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Sustainable Tourism
Consulting & Communication

Market Analysis & Best Practices

Sustainability in the World War II
Remembrance & Cultural Heritage
Tourism Sector

PART 1: MARKET ANALYSIS
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List of the GSTC criteria for attractions focused on the ones particularly applicable to sites of World War II remembrance.

1. Overview: Cultural and remembrance tourism and a view on sustainability

Following the Second World War, tourism experienced significant growth, expanding across the globe. This was facilitated by increased prosperity, groundbreaking advancements in transportation and telecommunications, and improved international relations. Since then, tourism has repeatedly demonstrated its immense influence as an economic, social, cultural, environmental, and political force. It impacts every country and community, either directly or indirectly, even in areas without a tourism industry, and plays a role in shaping decisions at national and international levels.

Heritage tourism, often considered a subset of cultural tourism (and vice versa), is one of the most prominent and enduring forms of travel. It is also among the earliest types of tourism, as historical evidence reveals that ancient Egyptians, Romans, and medieval nobility journeyed to visit culturally significant and historic sites.

The concept of "*heritage*" is subject to various interpretations, but a widely accepted definition among heritage scholars centres on "*the present-day use of the past*"[1]. This broad definition encompasses both tangible and intangible elements of the cultural landscape. Some organisations, such as UNESCO, have further expanded this scope to include natural heritage as well[2].

The EU Project "*Preserving the Past, Securing the Future: A Sustainable Approach to Cultural and Remembrance Heritage*" complements the general objectives of the Creative Europe Programme, as it recognises the need to promote European cultural heritage whilst simultaneously safeguarding it for future generations. There are many issues and conflicts that can arise from this, as whilst visitors are key to the transmission of history and culture in the cultural heritage and remembrance sector, pressures on the sites and attractions themselves can threaten the long-term sustainability of these places.

During the needs assessment and research phase of the PPSF project, this market analysis was conducted in order to:

- Identify the cultural and remembrance tourism sectors in the targeted countries;
- Collect and analyse data on trends and opportunities related to sustainable development in the identified sectors;
- Report on the findings of the market analysis.

This report offers various insights into the status quo of the remembrance sector in general, in particular World War II memorials in Europe, and concludes with a list of the opportunities and challenges that arise when working on the further sustainable development of tourism at the relevant attractions.

1.1 Sustainable Tourism Criteria for attractions

The demand for sustainable travel options has grown significantly in recent years and continues to rise, driven by business travellers, leisure tourists, regulators, and the general public. The attractions industry plays a substantial role in impacting the environment and local communities, as it organises events and exhibitions that promote regional destinations while marketing products.

[1] Ashworth (2003).
[2] Timothy & Boyd (2006).

The sustainability of attraction activities aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria supporting SDG Goal 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production. The GSTC Attraction Criteria, developed through a rigorous and inclusive process, are globally recognised standards adopted by governments and businesses across diverse political and cultural contexts, promoting universal principles of sustainable tourism[3].

Some of the uses of the Criteria include the following:

- Help define sustainability in a holistic manner;
- Raise awareness of the breadth and nature of sustainability;
- Serve as the basis for certification for sustainability;
- Serve as basic guidelines for Attraction businesses to become more sustainable, which includes guidance for identifying more sustainable suppliers and service providers;
- Provide greater market access in the growing market for sustainable businesses, serving as guidance for the Attraction businesses in choosing suppliers and partners;
- Help consumers identify sustainable Attraction businesses;
- Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognise sustainable Attraction businesses;
- Offer both the public and private sectors a starting point for developing sustainable Attraction business requirements;
- Serve as basic guidelines for education and training on sustainable Attraction by universities, hospitality schools, or associations;
- Demonstrate leadership that inspires others to act.

In Annex 1 you will find a list of the GSTC criteria for attractions as they provide a baseline of possibilities for adaptation for this project. This list does not include all criteria recommended by the GSTC but focused on the ones particularly applicable to sites of World War II remembrance.

1.2 Cultural and remembrance tourism sectors in European countries

While this project focuses on remembrance sites in Europe to identify areas of further adaptation of sustainable practices, it may later serve as a reference point for project teams concerned with the sustainable development of heritage sites all over the world. The coordination and preservation of heritage sites in Europe are closely linked to the work of the European Union.

The European Union's role is to assist and complement the actions of Member States in preserving and promoting Europe's cultural heritage. It states the importance of an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe and has developed a number of relevant policies and programmes. In the European Councils resolution on the 2023-26 Work Plan for culture it highlights:

- The ongoing Russian war against Ukraine, a candidate country for EU membership, which represents a blatant breach of international law, an assault on human rights, and a violation of fundamental EU values and principles, the conflict poses a grave threat to Ukraine's rich cultural heritage. Furthermore, it has caused the largest displacement of people in Europe since World War II and has precipitated a severe energy crisis;

[3] GSTC (2024).

- The profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on society as a whole, on individuals, and on various economic sectors, particularly the cultural and creative industries, many of which are still grappling with its lasting consequences.
- The rapidly accelerating climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and the resulting urgent need to advance the sustainability transformation, a process that culture can significantly contribute to through awareness-raising, creativity, and innovation;
- The ongoing developments like digitalisation and enduring challenges, including the unique working conditions faced by artists, creators, and other cultural professionals[4].

The EU Work Plan for Culture is founded on the following guiding principles:

1. **Intrinsic Value of Culture:** Culture, including cultural heritage, holds intrinsic value and plays a vital role in strengthening European identity.
2. **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:** The EU recognises cultural and linguistic diversity as fundamental assets to be respected, promoted, and enhanced, including through mobility and the circulation of creative works.
3. **Artistic Freedom and Creativity:** Freedom of artistic expression and creativity is essential for addressing challenges, fostering critical thinking, driving innovation, and enabling invention. These freedoms must be actively encouraged and supported.
4. **Cultural Diversity and Human Rights:** Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are critical for promoting and safeguarding human rights. They foster mutual understanding, help prevent and resolve conflicts, and promote reconciliation, peace, and international stability. The misuse of culture for war propaganda, spreading disinformation, or inciting hatred is contrary to the EU's core values and principles.
5. **Contribution to Sustainable Development:** Culture significantly contributes to sustainable development, economic growth, social inclusion, and the enhancement of territorial cohesion.
6. **Equality and Mutual Respect:** Culture has the power to promote equality, mutual respect, and the fight against all forms of violence, discrimination, intolerance, and prejudice.
7. **Data-Driven Implementation:** Effective implementation of cultural initiatives should be supported by the optimised use of quality data and statistics[5].

Those aligning with the GSTC criteria for attractions as in Annex 1.

1.3 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme

Cultural route of the Council of Europe
Itinéraire culturel du Conseil de l'Europe

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Established by the Council of Europe in 1987, a network of Cultural Routes highlights how the rich heritage of Europe's nations and cultures interconnects to form a shared, dynamic cultural legacy, experienced through journeys across history and geography.

[4] Council of Europe (2024), p 1.
[5] Council of Europe (2024), p 1.

The "*Cultural Route of the Council of Europe*" certification represents excellence, with networks engaging in innovative projects across five key areas:

- Research and development collaboration
- Preserving memory and heritage
- Cultural and educational exchanges for youth
- Contemporary artistic practices
- Sustainable cultural tourism.

This programme provides a model for transnational cultural and tourism management, fostering collaboration among national, regional, and local authorities alongside various associations and socio-economic stakeholders[6].

The more than 45 Cultural Routs of the Council of Europe offer diverse leisure and educational opportunities across Europe which are highlighted in their database. Furthermore, the Council of Europe lists Best Practices of the Cultural Routes on their website.

1.4 The LRE Foundation

The LRE Foundation was especially created to identify connect sites and travel routes to commemorate the liberation of Europe from occupation during World War II. It reflects on the lasting impacts and history of the war through a multinational and multi-perspective approach. Their project and certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, the Liberation Route Europe, is a network of trails to make the route a physical part of Europe's landscape[7].

The network creates routes of travel to experience the rich heritage or Europe by hiking, walking, and cycling. They cooperate with tour operators which support the Liberation Route Europe and have integrated the routes into their offerings. Furthermore, the Liberation Route Europe includes more than 3000 points of interest of the history of the end of World War II in Europe, visible on their website.

2. Trends in cultural and remembrance tourism in European countries

Since the 1980s, cultural tourism has highlighted heritage as key to destination appeal and competitiveness. While widely acknowledged, following a study of 2020, empirical evidence on its economic impact remains limited. However, it becomes clear that international tourism plays a crucial role in leveraging heritage for regional economic growth in Europe[8].

In the EU, the cultural heritage sector directly employs over 300,000 people, with an additional 7.8 million jobs indirectly connected to heritage through industries like hospitality, interpretation, and security [9].

