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The 2023 Global Destination Sustainability Index Results

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The world's leading sustainability benchmarking and improvement programme, the GDS-Index, announced the results of its 2023 sustainability benchmarking process. The results offer insights into the trends and the progress of global destinations' commitment to transforming their social, environmental, supplier, and destination management offerings.

The GDS-Index 2023 Results

This is the eighth year of benchmarking based on a revised and comprehensive set of criteria. One hundred destinations participated, and 42 new destinations from eleven countries joined for the first time. These newcomers have challenged the overall ranking, and, in some instances, brought nail-biting results within decimal points of one another.

Gothenburg tops the Global Destination Sustainability Index for the seventh time

With a remarkable score of 94.64%, Gothenburg, represented by Göteborg & Co, secured the first place for the seventh time. They demonstrated their excellence across all criteria.

Oslo went up from tenth place to second because of its improved strategy and implementation. Copenhagen remained at third place, and Helsinki came in at fourth place, up from twelfth place in 2022. Eight of the top ten cities are in Nordic countries, up from seven in 2022.

Growth in other regions

Of the top 40, 17 cities were from Western Europe, one city from North America (Montreal), and seven cities from Asia Pacific (Goyang, Singapore, Songkhla, Melbourne, Sydney, Bangkok, and Brisbane). Singapore jumped 18 places to 17th position this year, delivering on its ambition to becoming a world-class leader in sustainable tourism and events.

Boost in newcomers

The 42 newcomers are predominantly from small- and medium-sized cities, collectively accounting for 22.4 million inhabitants. In contrast, the returning destinations encompass a substantial population of 74.4 million. This big jump in new destinations was propelled by the great work of VisitBritain and Destination Canada which respectively saw 12 new English and 20 new Canadian destinations join.

Observed trends include

1. Increasing integration with climate strategies

85% of all cities have a climate mitigation and adaptation strategy.

2. Wider stakeholder engagement

55% of new destinations are engaging stakeholders in their strategies, whereas 95% of returning destinations already do.

3. Growing third-party certification

Venues are leading the change. In Nordic destinations, 84% of venues are certified, followed by 71% in Asia Pacific, 46% in Western Europe, and 14% in Eastern Europe.

4. Formalising social impact strategies

44% of cities are facilitating partnerships to help clients generate a long-term, positive impact and legacy in the destination.

5. Increasing focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

75% of cities in the top 40 have DEI policies and initiatives.

6. Greater storytelling

53% of destinations are talking about their sustainability efforts and strategies via their websites. Advanced destinations are getting better at telling stories that engage and move audiences.

The index data offer valuable insights into the sustainability performance of cities of varied sizes. Large cities comprise 37% of the index, and score the highest across all four categories, consistently.

"The evolution and results of the GDS-Index unequivocally demonstrate that destination management organisations and national tourism organisations can and do drive accelerated economic, social, and environmental transformation within their tourism and events ecosystems. With this compelling evidence, we hold the key to an optimistic future for travel and events. By amplifying our regenerative action plans and scaling them with urgency, we pave the way for meaningful change and progress."

Guy Bigwood, CEO, GDS-Movement

For an in-depth look at the GDS-Index Results, read the report, *The Ripple Effect*.

Full results here www.gds.earth/2023-results



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