

InterContinental, Hong Kong

The Langham, Boston

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## Biosphere Responsible Tourism



### Number of questions by compliance area:

**Environment – 35**

**Social – 19**

**Management – 8**

**Quality – 2**

**Ethics – 1**

Biosphere Responsible Tourism is a global scheme that meets the standards recognised by the Responsible Tourism Institute - a member of UNWTO that maintains a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with UNESCO. Established in 1995, it has certified 63 tourism businesses globally, 40 of which are hotels. This scheme is GSTC approved. As a performance based scheme, Biosphere Responsible Tourism expects the hotel properties they award to minimise their environmental and social impact to a minimal level whilst adding positive impacts. Awarded hotels therefore go above and beyond their sustainability capacity.

### Key performance areas:

- Responsible tourism policy
- Conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage
- Contribution to economic and social development of the destination
- Conservation of the environment

## Criteria

Users can access the Biosphere standard [online](#). To achieve certification the following management tools and resources must be developed to a high sustainability standard:

- Responsible tourism policy
- Action plan
- Staff motivation and training plan
- Responsible marketing
- Legal and regulatory compliance evidence
- Procedure for corrective actions

To achieve the objective of conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, hotels are expected to 'act in the interest of present and future communities'. This means that the hotel helps with the conservation of cultural resources and promotes the culture of the destination to the visitors. The hotel business participates in the economic and social development of the destination by engaging with key stakeholders of the community through supporting education, training and employment as well as welfare campaigns.

Environmental conservation is achieved to the Biosphere standard when impact is totally minimised or managed. This involves protection of landscape, biodiversity and soil, and thorough management and control of energy, water, waste, products and services, atmospheric emission, noise, light pollution.

Different to other schemes, Biosphere Responsible Tourism includes a comprehensive performance area regarding client satisfaction and involvement in responsible tourism. This assesses the hotel's engagement and awareness raising with the client and the client's behaviour in the setting.

## Levels of assessment

Single level of assessment – an entity either will or will not be certified.

## Process of certification

1. Registration and payment of fee
2. Upon registration, the user can access tools and services, such as training courses, public information management software, analytics and benchmarking to assist with applying for certification
3. Complete application
4. External audit
5. The Technical Committee evaluates the evidence and awards the certificate if criteria are met.
6. The user can then benefit from the Biosphere Responsible Tourism marketing.
7. Annual review of certification by external auditors

## Examples of certified hotels:

Hotel Melia Luxembourg

Hotel Krystal Grand Reforma, Mexico City

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## Green Globe



### Number of questions by compliance area:

**Environment – 222**

**Social – 17**

**Management – 98**

**Quality – 9**

**Ethics – 34**

Established by and for the travel industry over two decades ago, Green Globe operates in 90 countries and has certified 508 businesses to date. The scheme is recognised by GSTC and therefore meets the minimum criteria for a hotel property to meet GSTC's sustainability standards.

### Criteria

These are publicly available [online](#) covering Sustainable Management, Environmental, Cultural Heritage and Social / Economic areas. They include 44 core criteria supported by over 380 compliance indicators.

To become a Green Globe certified property, a hotel must demonstrate sustainable management processes in legal compliance, employee training, customer satisfaction, accuracy of promotional materials, design and construction, interpretation of the natural and cultural environment, communications strategy and health and safety.

A strong focus is on maximising economic impact and minimising social impact by investing in community development, local employment and entrepreneurs and fair trade. The business must have a code of conduct to respect local communities, have a policy against commercial exploitation, protect employees under international and national legislation, and pay a living wage. The business must demonstrate an equitable hiring procedure to maximise employment of women and local minorities, and progress them to management positions. Hotels certified by Green Globe must adhere to a code of behaviour verified by the standard to protect the cultural heritage of the destination.

On the environmental side, sources of energy and water must be identified, and renewable energy, wastewater and grey water used to the maximum level possible. Businesses also have to demonstrate that they are reducing pollution by controlling all sources of greenhouse gas emissions and taking measures to reduce or offset their carbon footprint. Processes and communications systems must be in place for waste management, purchasing policies and practices, and conserving biodiversity.

Green Globe recognises the importance of other key stakeholders in maintaining sustainability for a business, such as community, government, NGOs and private sector investors. As a process-based scheme it focuses on ensuring that there are systems in place to support sustainable management, while attaining specific goals for continuous improvement.