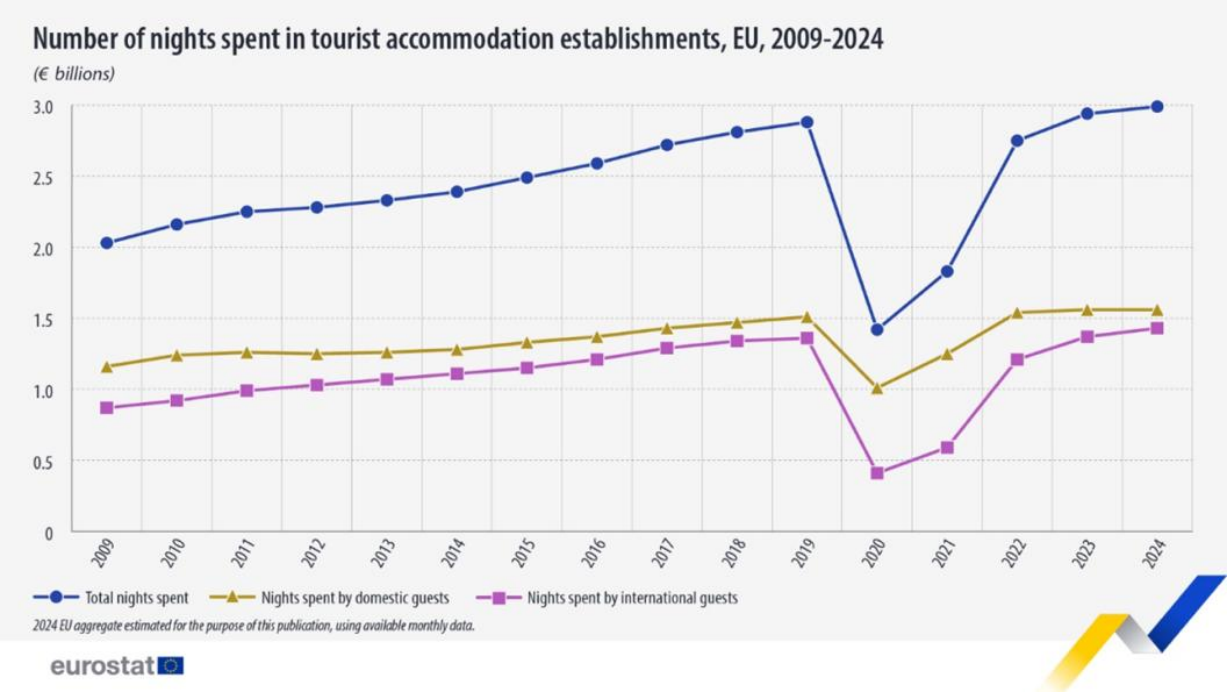
[6] Council of Europe (2025).
[7] Liberation Route Europe (2025).
[8] Panzera et. al. (2021).
[9] European Commission (2024).

2.1 Trends of heritage destinations in Europe

Tourist flows grew steadily before COVID-19, with global arrivals reaching 1.3 billion in 2017, a 7% annual growth rate. Europe accounted for 51% of arrivals, growing 8% from 2016 (UNWTO, 2017). Tourism contributes 10% to the EU GDP, employs 12 million people (9% of EU employment), and makes up 22% of services exports. Both domestic and international tourism are key drivers of regional economic growth in Europe (Paci & Marrocu, 2014). Cultural tourism drives decisions for four in ten travellers (UNWTO, 2018b). While its growth is highlighted by OECD and UNWTO, international tourism statistics do not distinguish cultural tourism from leisure or indicate if culture is the main travel motivation. The concept of cultural tourism has expanded to include monuments, museums, events, performing arts, and lifestyle experiences such as gastronomy, traditions, and habits (Noonan & Rizzo, 2017)[10].

The tourism statistics post Pandemic show strong signs of recovery and even further increase in corresponding tourist numbers. In Q3 2024, tourists spent 1.2 billion nights in accommodations, reflecting a 0.8% increase compared to the same period in 2023. Preliminary estimates indicate that 2024 was a record year, with nearly 3 billion nights spent in EU tourist accommodations—an increase of 53 million nights (+1.8%) over the previous year. Almost all EU countries experienced growth in overnight stays in 2024 compared to 2023, with double-digit increases recorded in Luxembourg and Malta. Over the long term, tourism has surged, with overnight stays in 2024 nearly 50% higher than 15 years ago (rising from 2 billion nights in 2009 to 3 billion in 2024). Additionally, tourism levels in 2024 exceeded the pre-pandemic 2019 figures by 4%.[11] This is visualised in the following figure.

Figure 3: Number of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments, EU, 2009-2024, € billion



There is also a steady growth of visitor numbers to selected remembrance sites in Europe, as shown in the following figures.

[10] Panzera et. al. (2021).
[11] Eurostat (Jan 13, 2025)

Figure 4: Number of visitors to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, the Netherlands from 2014 to 2023 (in 1,000s)

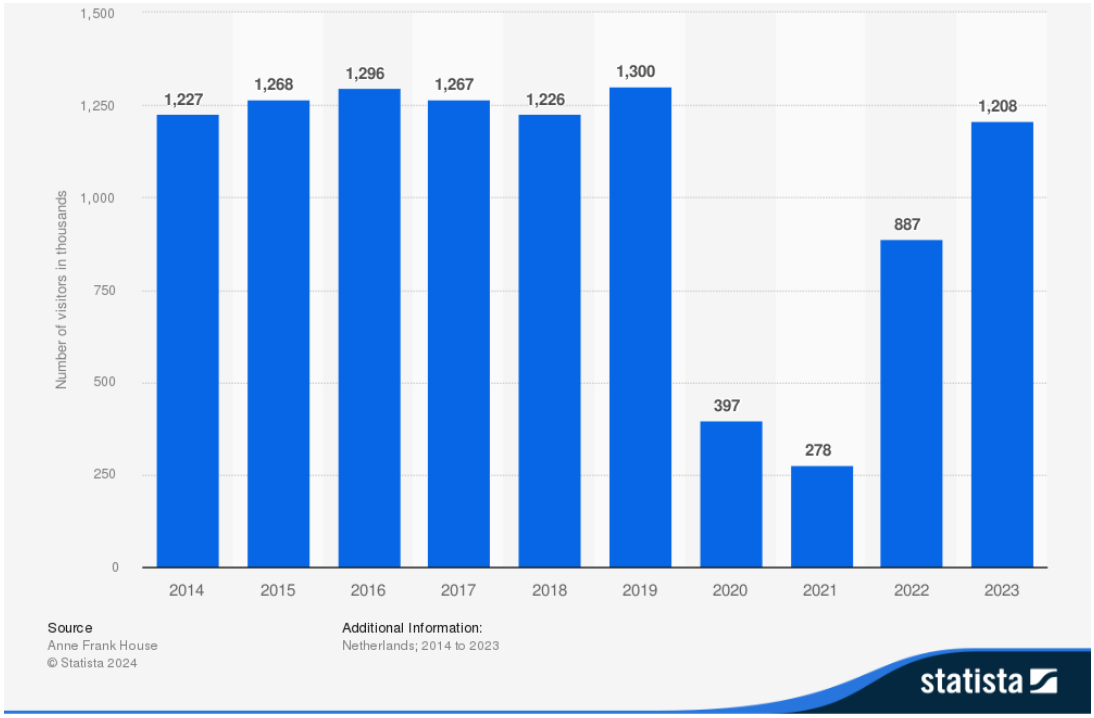
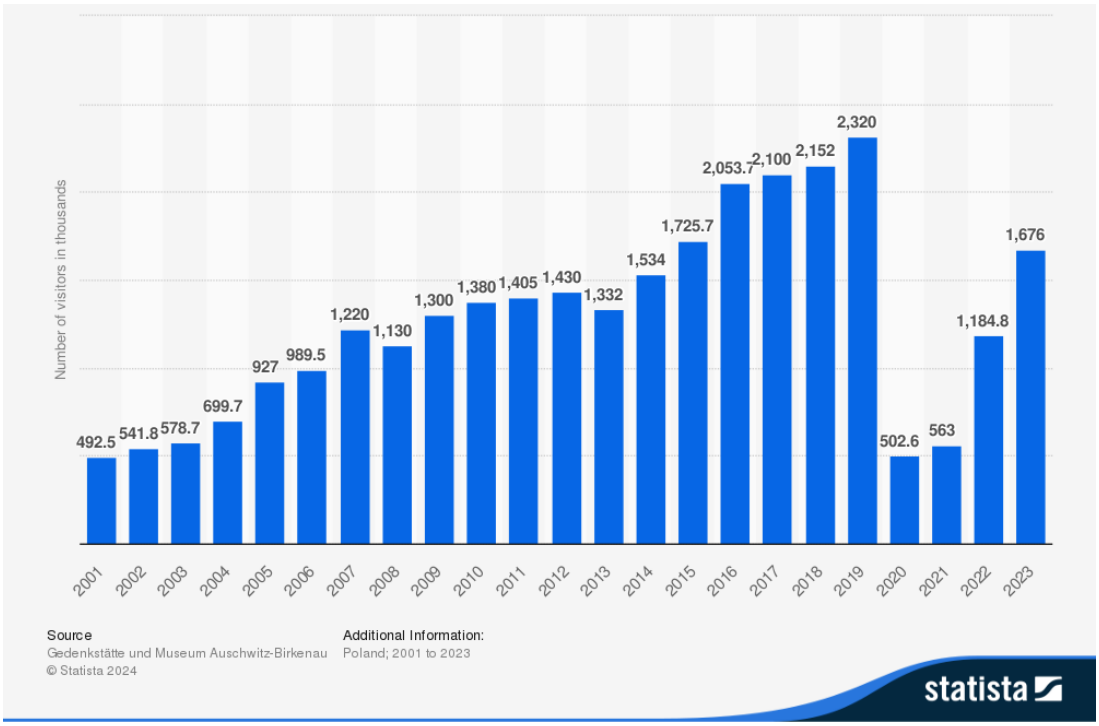


