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Kraków**

Kraków among the most dynamically developing destinations - GDS-Index 2025

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Kraków moved up to 53rd place among the 81 cities included in the 2025 edition. What is particularly pleasing is that our city made it to the podium in the “Most Improved Destinations” category, ranking 2nd among the destinations with the most improved results in the world.

This year, Krakow achieved a score of 62.2%, which represents an increase of 12.9 percentage points compared to 2024 (49.3%). As a result, the city moved up 19 places – from 72nd to 53rd.

The Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) is an international benchmarking program that has been measuring and comparing the sustainability of tourist and business destinations since 2016. The assessment is based on 76 indicators in four areas: destination management, suppliers, social aspects, and environmental aspects. The aim of the index is to support cities and regions on their way to more responsible, regenerative tourism and to increase their global competitiveness.

Where has Krakow made the most progress?

Suppliers (+24.8 p.p.) – more hotels and PCO/DMC companies with certificates, greater awareness of the circular economy, reduction of food waste in catering,

Social aspects (+22 p.p.) – improvement in accessibility, better involvement of residents, more responsible management of short-term rentals,

Environment (+11.2 p.p.) – increase to 67.2% thanks to better alignment of urban policy with pro-environmental activities and the involvement of the Krakow authorities

Helsinki – leader in the global ranking

Helsinki once again topped the list, achieving an impressive score of 93.52%. The Finnish capital was ahead of Gothenburg (91.51%) and Copenhagen (88.76%).

Why is Helsinki number 1?

Highest level of certification: as many as 99% of hotel rooms, all convention centers, and 80% of major tourist attractions are certified as sustainable

Green city: in March 2025, Helsinki became the first large city in the world (over 500,000 inhabitants) to obtain the Green Destinations – Platinum certificate, the highest possible distinction.

- Strong climate policy: the city implements a Climate Action Plan for Tourism, measures emissions, and conducts research on the risks associated with climate change. Together with Tampere, it published a report entitled “The Impacts of Climate Change on Tourism: Preparation and Adaptation,” which outlines strategies for resilient and low-carbon urban tourism.
- Resident involvement: Helsinki regularly conducts surveys and public consultations on tourism. In 2025, the first “social capacity” study was also prepared, analyzing how the number of



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tourists affects the quality of life of residents and the experience of visitors.

- International leadership: Helsinki is a partner in the Interreg Climate Neutral Destinations project, working with other cities in the Baltic Sea region to scale up climate solutions.
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All these activities have resulted in Helsinki ranking first in the GDS Index for the second time in a row, becoming a global model for other cities striving for sustainable tourism and event organization.

Why is benchmarking important?

Benchmarking within the GDS-Index involves comparing the performance of individual destinations with other cities around the world. This provides cities with a detailed diagnosis of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommendations to help them plan their development strategy more effectively. This process:

facilitates decision-making – cities know which areas to invest in,
drives innovation and cooperation – because it learns from the best examples in the world,
increases transparency and credibility – especially in the context of greenwashing regulations,
strengthens the city's brand – by demonstrating its commitment to responsible tourism and attracting conscious travelers and event organizers

Future challenges for Kraków

The report emphasizes that certification will be a key factor in further success – for hotels, conference facilities, tourist attractions, PCO/DMC agencies, and airports. These are areas where Krakow still has a lot of work to do, but at the same time has enormous potential.

Poland on the GDS-Index map

Apart from Krakow, other Polish cities were also included in the ranking: Gdańsk, Wrocław, and Szczecin. Szczecin received a special distinction, as it will host the prestigious GDS-Forum & Impact Day event on June 16–18, 2026, dedicated to regenerative tourism and sustainable development of the MICE industry.

[Full report](#)