## Process of certification

1. Payment of Green Globe membership
2. Access the Green Globe Standard, Green Globe Solution Centre and the Green Globe Academy to fully understand the process of certification and to manage the audit process.
3. Business must meet 50% of compliance criteria to become certified
4. Independent third party on-site compliance audit completed
5. Certification issued.

## Levels of certification

Green Globe Certified

Green Globe Certified *Gold* (for 5 consecutive years of certification)

Green Global Certified *Platinum* (for 10 consecutive years of certification)

## Certified hotels:

Green Globe has certified hotels, resorts and tourism businesses across more than 60 countries and their membership includes small eco retreats through to large urban hotels.

## Examples of member hotels:

InterContinental London Park Lane

The Tryall Club Jamaica

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## European Ecolabel or EU Flower

### No of questions by compliance area:

**Environment – 41**

**Social – 9**

**Management – 1**

**Quality – 2**

**Ethics - 1**



The EU Ecolabel is recognised in 30 countries and over 44,000 products and services have been awarded the label. This scheme is certified by the European commission for Environment and recognised by the GSTC criteria. Any product or service supplied for distribution, consumption or use in the European Economic Area may apply for the label.

## Criteria

The criteria for the European Ecolabel are publicly available and are reviewed every four years. The current period ends in December 2016 when there will be a review process for renewals. As a performance based scheme, the EU Flower demonstrates a product or service that is kinder to the environment than its competitors. The criteria is tough, having been set by panels of experts from various stakeholder groups.

This standard focuses heavily on environmental sustainability and assesses the whole of the tourist accommodation service life cycle from extraction to disposal / recycling.

The technical criteria compliance requires documents such as declarations, evidence of manufacturers and relevant authorities for verification. The scheme analyses the use of sustainability materials and energy, water and chemical inputs to the production of products and services. The impact on biodiversity and disposal of waste is assessed to ensure minimal impact. On the social side, the criteria focus on the conditions of employment.

### **Process of Certification**

1. Check whether the property is eligible to apply with regional bodies.
2. Online application including evidence for proof of compliance with criteria
3. Within two months the competent body in each country will assess the application. Visits or audits may or may not be conducted. Users are requested to submit an application fee and an annual fee.
4. If the user meets the criteria with complete documentation and successful visit / audit then the competent body will award the EU Ecolabel. This allows the use of the EU Ecolabel logo. Continuing compliance with the standard is the responsibility of the licence holder.

### **Certified hotels:**

Scandic, Gdansk

Mercure Saint Malo Hotel, Balmoral

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## **Rainforest Alliance**

### **Number of questions by compliance area:**

**Sustainable Business Management – 101 indicators**

**Socio-cultural – 36 indicators**

**Environmental practices – 67 indicators**



As of June 2015 there were 80 Rainforest Alliance certified tourism operations located in 10 Latin America countries. Established in 1987, this scheme is currently available and fully operational in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is planned to expand the service into Asia, Africa and North America in the next two years (FY17 and FY18). A member of GSTC and recognised by the GSTC standard, the Rainforest Alliance logo is widely recognised due to its work in other industries such as sustainable agriculture and forestry.

### **Criteria**

[Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Tourism Standards](#) are publicly available and are separated into business, socio-cultural and environment fields. Outcomes and indicators are explained for each criterion, allowing a hotel or inbound tour operator to understand the scope and requirements for gaining certification. The depth of analysis in all key performance areas make this certification a robust assessment of a hotel's or inbound tour operator sustainability performance. Importantly, the candidate organization must meet at least a 70% of the overall applicable criteria and 100 percent of the critical indicators included within.

## **Key performance areas**

### **Business Field**

- Sustainable management planning
- Quality management
- Human resource management
- Safety management
- Communication and marketing management
- Food and beverage safety programme
- Supplier management
- Sustainability education

### **Socio Cultural Field**

- Contribution to Local Development;
- Legal and Ethical Labour Practices;
- Respect for Local Cultures and People; and
- Rescue and Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage.

### **Environmental Field**

- Climate Change;
- Rational Use of Water;
- Rational Use of Energy;
- Protection of Biodiversity;
- Conservation of Natural Areas;
- Prevention of Pollution; and
- Solid Waste Management.