Figure 5: Number of visitors to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland from 2001 to 2023 (in 1,000s)



On the other hand, the risk of over-tourism is present, which can cause environmental damage and disrupt local communities' quality of life. Concerns about tourism's impact on economies, neighbourhoods, and residents have led to calls for stricter regulation. In cultural heritage tourism, high visitor numbers can result in heritage losing its context, disconnection from local communities, overcrowding, and commercialisation or, so-called, '*Disneyfication''* of cultural heritage. Uneven distribution of heritage sites also raises issues of inequality across regions. Despite these challenges, cultural heritage holds significant potential to boost regional tourism appeal.

2.2 Risk of Overtourism (Example: Amsterdam)

Two places of remembrance for WWII, and especially the Holocaust, have been recently opened in Amsterdam underlining the ongoing wishes of European governments to share knowledge about their tragedies and to heal the collective traumas associated.

The National Holocaust Names Memorial in Amsterdam serves since 2021 as the Dutch national memorial for the Holocaust and the Porajmos in Amsterdam. The memorial honours the approximately 102,000 Jewish victims from the Netherlands who were arrested by the Nazi regime during the German occupation (1940–1945), deported, and predominantly murdered in the Auschwitz and Sobibor death camps. It also commemorates the 220 Roma and Sinti victims who suffered the same tragic fate[12].

The Dutch National Holocaust Museum was officially inaugurated on 10 March 2024, by Dutch monarch Willem-Alexander. In his opening address, the king emphasised that the museum "*brings to life the stories of people who were marginalised from Dutch society, stripped of their rights, denied legal protection, detained, separated from their families, and ultimately murdered*" attributing these atrocities to the pervasive root cause of antisemitism[13].

At the same time, for several years already Amsterdam has been facing the challenge of over tourism, receiving ever increasing numbers of visitors. This comes with a negative impact on the local neighbourhoods and the homogenisation of the city centre risks ruining the very character of that people come to experience in the first place. The Netherlands, and especially Amsterdam, invests heavily in tourism. Money pours into marketing the city as a tourist destination and it has worked so well that Amsterdam has since become a victim of its own success[14]. The city reported that in 2023, 9.4 million visitors came to the city, spending a total of 22.1 million nights. While the number of visitors remains below the pre-pandemic peak of 10.2 million in 2019, the duration of their stays has increased compared to the 21.8 million nights recorded that year. However, the resurgence in tourism has brought back familiar challenges. Overcrowding in the city centre, disruptive behaviour, and the widespread use of home-holiday rental platforms like Airbnb are contributing to rising property prices, exacerbating affordability issues for local residents[15].

[12] Wikipedia (edited Apr. 5, 2024).
[13] Wikipedia (edited Nov. 19, 2024).
[14] Responsible Travel (n.d.).
[15] Hospitality Investor (Sep 24, 2024).

2.3 Different approaches between modernisation and conservation (France and Germany)

When working with the remembrance sector in Europe it seems to become important to note different perspectives on the topic and its purpose across the corresponding authorities across EU member states.

For example, remembrance sites in France are experiencing a remarkable surge in visitors, largely due to recent renovations undertaken to commemorate the anniversaries of both world wars. This trend contrasts sharply with Germany, where addressing remnants of the past involves numerous complexities. In France, remembrance tourism, which began during the First World War, has grown through commemorations and local initiatives, preserving heritage and meeting societal demand for historical reflection. In contrast, Germany takes a more cautious approach, focusing on civic and educational goals, avoiding sensationalism, and emphasising shared perspectives to address the complexities of collective memory[16].

In France, the First World War centenary saw significant investment from local authorities, in partnership with the State, to renew remembrance offerings. This included the renovation of numerous museums and sites, along with the opening of new visitor attractions. The centenary strengthened the development of tourist destinations tied to the memory of modern conflicts, supported by the rise of e-tourism. This trend is particularly evident in Normandy near the landing beaches, where local organisations have leveraged the internet, social media, and YouTubers to attract visitors. These include those exploring family histories, history enthusiasts, and green tourism fans interested in nature and heritage. Another trend is the merging of historical periods, as seen at the *Musée Guerre et Paix en Ardennes*, which spans conflicts from the Franco-Prussian War to World War II.

Tourism development at remembrance sites has embraced new digital practices. Modernisation efforts during the First World War centenary, supported by local authorities and the State, included immersive tours, touchscreen terminals, and 3D glasses at the Verdun Memorial. The Australian John Monash Centre and the Dragon's Cave introduced fully immersive displays and interactive tables. Many sites also enhanced accessibility by offering multilingual services, including translated information panels, multilingual audio guides, and guided tours in English, German, and Dutch.

In Germany, military cemeteries, monuments, and sites from the First World War have received less attention, as its memory has largely merged with that of the Second World War. Ethical and moral considerations play a significant role in public debates about developing remembrance sites. The concept of "*dark tourism*" linked to locations associated with war, disaster, or genocide, is often criticised for potentially commercialising remembrance. This raises ongoing questions for Germany's tourism industry.

In Germany, remembrance sites prioritise civic and educational purposes over tourism, emphasising objective historical understanding through exhibitions, workshops, and multimedia. Emotional appeals and recreations are avoided to prevent glorifying harmful ideologies. Visiting is seen as a civic duty, reinforcing democratic values. Since 2005, public funding requires sites to include educational elements.

[16] Chemins de Memoire (n.d.).

2.4 Digital Transformation

Especially in France, the positive effects of including digital products into the development of remembrance sites becomes apparent. In general, sustainable development and digital transformation are closely linked because digital technology can help make the world more sustainable, and sustainability goals can guide how digital technology is used.

How Digital Transformation Helps Sustainable Development:

1. **Better Use of Resources:** Smart technologies like data analytics and the Internet of Things (IoT) help companies and governments use energy, water, and other resources more efficiently.
2. **Economic Growth & Inclusivity:** Digital tools create new jobs, improve businesses, and help people in remote areas access education and healthcare.
3. **Faster Solutions:** Technology speeds up solutions for global issues like climate change, poverty, and healthcare. [17]

How Sustainable Development Influences Digital Transformation:

1. **Eco-friendly Innovation:** Companies are using technology in ways that reduce waste and pollution, such as energy-efficient AI and smart grids.
2. **Social Responsibility:** Governments and businesses ensure that digital advancements are fair for everyone and do not widen social inequalities.
3. **Ethical Technology Use:** Sustainable development encourages responsible use of technology, including data privacy, fair labour practices, and equal access.[18]

Technology and sustainability go hand in hand. Digital transformation helps create a greener, fairer world, while sustainable development ensures technology is used in a way that benefits everyone.

For example, the *Kulturstiftung des Bundes* (German Federal Cultural Foundation) was established in 2002 and is one of Europe's largest publicly funded cultural foundations, dedicated to promoting art and culture within the scope of federal competence. The foundation places particular emphasis on supporting innovative programmes and projects in an international context, fostering cross-border cooperation and vibrant cultural exchange. It is actively engaged in integrating digital transformation within its sustainable development initiatives. Recognising the pivotal role of digitalisation in contemporary culture, the Foundation has launched several programmes to support cultural institutions in adapting to and shaping the digital landscape.[19]

2.5 EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy

In 2025, the European Commission announced the publication of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy, currently expected for Q4 2026. Public and targeted consultations with stakeholders of the tourism sector were carried out in order to establish its priorities[20]. On 26 March 2026, the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) of the European Parliament adopted an own initiative report on the

[17] Vaishnav (Jul. 1, 2024).
[18] Alojail & Khan (2023).
[19] German Federal Cultural Foundation (2025).
[20] https://www.linkedin.com/in/eric-dresin-5807a082/
[21] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2026-0123_EN.html
[22] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/05/28/the-council-sets-strategic-guidelines-for-a-sustainable-and-competitive-tourism-sector

topic which was subsequently adopted as a European Parliament resolution on 28 April 2026[21]. The Council adopted conclusions on the subject matter on 28 May 2026, setting strategic guidelines for a sustainable and competitive tourism sector[22].

Among the key topics announced by the European Commission are:

1. Setting Sustainable Tourism at the centre
2. Developing training and skills
3. Fostering the adoption of digital innovation and AI by SMES
4. Supporting Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) for a proper traveller's flow management
5. Branding Europe as a safe and sustainable destination
6. Making funding more accessible and simplified for SMEs
7. Reinforce connectivity and mobility while maintaining affordability.

These priorities align seamlessly with the objectives of the Preserving the Past, Securing the Future (PPSF) project, which aims to elevate Cultural and Remembrance Tourism by integrating sustainable practices, fostering skill-building through targeted training programmes, and leveraging digital solutions such as online learning. Moreover, at a broader level, this initiative contributes to positioning Europe as a leading sustainable and responsible travel destination. By embracing these strategic directions, Cultural and Remembrance Tourism will not only preserve Europe's rich heritage but also drive long-term resilience and competitiveness in the sector.

3. Conclusion — Challenges and Opportunities

Research on the current state of cultural heritage sites in the Europe Union has identified certain trends, revealing seven opportunities and two challenges for future development. These are highlighted in the following table.

Table 1: Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities	Insights
Opportunity 1: Profiting from ongoing interest	There is a sustained increase in demand for cultural and heritage attractions on the tourism side. The number of visitors rose continuously before the coronavirus years and since the end of the pandemic, the figures have almost reached the old highs again.

[21] https://www.linkedin.com/in/eric-dresin-5807a082/
[21] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2026-0123_EN.html
[22] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/05/28/the-council-sets-strategic-guidelines-for-a-sustainable-and-competitive-tourism-sector
[22] https://www.linkedin.com/in/eric-dresin-5807a082/
[21] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2026-0123_EN.html
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Opportunity 2: Highlighting many routes and sights – Network character	In the European Union, sites of cultural exchange and historical reappraisal are brought together in experience trails. These extend across individual countries and national borders. Particular emphasis is placed on networking and co-operation. Numerous routes have already been created in this way, which this PPSF project could build on.
Opportunity 3: Emphasising cooperation and synergies	It remains to be clarified whether less favoured countries, such as those with fewer cultural heritage sites, can be more strongly involved in value creation. It is also advisable to strengthen the networking of the individual attractions in order to utilise synergy effects and promote sustainable transformation through a targeted exchange of knowledge.
Opportunity 4: Focusing on the GSTC Criteria for Attractions	It is recommended to align the sustainable management of cultural sites, particularly regarding their potential as tourist attractions within the European Union, with the GSTC Criteria for Attractions. These criteria have proven effective over the years and are widely recognised as a valuable tool for achieving sustainability goals in the tourism industry. The points mentioned above are all reflected, in one way or another, within the GSTC framework.
Opportunity 5: Discovering the potential of digitalisation for sustainability aspects	It should be emphasised that digital opportunities for individual cultural aspects, entire heritage sites, or routes should be utilised to enhance intuitive experiences, increase interest, and better manage visitor flows.
Opportunity 6: Cooperating with known Tour Operators	Existing collaborations with tour operators in various tourism development efforts related to the presentation of cultural heritage in the European Union can be further expanded and strengthened.
Opportunity 7: Learning from Best practices	Existing best practices within the European Union, particularly those related to cultural heritage and the Second World War, should be examined to learn from their experiences and adapt effective measures for achieving desired outcomes towards a sustainable transformation. For example, a list of Best Practices can be found here.

Challenges	
Challenge 1: Acknowledging different approaches	The examples of France, Germany, and Amsterdam illustrate that the challenges and recognition of tourism's potential are evaluated and approached differently across member states and smaller political entities. While presenting cultural heritage can be understood as an educational mission and a warning for future generations, it can also be seen as a valuable cultural asset capable of attracting travellers. The former approach cautions against the voyeuristic aspects of "*dark tourism*" while the latter highlights the risks of "*overtourism*." These differing perspectives could pose challenges for collaboration and the development of a unified strategy for the sustainable management of cultural sites.
Challenge 2: Balancing uneven distribution of attractions	Despite the networking, it is clear that the hotspots of cultural activities are unevenly distributed across the EU. While some countries benefit more from tourism potential, others are less reached by tourists. However, it remains unclear whether the presence of memorial sites is sufficient as a reason to choose a destination or whether this is merely an additional criterion for organising a trip.

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1. Introduction

As part of the market analysis of the EU Project "*Preserving the Past, Securing the Future: A Sustainable Approach to Cultural and Remembrance Heritage*" a comprehensive study was conducted to identify and compile best practices in sustainable remembrance and cultural heritage tourism. The primary objective of this research was to examine how existing projects and initiatives successfully integrate sustainability principles, including:

- **Environmental Responsibility:** Reducing ecological impacts through conservation, resource efficiency, and green infrastructure.
- **Cultural Heritage Preservation:** Safeguarding and promoting historical, architectural, and intangible cultural assets.
- **Socio-economic Benefits:** Empowering local communities through economic opportunities, inclusivity, and equitable resource sharing.

The best practices collected during this study are organised into thematic categories, reflecting diverse approaches and contexts:

1. **Sustainable Urban Heritage Sites**
   Highlighting urban centres and historical cities that combine cultural preservation with environmentally conscious and community-focused practices.

2. **World War II Heritage Sites**
   Showcasing sites that commemorate WWII history while fostering sustainability through heritage preservation, education, and community engagement.

3. **Nature and Culture Integration**
   Demonstrating examples where natural landscapes and cultural heritage coexist, showcasing how tourism can protect ecosystems while celebrating local traditions.

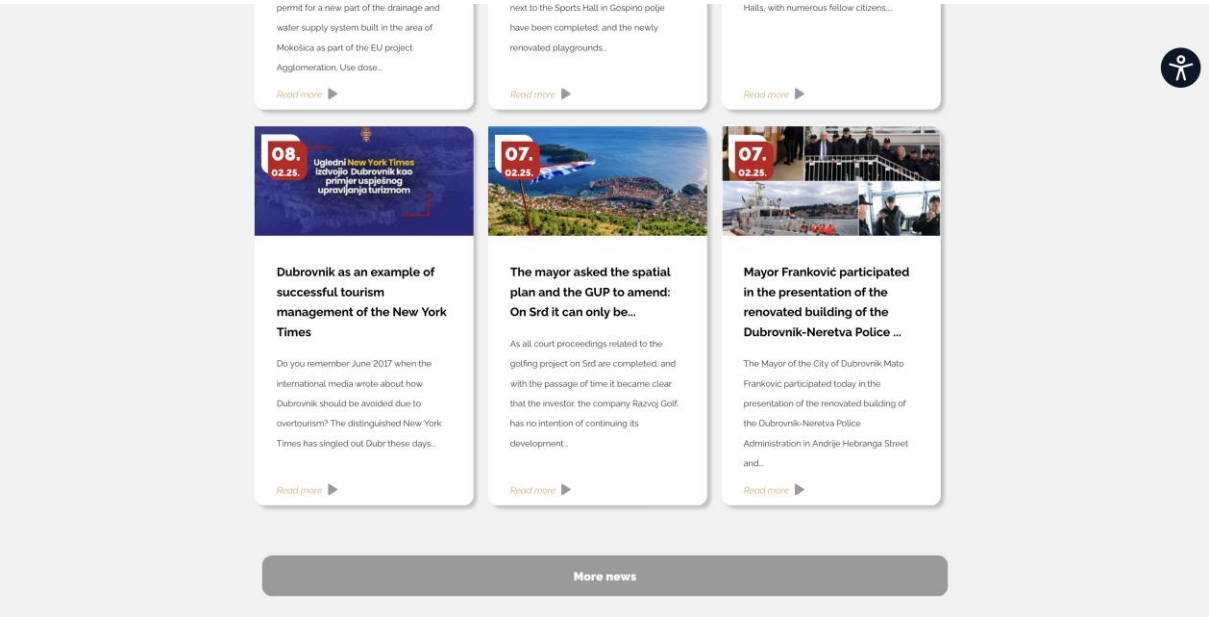
4. **Cultural Routes and Networks**
   Featuring multi-country or regional initiatives that connect cultural and historical landmarks through sustainable tourism models.

5. **Digital Transformation**
   Enabling insights into transformative processes of digitalisation with direct reference to sustainable development measures.