The certification scheme is a mix of process and performance based indicators, and the Rain-forest Alliance requires that certified organisations undergo annual monitoring audits, however, certificates are issued for a three year period,

### **Process of certification**

1. Certified operations with scores of 70% or higher and 100% compliance with critical indicators are featured for promotional purposes in a new online database called [Green Your Travel](#).
2. Certified operations are granted a certificate for three years and gain access to different benefits, among the main ones are the following:

- Use of the Rainforest Alliance Certification Seal for promotional purposes
- Inclusion in the Green Your Travel Database
- Promotion among third party databases such as TRANSAT, Sustainable Visit, Green Leaders Programme by TripAdvisor.
- Option to obtain a second certification based on their Rainforest Alliance audit with Travelife for Hotels.

#### **Examples of certified hotels:**

Cock of the Rock Lodge, Peru

Fairmont Mayakoba, Mexico

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## **Travelife for Hotels and Accommodations**



**Number of questions by compliance area:**

**Environment – 64**

**Labour and Human Rights – 29**

**Management (including legislation, policies and communication – 34**

**Quality, supply chain and guest engagement – 12**

**Community integration – 18**

**Wildlife and Biodiversity - 6**

Very popular with the UK, German, Dutch, and Scandinavian outbound tour operator market, Travelife for Hotels and Accommodations – or more simply referred to as Travelife - is managed by ABTA – The Travel Association. Travelife is GSTC recognised and available globally. Travelife currently has 1,400 hotel members, c. 900 of them certified. A performance based scheme, Travelife aims to provide companies with realistic sustainability goals, tools and solutions to implement positive change within their businesses and supply chains.

Certified properties are highlighted in tour operator brochures of TUI, Thomas Cook, DER Touristik, across Europe and on booking sites such as Expedia and bookdifferent.com.

#### **Criteria**

[Travelife for Hotels and Accommodations](#) criteria and indicators are publicly available and clearly outline the documentary evidence required to demonstrate compliance. Application involves direct questions on performance rather than broad criteria and indicators. There is equal weighting on environmental and social sustainability to a good level of detail.

Compulsory criteria for certification:

- Adherence to business policies and legislation
- Human and financial resources
- Environmental management – energy use and maintaining records, water, solid waste, pollution / erosion, hazardous substances, wildlife

- Labour & human rights
- Community integration
- Suppliers
- Guests

Compulsory criteria for re-certification.

Evidence that the hotel is:

- Building on communicating progress
- Training staff in more areas of sustainability
- Deepening sustainability practices

### **Process of certification**

1. Registration with Travelife to become a subscribed member
2. Online self-assessment against Travelife's checklist
3. An independent Travelife audit is mandatory within 6 months of becoming a member and is valid for two years
4. If 'yes' is answered to all compulsory questions, then award is achieved

### **Levels of certification**

*Gold*

*Award of Excellence (under development)*

### **Certified hotels:**

Greotel Rhodos Royal, Greece

The Westin Grande Sukhumvit, Thailand

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## **Green Growth 2050**

Developed by Greearth.travel and VisionCSR, Green Growth 2050 intends to link sustainable tourism and corporate social responsibility in support of Green Growth.



Green Growth provides both certification scheme, performance measurement process and CSR impact analysis solutions. Green Growth 2050 currently serves Western Europe, Scandinavia, Portugal, Spain, UK, Asia, Australasia, the Pacific, North America and the Caribbean with the view to expand their network and reach more globally.

### **Criteria**

Green Growth 2050 criteria are not publicly available. From resources online Green Hotelier identified its key performance areas measured, below:

- Sustainability management
- Legal compliance
- Labour practices
- Health & safety
- Human rights
- Sustainable design & construction of buildings and infrastructure
- Sustainable operations – best practice
- Bribery & corruption
- Environmental stewardship – conserving resources
- Environmental stewardship – reducing pollution
- Environmental stewardship – conserving biodiversity
- Social & community development

### **Process of Certification**

1. Registration into the Green Growth 2050 network and payment of annual fee which allows businesses to engage with the partner network who can provide third-party auditing, training and professional service and consulting advice.
2. The business outlines how it complies with the certification criteria and uploads required documentation,
3. Third party audit.
4. Depending on level of achievement, Green Growth 2050 awards certification –Silver, Gold or Platinum – awarded according to level of compliance.
5. PR and Communications strategy developed with Green Growth 2050 to promote achievements.
6. Maintaining annual registration and onsite audits, the business should improve continuously to achieve higher levels of certification by measuring their performance.