The following lists provide a curated selection of these best practices, offering inspiration and practical insights that will guide the project's implementation in fostering a sustainable, inclusive, and culturally rich tourism landscape across Europe.

2. Sustainable Urban Heritage Sites

a. Old Town of Dubrovnik, Croatia



Website: https://www.dubrovnik.hr/

Description: A UNESCO World Heritage Site implementing visitor caps and using tourism revenue for restoration to counter over-tourism.

Place: Dubrovnik, Croatia

Year: Listed as a UNESCO site in 1979.

Field of Action: Over-tourism management, cultural heritage preservation, and eco-tourism.

GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: Implements a clear plan to manage visitor flows and minimise over-tourism.

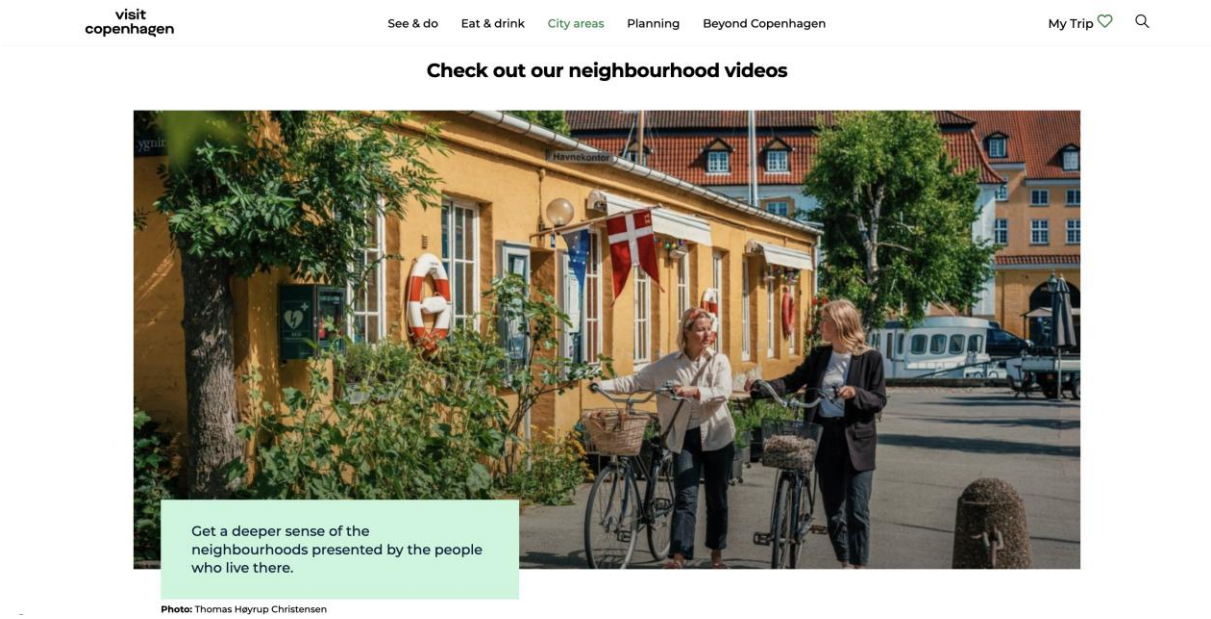
A3. Monitoring and Reporting: Regularly measures visitor impacts and adjusts strategies accordingly.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: Supports local artisans and businesses to retain economic benefits within the community.

C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: Directs tourism revenue to maintaining historical structures and landmarks.

D1. Conserving Resources: Adopts efficient waste management and sustainable energy use.

b. Copenhagen, Denmark



Website: https://www.visitcopenhagen.com/

Description: A city blending modern architecture with historical heritage, promoting cycling, renewable energy, and eco-friendly accommodations.

Place: Copenhagen, Denmark

Year: Longstanding urban development with modern sustainability measures implemented since the 1990s.

Field of Action: Urban sustainability, cultural preservation, and green mobility.

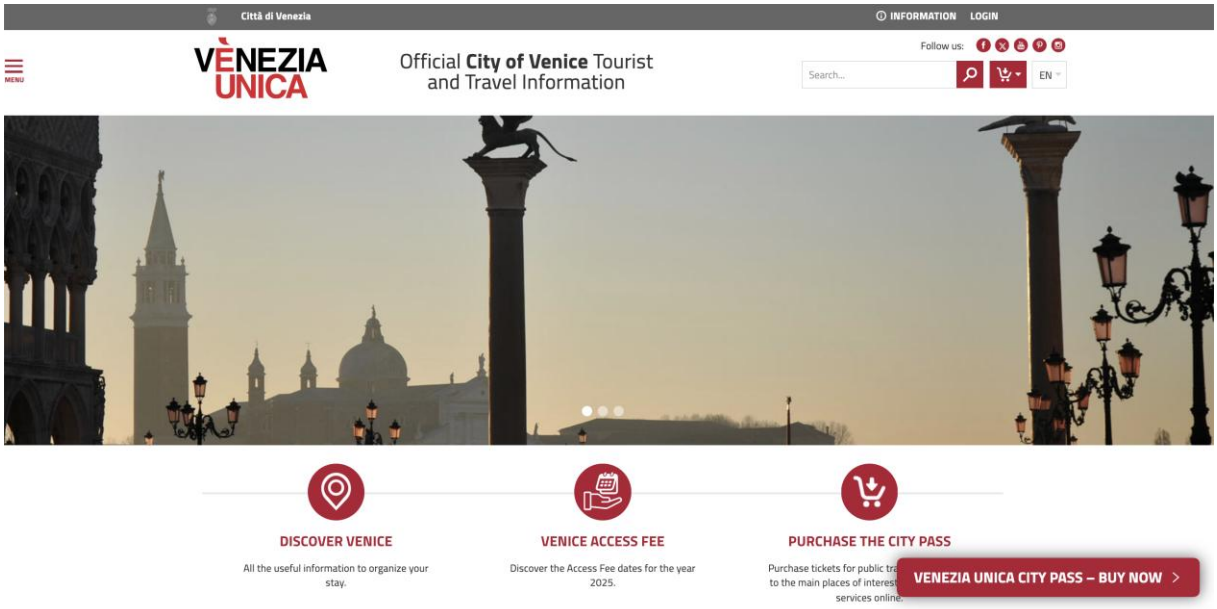
GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: Integrates green urban planning into cultural heritage management.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: Promotes local green businesses, such as eco-certified hotels and sustainable restaurants.

C2. Visitor Interpretation: Educates visitors about the integration of sustainability into the city's historical preservation efforts.

c. Venice, Italy



Website: https://www.veneziaunica.it/

Description: A UNESCO city managing over-tourism through visitor controls, cruise ship bans, and cultural preservation.

Place: Venice, Italy

Year: UNESCO World Heritage status since 1987.

Field of Action: Over-tourism management, cultural preservation, and environmental protection.

GSTC Criteria:

A5. Visitor Management: Regulates entry and limits access to protect delicate infrastructure, including the canals.

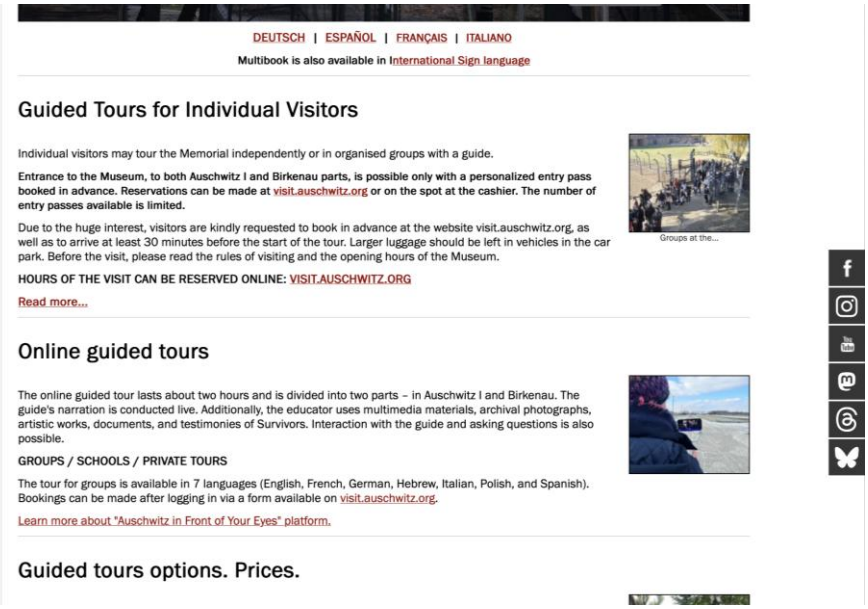
B2. Local Community Wellbeing: Addresses challenges like resident displacement through policies protecting housing for locals.

C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: Ensures preservation of historic buildings and cultural landmarks such as St. Mark's Basilica.

D2. Reducing Pollution: Implements measures to reduce pollution by banning large cruise ships from entering the lagoon.

3. World War II Heritage Sites

a. Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, Poland



Website: https://www.auschwitz.org/

Description: Holocaust memorial using sustainable preservation methods and efficient visitor management.

Place: Oświęcim, Poland

Year: Established as a memorial in 1947.

Field of Action: Sustainable heritage preservation, educational tourism, and eco-conscious management.

GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: Comprehensive management ensures sustainable operations to preserve the site's integrity.

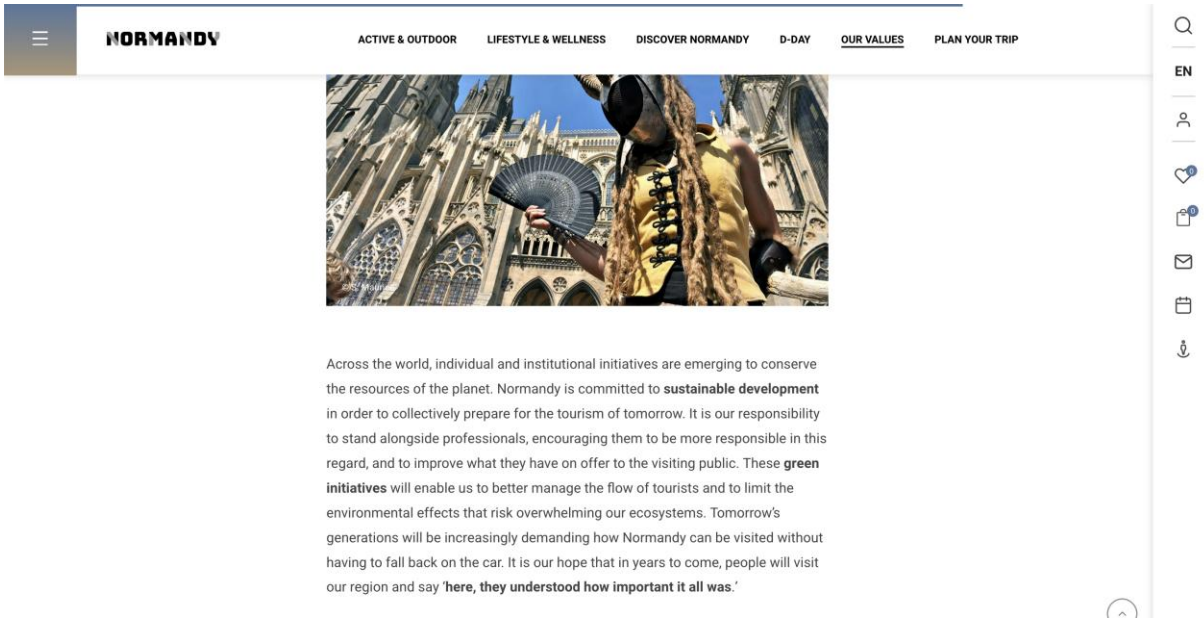
A3. Monitoring and Reporting: Tracks visitor impact to make adjustments that maintain the site's long-term preservation.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: Engages local businesses in services like guided tours and hospitality.

C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: Maintains Holocaust-era artifacts and infrastructure to preserve historical authenticity.

D1. Conserving Resources: Uses resource-efficient methods in maintenance and visitor facilities.

b. Normandy Beaches, France



Website: https://en.normandie-tourisme.fr/

Description: Preserves D-Day landing sites while promoting sustainable tourism through eco-friendly transport and local economic support.

Place: Normandy, France

Year: Memorial development began post-WWII.

Field of Action: Environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and community-based tourism.

GSTC Criteria:

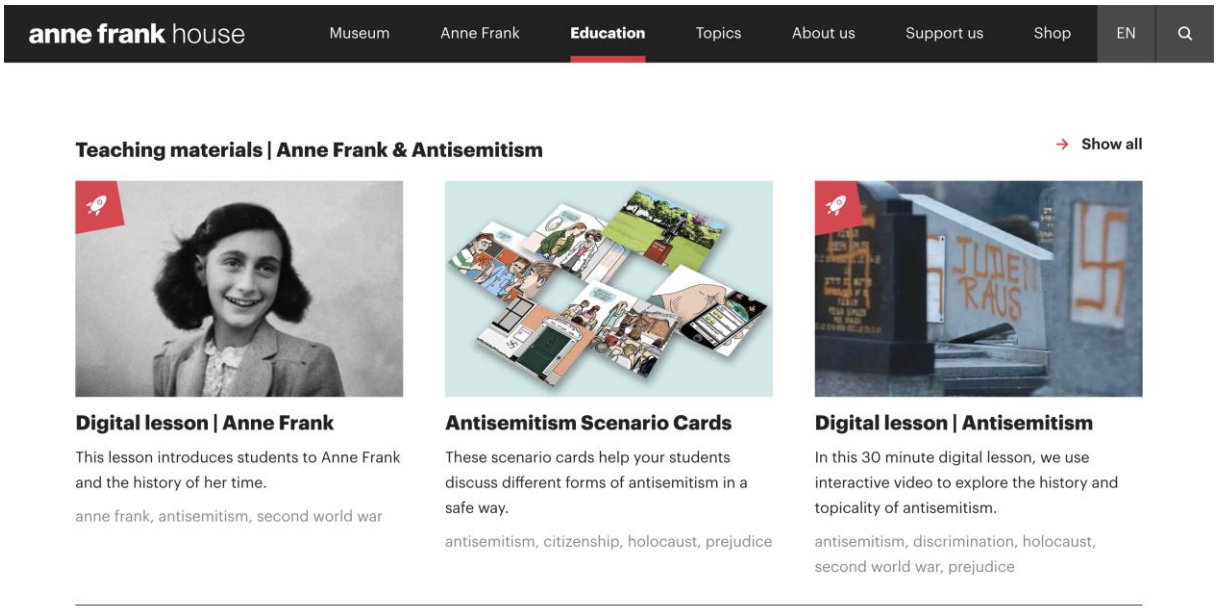
A5. Visitor Management: Ensures controlled access to sensitive memorials and beaches to prevent overuse.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: Strengthens local businesses through tourism-related services.

C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: Preserves historic landmarks such as cemeteries and landing sites.

D2. Reducing Pollution: Encourages eco-friendly travel through walking and cycling tours.

c. Anne Frank House, Netherlands



Website: https://www.annefrank.org/

Description: Preserves the Anne Frank house using energy-efficient technologies and virtual tours to reduce physical impact while promoting Holocaust education.

Place: Amsterdam, Netherlands

Year: Opened as a museum in 1960.

Field of Action: Green museum practices, sustainable visitor management, and historical education.

GSTC Criteria:

A2. Legal Compliance: Adheres to environmental and accessibility laws in its operations.

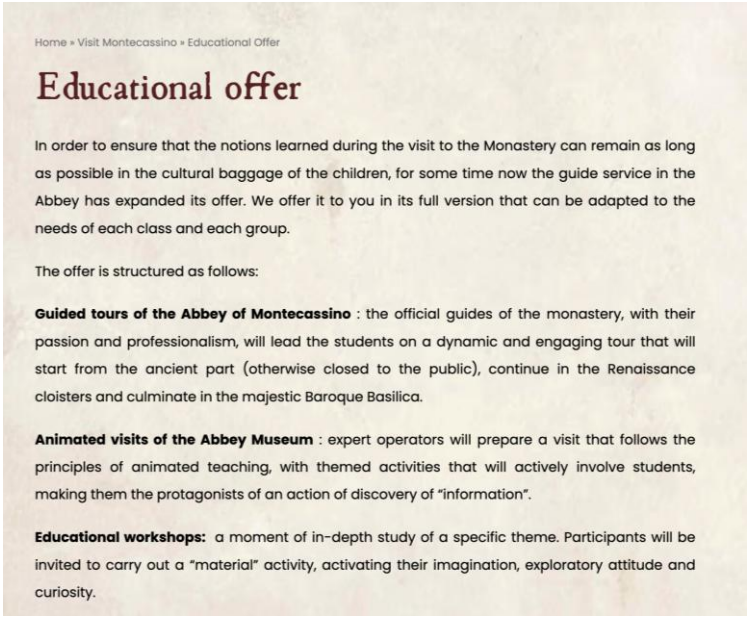
A6. Promotion of Sustainability: Incorporates energy-efficient systems and digital exhibits to educate visitors on sustainability.

C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: Maintains the house and its artifacts, emphasising their historical significance.

D1. Conserving Resources: Reduces resource use through virtual tours and energy-efficient systems.

4. Nature and Culture Integration

a. Monte Cassino, Italy



Home » Visit Montecassino » Educational Offer

Educational offer

In order to ensure that the notions learned during the visit to the Monastery can remain as long as possible in the cultural baggage of the children, for some time now the guide service in the Abbey has expanded its offer. We offer it to you in its full version that can be adapted to the needs of each class and each group.