### **Performance measurement**

Once certified, Green Growth 2050 ensures their members measure their performance through the following process:

1. Access to the InVision2050 performance management solution
2. Engagement with the partner network for consulting advice in maintaining the performance metrics and dashboards of your management tool.
3. Recoding historical data as well as ongoing monthly data entries.
4. Using reporting tool for monthly business intelligence, analytics etc.
5. Maintaining annual membership fee to access these services which enable the member to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

### **Certified hotels:**

Minor Hotel Group's 35 properties under the Anantara Brand are all participating in the Green Growth 2050 sustainability programme.

# Green Key



## Number of questions by compliance area:

Environment – 88

Social – 0

Management – 6

Quality – 13

Ethics - 0

Certified by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), Green Key is GSTC recognised. Green Key's particular focus is on sustainability management (lowering of environmental footprint) and sustainability awareness raising (education of staff and awareness raising with guests). There are 2,370 Green Key awarded hotels in 52 countries, predominantly in Europe.

## Criteria

Green Key criteria for hotels and hostels is [publicly accessible](#). Green key is a process based scheme that aims to lower environmental footprint through sustainability management in addition to raising awareness of sustainability to staff and guests. A key point is that Green Key requires that a business is decreasing its impact on the local environment each year of certification. It emphasises the importance of engaging staff and customers in environmental protection and 'green' activities.

Environmental Management	Food and beverage
Staff Involvement	Indoor Environment
Guest Information	Green areas
Water	Corporate social responsibility
Washing and cleaning	Green activities
Waste	Administration
Energy	

In addition, a blacklist of cleaning products is supplied. Some areas of the criteria require documented evidence. In all countries, there is a third-party verification of the award, either by a third-party auditor or by a National Jury taking the decisions regarding award/re-award. Re-application for renewals requires additional information, such as water and energy data, action, any relevant changes since the last review etc.

## Process of Certification

1. Self - assessment application form responding to questions for the areas outlined above.
2. Third-party audits in years 1 and 2, then every third year.
3. Once awarded, awarded establishments are supported through promotion on the Green Key website, news and seminars.
4. Green Key encourages their certified properties to improve their compliance with the criteria by 5% each year of certification, starting from the second year.
5. The award is valid for one year, so annual renewal takes place.

## Certified hotels

### [Radisson Blue Hotel Nairobi, Kenya](#)

Hotel Arctic, Greenland

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## Green Key Global

Green Key Global is owned and operated by the Hotel Association of Canada but the criteria are applicable globally. As well as the Green Key Eco-rating Programme for hotels, there is also the Green Key Meetings Programme that evaluates the sustainability of event facility meeting spaces.



### Criteria

The criteria for self-assessment are available once a hotel has become a member, but may be provided on [request](#). The criteria consist of performance-based questions covering the following areas:

**Corporate Environmental Management** - The hotel must demonstrate the existence of a written environmental policy, action plan, policies on IT, hazardous waste disposal, CFCs, exposure of guests to volatile organic compounds, and procedures for indoor environment complaints. Sustainability communications, training and education of employees, suppliers and guests are expected. Hotels can show their participations in sustainability activities outside the property with different stakeholders and the local communities. The hotel should demonstrate a formal sustainability reporting method, such as via CDP or annual reports.

**Housekeeping** – Green Key Global hones in on the operational details, daily practices and resources used in housekeeping activities. It inquires about practices that can help minimise environmental impact such as linen change opt-out schemes for guests, standard set-points for thermostats, housekeeping staff awareness, maintenance of light fixtures, use of motion sensors, training in green practices, in-room recycling options, refillable amenities etc.

**Conference & Meeting Services** – includes the lighting, heating and cooling, recycling facilities and waste management of meeting spaces and communication of environmental policies, programmes and features to planners and delegates.

**Food & Beverage Services** – this section takes a comprehensive look into the running of dining areas including energy saving procedures, refrigeration, water usage, food preparation practices, scale and impact of packaging and waste, sourcing (with an emphasis on local or grown on-site if possible), and use and disposal of oils and chemicals.

**Engineering & Maintenance** – the hotel must demonstrate that in the past three years performance audits on energy and water consumption have been made as well as improvements to operations and maintenance of the property. The hotel should monitor Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and track utilities and disposal costs. Hotels can achieve greater compliance by generating renewable energy on-site. The applicant is asked about the sources of building and construction materials and whether they hold any additional third-party environmental certifications such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology) and BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association).

## Process of certification

1. Registering for Green Key Global Eco-Rating scheme [online](#)
2. Completing the online self-assessment form
3. 20% of properties completing the programme are audited annually

## Levels of certification

Green Key Global certification is based on a point system that delivers the following rating scale:

1 – 19.9%	1 Green Key
20 – 39.9%	2 Green Keys
40 – 59.9%	3 Green Keys
60 – 79.9%	4 Green Keys
80 – 100%	5 Green Keys

## Certified hotels

[Grand Hyatt Kauai](#)

[Westmont Hospitality Group](#)

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## Green Tourism Active

### Number of questions by compliance area:

**Environment – 73**

**Social – 20**

**Management – 10**

**Quality – 12**

**Ethics – 10**

Recently recognised as a global standard by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the Green Tourism Active (GT-Active) Standard benchmarks property performance and analyses business processes in order to certify and advise on reduced consumption and best global sustainable practices during a three year programme. Whilst global, the scheme's main reach currently is South Africa, USA and Europe. The programme is applicable to the hospitality, leisure, tourism and retail sectors with a focus on accommodation providers and restaurants.

### Criteria

The GT-Active assessment includes over 12 sections, with the hotel assessment including 135 questions covering the compliance areas above. All questions must be answered in order for the system to tally the score and provide the property with a preliminary level. 67 of these questions are compulsory to achieve certification. Each question is weighted depending on its importance, relevance and compliance in order to ensure that areas with varying impact intensities are properly assessed.



## **Process of certification**

1. Initial online assessment completed, back up documentation supplied for sampling verification
2. An onsite audit within the three year programme takes place.
3. After three years full benchmarked re-certification is required thus establishing whether adequate progress and impact minimisation has occurred during the three year programme. Being a 3 year programme, certification costs are substantially lower than most other programmes which require an annual re-certification fee.

## **Levels of certification**

*Green Champion Status* – properties that have achieved over 80% across 12 sections assessment criteria

*Green Leader Status* – properties that have achieved over 65% across 12 sections of the assessment criteria.

*Green Initiate Status* – properties that have achieved 30% across 12 sections of the assessment criteria.

## **Some certified hotels and members include**

The Fairmont Waterfront, Vancouver  
The Vineyard Hotel, UK

## **Other programmes and standards**

### **TripAdvisor GreenLeaders**

Although not a sustainability certification scheme, the TripAdvisor GreenLeaders programme requires hotels to complete a questionnaire to demonstrate to consumers that they have environmental practices in place. The list of activities assessed is comprehensive and hotels and other accommodation providers can achieve four levels of participation – Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum. A great benefit of this programme is the accessibility to consumers due to the mass usage of TripAdvisor's platform.

### **LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design**

LEED is a certification programme that evaluates the environmental performance of a building in order to encourage more sustainable design. Developed by the United States Green Building Council, LEED is the most popular green building certification programme used worldwide. As a flexible scheme, it can be adapted for many different business needs. LEED assesses the design, construction, operation and maintenance of buildings to determine whether they can be seen as environmentally sustainable. A building requires at least 40 points to be certified, above which Silver, Gold and Platinum levels may be achieved. The data for this is collected by the design team and sent to the United States Green Building Council who issues the certification. LEED has certified more than 13.8 billion square feet of building space and dominates the market for this type of certification, aside from the UK where BREEAM is used more widely.

### **BREEAM – Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology**

Created by the Building Research Establishment, BREEAM is an environmental assessment method and rating for buildings. There are around 2,300 certified-BREEAM projects in the UK where it is most recognised. Different to other schemes it is not administered by a non-profit organisation and therefore has received criticism for its high fees for assessment. Different to LEED, the design team do not collect the data, instead BREEAM licensed assessors examine the evidence which is passed onto the programme's parent company, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) which then issues the certificate. The nine weighted criteria assessed include: energy, land use and ecology, water, health and wellbeing, pollution, transport, materials, waste and management. An interim certificate is issued for the design stage then finalised post construction. The ratings include; unclassified, pass, good, very good, excellent and outstanding.

### **ISO Standards**

The International Organisation for Standardization provides many internationally agreed standards for different areas of business management. ISO does not perform certification, this can be carried out on some of their standards by a third-party certification body by auditing the business's practices against the standard. ISO is a non-governmental organisation with a membership of 162 national standards bodies that creates market relevant International Standards to support responses to global challenges. The below standards provide requirements, specifications and guidelines that help to ensure that business processes and resources are fit for purpose.