The offer is structured as follows:

Guided tours of the Abbey of Montecassino : the official guides of the monastery, with their passion and professionalism, will lead the students on a dynamic and engaging tour that will start from the ancient part (otherwise closed to the public), continue in the Renaissance cloisters and culminate in the majestic Baroque Basilica.

Animated visits of the Abbey Museum : expert operators will prepare a visit that follows the principles of animated teaching, with themed activities that will actively involve students, making them the protagonists of an action of discovery of "information".

Educational workshops: a moment of in-depth study of a specific theme. Participants will be invited to carry out a "material" activity, activating their imagination, exploratory attitude and curiosity.

Website: https://www.abbaziamontecassino.org/

Description: A historic abbey and battlefield restored using traditional methods, with eco-friendly tourism through nature trails.

Place: Cassino, Italy

Year: Rebuilt and reopened in 1950.

Field of Action: Sustainable restoration, battlefield history, and cultural preservation.

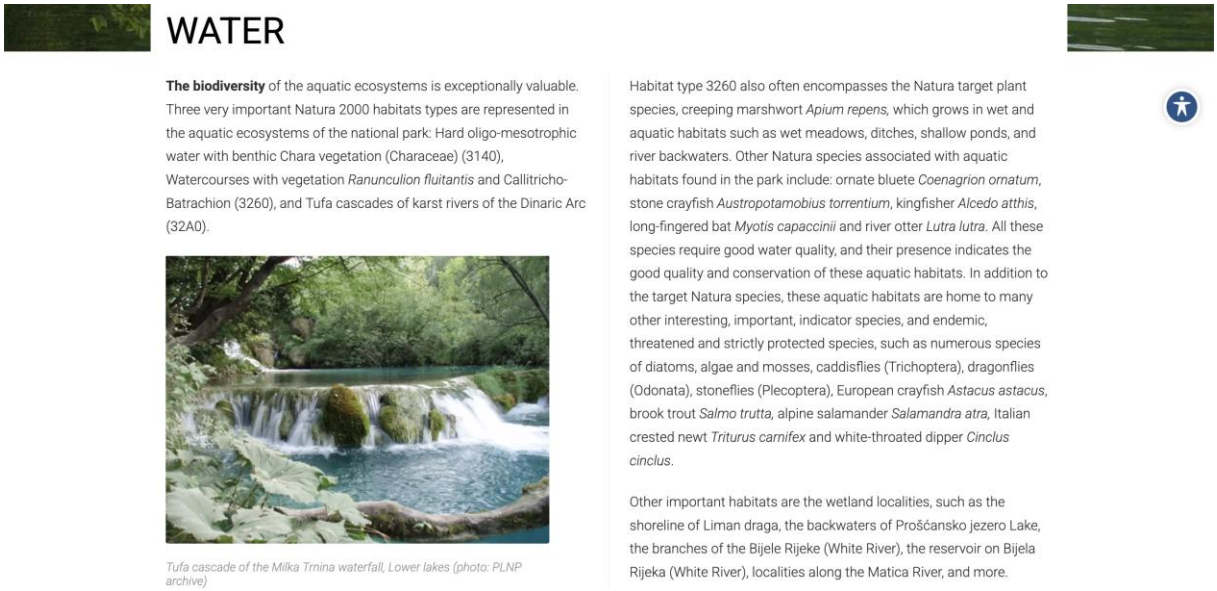
GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: Sustainable practices integrated into long-term restoration projects.

B2. Local Community Wellbeing: Promotes local economic benefits by encouraging partnerships with eco-tourism businesses.

C2. Visitor Interpretation: Highlights the site's historical and cultural significance through responsible educational programs.

b. Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia



WATER

The biodiversity of the aquatic ecosystems is exceptionally valuable. Three very important Natura 2000 habitats types are represented in the aquatic ecosystems of the national park: Hard oligo-mesotrophic water with benthic Chara vegetation (Characeae) (3140), Watercourses with vegetation *Ranunculion fluitantis* and Callitricho-Batrachion (3260), and Tufa cascades of karst rivers of the Dinaric Arc (32A0).

Tufa cascade of the Milka Trnina waterfall, Lower lakes (photo: PLNP archive)

Habitat type 3260 also often encompasses the Natura target plant species, creeping marshwort *Apium repens*, which grows in wet and aquatic habitats such as wet meadows, ditches, shallow ponds, and river backwaters. Other Natura species associated with aquatic habitats found in the park include: ornate bluete *Coenagrion ornatum*, stone crayfish *Austropotamobius torrentium*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, long-fingered bat *Myotis capaccinii* and river otter *Lutra lutra*. All these species require good water quality, and their presence indicates the good quality and conservation of these aquatic habitats. In addition to the target Natura species, these aquatic habitats are home to many other interesting, important, indicator species, and endemic, threatened and strictly protected species, such as numerous species of diatoms, algae and mosses, caddisflies (Trichoptera), dragonflies (Odonata), stoneflies (Plecoptera), European crayfish *Astacus astacus*, brook trout *Salmo trutta*, alpine salamander *Salamandra atra*, Italian crested newt *Triturus carnifex* and white-throated dipper *Cinclus cinclus*.

Other important habitats are the wetland localities, such as the shoreline of Liman draga, the backwaters of Prošćansko jezero Lake, the branches of the Bijele Rijeke (White River), the reservoir on Bijela Rijeka (White River), localities along the Matica River, and more.

Website: https://np-plitvicka-jezera.hr/en/

Description: A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this park combines stunning natural beauty with traditional cultural heritage. It integrates sustainable tourism through eco-conscious visitor management, education programs, and the preservation of traditional Croatian crafts and customs.

Place: Plitvice Lakes, Croatia

Year: Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979.

Field of Action: Nature conservation, cultural preservation, and eco-tourism.

GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: A comprehensive strategy ensures long-term protection of natural and cultural resources, including visitor capacity limits to prevent degradation.

A4. Stakeholder Engagement: Collaborates with local communities to promote traditional crafts, sustainable farming, and cultural tourism.

A5. Visitor Management: Implements timed entry systems and designated walking paths to minimise environmental impact.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: Encourages partnerships with local artisans and small businesses that sell handmade goods and local delicacies.

B3. Community Empowerment: Supports local traditions, including music and folklore, as part of the visitor experience.

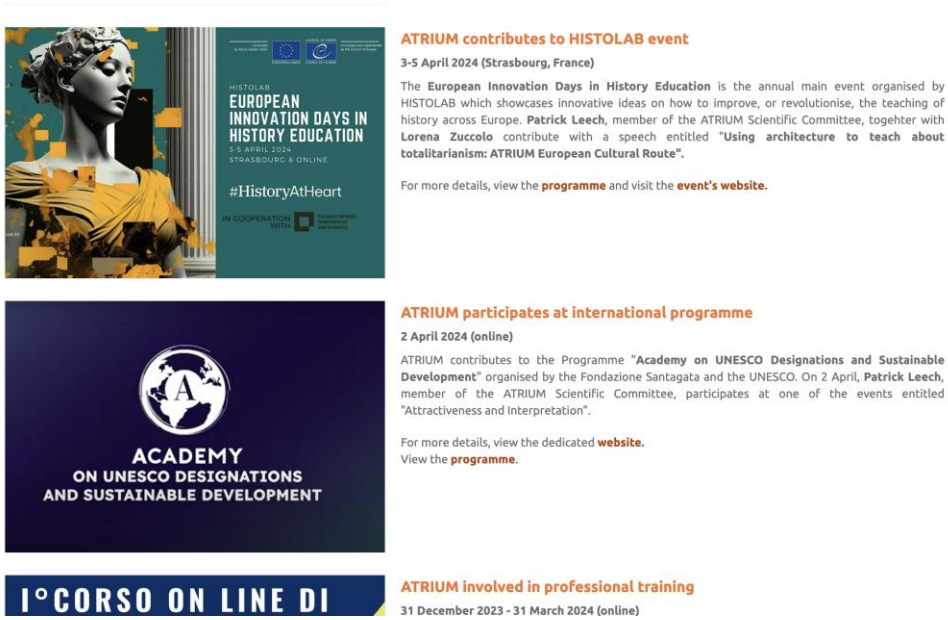
C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: Preserves wooden watermills, traditional housing, and customs that reflect the area's rich history.

C2. Visitor Interpretation: Offers educational programs to teach visitors about the interplay between local culture and the surrounding natural landscape.

D1. Conserving Resources: Uses eco-friendly facilities, including renewable energy sources and waste management systems, to reduce environmental strain.