## **ISO 26000 – Social Responsibility**

### **198CHF + document and third party auditor costs**

This set of guidance developed by key stakeholder groups and experts over an eight year process offers international guidance on human rights, labour practices, environment, fair operating practices, consumer issues, and community involvement and development, with a comprehensive check list of expected actions. This cannot be certified like other standards, instead it provides the tools for a business from any sector, size or setting to manage the improvement of their impact.

## **ISO 14001 – Environmental Management**

### **138CHF + document and third party auditor costs**

ISO 14000:2015 and ISO 14000:2011 focus on environmental systems that help the approach towards audits, communications, labelling and life-cycle analysis and broader environmental challenges.

## **ISO 9001 – Quality Management Systems**

This standard focuses on quality assurance with the option of certification. It covers the seven quality management principles of customer focus, leadership, and engagement of people, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision making and relationship management.

## **EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme)**

Developed by the European Commission, EMAS helps organisations to evaluate, manage and improve their environmental performance. Implementing this system involves complying with a broad range of social and environmental sustainability areas alongside key performance reporting and tracking to ensure continuous improvement.

## **Resources and further reading**

The [Standards Map website](#) - allows users to identify and compare different certification schemes or standards. Not all sustainable hotel certification programmes included in this Know How Guide are available here.

Honey, M. & E. Stewart. (2002) The Evolution for “Green” Standards for Tourism. In M. Honey (Ed.), *Ecotourism & Certification Setting Standards in Practice* (33-71). Washington, DC: Island Press.

Center for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development [A Simple User's Guide to Certification for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism.](#)

GREEN HOTEL CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

CERTIFICATION SCHEME	LOGO	WEBSITE	CERTIFYING BODY	REGION OF OPERATION	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT	ARE THERE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT?	COST	MONITORING AND RENEWAL	ARE CERTIFIED BUSINESSES ADVERTISED ON CERTIFIERS WEBSITE?	NUMBER OF BUSINESS CERTIFIED	SUPPORT THE GSTC CRITERIA OR MEMBER OF GSTC?	CRITERIA PUBLICLY AVAILABLE?
Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) in Costa Rica		<a href="http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/index.php">http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/index.php</a>	Costa Rica Tourist Board	America	Self assessment based on questionnaire	Yes - levels 1 to 5 (1 being initial steps towards sustainability, 5 being outstanding commitment)	No cost for enrollment or first level of assessment - no costs for further assessment	No information	✓	314 businesses	X	X
EarthCheck		<a href="http://earthcheck.org/">http://earthcheck.org/</a>	EC3 Global	Global	Independent third party verification from EarthCheck approved auditor	Yes - Bronze Benchmarked (not certification), Silver Certified, Gold (for 5-9yrs continuous certification) and Platinum (for 10+yrs continuous certification)	(1) EarthCheck Evaluate GBP370 (2) EarthCheck Benchmarked GBP1300 (3) EarthCheck Certified - Operational - Bronze Benchmarked (not certification), Silver Certified, Gold ( 5-9 yrs continuous certification) and Platinum (for 10+yrs continuous certification) GBP2100* (4) EarthCheck Certified - Design GBP21,200 inclusive of auditor fees (5) EarthCheck Certified - Destination GBP4,700* *Additional costs for auditors	Annual benchmarking, self assessment checklist and on-site certification audit at least every 2 years and an annual return when an audit is not required	✓	1,300 businesses in 84 countries	✓	X
Ecotourism Kenya		<a href="http://www.ecotourismkenya.org/">http://www.ecotourismkenya.org/</a>	Ecotourism Society of Kenya	Kenya	Self assessment questionnaire (plus Responsible Tourism Report and Environmental Management Plans for Silver / Gold applications), assessment in 3 stages - desk evaluation, field audit and committee evaluation	Yes - Bronze, Silver and Gold	USD150 application fee, certification fee: USD350 for Bronze, USD850 for Silver and USD1,350 for Gold	Certification valid for 2 years then renewal application 3 months prior to expiry of old certification	✓	100 businesses	X	X
European Ecolabel or EU Flower		<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/">http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/</a>	European Commission, Environment	Europe	Electronic application submitted to designated competent bodies in each country. Competent Body examines the dossier including documentation sent directly from suppliers. All documentation is assessed and if approved, the Competent Body awards the ecolabel	No	Varies country to country.	Criteria reviewed every 4 years, current period ends Dec 2016 when there is a review process for renewals	✓	44,051 products and services comprised by 2,010 licences	X	✓
Fair Trade Tourism		<a href="http://www.fairtrade.travel/">http://www.fairtrade.travel/</a>	N/A	Sun-Saharan Africa	Basic online application form and upload of supporting documents followed by an on-site evaluation by a 3 <sup>rd</sup> party auditing company to check if areas of compliance are met.	no, but criteria and auditing guidelines are applied differently depending on type of business (accommodation, activity, attraction, volunteering provider; small and micro enterprises).	Audit costs from €600 – €2000 over 3 year period payable to 3 <sup>rd</sup> party auditing company, additional annual marketing contribution costs from €55 – €550. Each cost depending on size of business.	Required to report online annually, including the uploading of a number of supporting documents, on-site audit occurs every 3 years	✓	68 businesses	X	✓
Green Globe		<a href="http://greenglobe.com/">http://greenglobe.com/</a>	Green Globe	Global	Certification is granted when the mandatory requirements are met and a compliance rate greater than 50%, followed by an independent evaluation completed by third party auditor	Yes - Green Globe Certified and Green Globe Certified Gold (for over 5 years certified) Green Globe Certified Platinum (for 10 consecutive years certified)	USD750 - 5,000 dependent on size (room numbers or employees) plus independent audit fees	Annual renewal period, Green Globe Standard is reviewed and updated twice per year	✓	508	✓	✓
Green Key		<a href="http://www.greenkey.global">http://www.greenkey.global</a>	Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)	Global	presently the largest global eco-label for accommodation. Complete application with documentation demonstrating that your hotel meets the criteria. Independent audits are also used after application is submitted.	No	EUR1000 plus EUR500 + expenses for audit	Audits are conducted first and second year and then every three years. Green key is awarded for one year at a time.	✓	2,400 hotels	✓	✓
Green Leaf Eco Standard		<a href="http://www.greenleafecostandard.net/index.html">http://www.greenleafecostandard.net/index.html</a>	The Green Leaf Environmental Trust	Global	Basic consultation to assess an organisation's compliance to the GLES followed by an audit process initiated through a GLES consultant from an Accredited Facility including an off-site document review and an on-site audit and personnel interviews	No	?	Two year review	✓	59 businesses	X	X
Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS)		<a href="http://www.greentourism.com/">http://www.greentourism.com/</a>	Green Business (UK) Ltd through the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT)	UK & Ireland	Application followed by verification by an independent auditor	Yes - Going Green, Bronze, Silver and Gold	Fees vary based on the size, location and type businesses, from GBP80 - 600 per year with a GBP62.50 joining fee	Sites are reassessed every two to three years based upon a set of regularly updated sustainable development standards	✓	Over 2000 members in the UK, Ireland and Canada	X	X
Travelife Sustainability System		<a href="http://www.travelife.org">http://www.travelife.org</a>	Travelife Ltd	Global	Be a subscribed Travelife member, achieve specified criteria and have a full audit by a Travelife auditor	No - only Gold	Membership and certification cost is EUR1,400 for large properties and EUR800 for small properties over two years	An independent Travelife audit is mandatory within six months of becoming a member and is valid for two years	<a href="http://www.travelife-collection.com/">http://www.travelife-collection.com/</a>	900 hotel members	✓	✓

CERTIFICATION SCHEME	LOGO	WEBSITE	CERTIFYING BODY	REGION OF OPERATION	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT	ARE THERE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT?	COST	MONITORING AND RENEWAL	ARE CERTIFIED BUSINESSES ADVERTISED ON CERTIFIERS WEBSITE?	NUMBER OF BUSINESS CERTIFIED	SUPPORT THE GSTC CRITERIA OR MEMBER OF GSTC?	CRITERIA PUBLICLY AVAILABLE?
Rainforest Alliance		<a href="http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/certification-verification">http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/certification-verification</a>	N/A	Latin America & The Caribbean (Expected to go Global in 2017)	On site audit must be performed by independent third party auditor team. To become eligible for certification, candidate organization must comply with at least 70% of the overall applicable standard and all critical indicators contained within.	No	Fees are based on the location, the size and specific needs of the business	Certificate is issued for a 3 year period, however, certified operations must go through an annual audit for monitoring on certificate anniversary date and if interested, at the end of the 3 year period, they must go through a full re-assessment audit.	✓ <a href="http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/travel">http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/travel</a>	52 Hotels and 18 inbound Tour Operators	✓	✓
Nordic Swan Ecolabel		<a href="http://www.nordic-ecolabel.org/">http://www.nordic-ecolabel.org/</a>	N/A	Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark	Complete application with documentation demonstrating that your hotel meets the criteria. Independent audits are also used after application is submitted.	No	28,000 SEK + VAT application fee. 5,000 SEK + VAT site visit, plus annual licensing fees dependent on the turnover of the business	Renewal of license 14,000 SEK + VAT	X	?	X	✓
Ecotourism Australia		<a href="http://www.ecotourism.org.au/">http://www.ecotourism.org.au/</a>	N/A	Australia	Apply with supporting documentation. This is reviewed by an assessor. Recommendations from assessment are worked through with a Certification Coach who works with the business to implement recommendations and achieve certification.	Yes - Eco Certification and Advanced Eco Certification. Also available is the Climate Action Certification with 3 levels; Business, Innovator and Leader. EcoLodges of Australia membership is exclusively for Advanced Ecotourism certified accommodation providers.	Varies according to turnover. From AUD395 application fee + AUD910 ongoing annual fee.	Annual renewal process involves fee payment and signing of Annual Declaration and Ethics. Audits are conducted within the first three months of achieving certification and every three years thereafter.	✓	470	✓	X
Green Tourism Active		<a href="http://www.gt-active.org">www.gt-active.org</a>	Green Tourism Active	Global	Stringent online assessment, followed by onsite audit	Yes, it is a 3 tier programme, the levels are: Green Initiate, Green Leader and Green Champion	Hotel £825 (for the three year programme) plus an annual license fee of £150	Onsite audit and renewal is every three years	Yes - there is a full , unlimited description and a link to the property's own booking system	137 certified and awards businesses	Fully GSTC recognised status 2016	Upon request
Qualmark Enviro Award		<a href="http://www.qualmark.co.nz/">http://www.qualmark.co.nz/</a>	N/A	New Zealand	Application followed by on-site evaluation by a Tourism Business Advisor.	Bronze, Silver and Gold	Varies according to the type of accommodation. A hotel is NZD850 + NZD6 per room, plus GST. Loyalty and long tenure discounts are available.	N/A	✓	231 hotels	X	X
Green Key Global		<a href="http://greenkeyglobal.com/">http://greenkeyglobal.com/</a>	Hotel Association of Canada	Global	Application form. 20% of businesses are also independently audited annually.	1 - 5 Green Keys	Dependent on country - about USD800	Each year the certification is renewed by payment of invoice, monitoring is	✓	1,925 hotels	✓	✓
Green Growth 2050		<a href="http://www.greengrowth2050.travel/">http://www.greengrowth2050.travel/</a>		Global	Registration into the Green Growth 2050 network, complement with certification criteria evidence of documentation, third party audit performed, awarded Silver Gold or Platinum.	No	Corporate hotel chains & business - USD2350 or from USD885 - USD4750 depending on hotel size	Member maintains annual registration and compliance promoting continuous improvement	No	?	✓	X
Green Seal		<a href="http://www.greenseal.org/">http://www.greenseal.org/</a>	Green Seal	US	Application form and confidentiality agreement. This is followed up by a Project Manager to guide through the data submission process. This can take several months. The last step is an on-site audit before certification is confirmed.	Bronze, Silver and Gold	From USD1,950 for dependent on the size of the hotel and the level of certification applied for. Annual monitoring fee from USD1.950 fee	Periodic compliance monitoring is conducted to ensure products and services continue to meet the requirements of certification. An annual fee applies.	✓	58	X	✓
Biosphere Responsible Tourism		<a href="https://www.biospheretourism.com/en">https://www.biospheretourism.com/en</a>	RTI	Global	Data introduction, manage of profile, implementation of requirements, external audit, evaluation and certification, enjoyment of benefits.	No	Based on room numbers and annual price: from EUR200 to EUR1200	Each year the certification is renewed by the auditors. After three years re-certification takes place.	✓	63 - 40 hotels	✓	X
Ecotel		<a href="http://www.ecotelhotels.com/index.shtml">http://www.ecotelhotels.com/index.shtml</a>	N/A	India primarily but is global	Application & contact with team member. Step one of certification is property assessment, then roadmap for certification followed by an audit.	No	?	Valid for 2 years and hotels seeking an upgrade or recertification must apply at the end of two years. However unannounced visits from ECOTEL team do take place.	✓	8	X	✓