5. Cultural Routes

a. ATRIUM Digital Catalogue



Website: www.atriumroute.eu

Description: The ATRIUM Digital Catalogue is a curated collection of architectural landmarks, monuments, and urban landscapes from the 20th century that reflect the legacy of totalitarian regimes in Europe. The project integrates historical preservation, educational tourism, and sustainable development practices to ensure that this contentious heritage is critically interpreted and responsibly managed. By promoting dialogue, reflection, and education, ATRIUM encourages sustainable cultural tourism across its network of sites.

Places: The ATRIUM Cultural Route includes locations in Italy, Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and other European countries that were influenced by totalitarian regimes during the 20th century.

Year: Certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2014.

Field of action: Co-operation in research and development, enhancement of memory, history and European heritage

GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: The ATRIUM project implements a clear sustainability strategy that balances heritage preservation with visitor impact management. Policies include capacity controls, conservation planning, and resource-efficient operations at partner sites.

A4. Stakeholder Engagement: The project actively involves local governments, historians, architects, and community groups to ensure that management plans align with local needs and interests.

A5. Visitor Management: Sites within the ATRIUM network use guided tours, visitor caps, and digital resources to ensure a low-impact and meaningful visitor experience.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: ATRIUM empowers local economies by integrating small businesses, local guides, and artisans into the tourism framework, ensuring that benefits remain within the communities.

B3. Community Empowerment: The project emphasises inclusivity and dialogue, encouraging local communities to participate in preserving and interpreting their own cultural heritage.

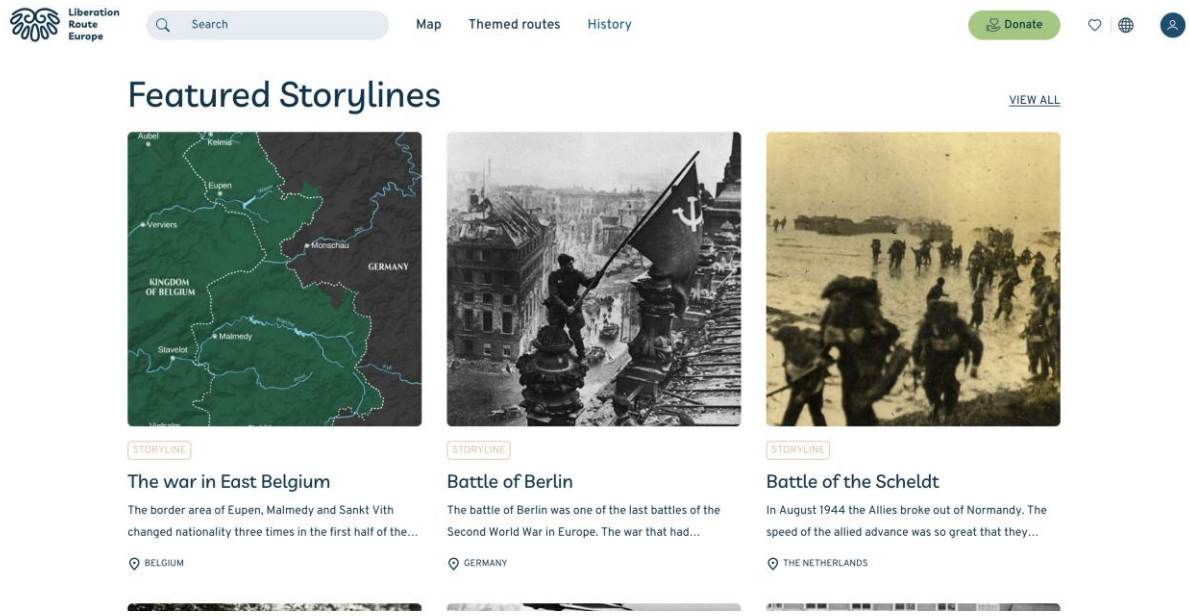
C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: The project focuses on preserving 20th-century architectural styles, urban layouts, and monuments as critical parts of Europe's shared history. Restoration efforts use sustainable materials and practices.

C2. Visitor Interpretation: ATRIUM prioritises accurate and responsible storytelling about totalitarian regimes, promoting education, dialogue, and reflection on this complex heritage.

D1. Conserving Resources: Partner sites adopt resource-efficient operations, including energy-efficient technologies and sustainable building practices during restorations.

D2. Reducing Pollution: Encourages sustainable travel options, such as public transport, cycling, and low-carbon cross-border routes.

b. Liberation Route Europe



Website: https://www.liberationroute.com/

Description: The Liberation Route Europe is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, a transnational memorial and trail connecting WWII remembrance sites and stories across Europe. Spanning multiple countries, it connects key sites, stories, and events of the war while promoting sustainable tourism, education, and cross-border cooperation. It also fosters critical reflection on the values of freedom, democracy, and human rights.

Place: Covers regions in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Italy, Luxembourg and other European countries impacted by WWII.

Year: Certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2019.

Field of Action: WWII heritage preservation, education, sustainable cultural tourism, and transnational collaboration.

GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: The project develops long-term plans to manage WWII heritage sites, ensuring minimal environmental impact and the preservation of historical integrity.

A4. Stakeholder Engagement: Works with local governments, museums, historians, and community organisations to co-manage sites and provide accurate historical narratives.

A5. Visitor Management: Introduces digital resources, such as interactive maps and audio guides, to manage on-site visitor impact and encourage responsible tourism.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: Engages local businesses, tour guides, and accommodation providers to create economic opportunities around WWII heritage sites

B3. Community Empowerment: Ensures that local voices and stories are central to the interpretation of liberation history, empowering communities to preserve and share their heritage.

C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: Preserves and promotes WWII-related sites, monuments, and stories, ensuring their long-term accessibility and educational value.

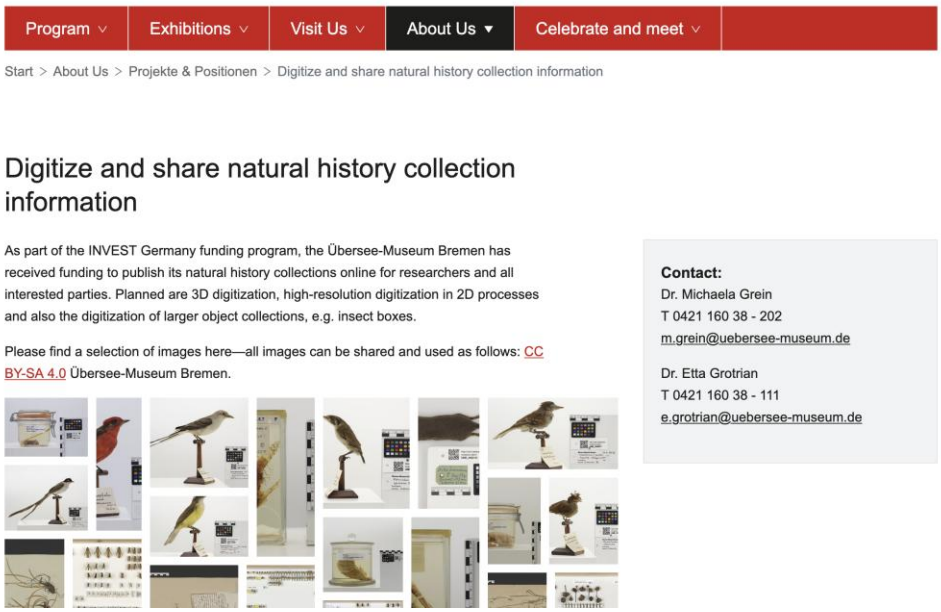
C2. Visitor Interpretation: Offers engaging, accurate, and inclusive narratives about the liberation of Europe, emphasising the importance of freedom and democracy.

D1. Conserving Resources: Encourages resource-efficient operations at WWII sites, such as energy-saving museum facilities and eco-friendly visitor centres.

D2. Reducing Pollution: Promotes green travel options, including walking and cycling routes, to explore WWII heritage trails.

6. Digital Transformation

a. NEO Collections Project



Website: https://www.uebersee-museum.de/en/about-the-museum/collection/neo-collections/

Description: Initiated in December 2019, the NEO Collections Project is a collaborative effort between the Übersee-Museum Bremen, the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, and the

National Museum in Stockholm. The project aims to explore innovative ways of engaging with museum collections both online and on-site. By digitising collections and developing user-centred, explorative, and open approaches, the project enhances accessibility and fosters public interaction with cultural heritage.

Place: Bremen and Hamburg, Germany; Stockholm, Sweden.

Year: 2019–2023.
Field of Action: Digital transformation, cultural heritage preservation, public engagement, and international collaboration.

GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: Implemented structured digital strategies to preserve and present collections, ensuring long-term accessibility and engagement.

A4. Stakeholder Engagement: Fostered partnerships among museums, digital experts, and the public to co-create and share knowledge.

A5. Visitor Management: Developed user-centred digital platforms to facilitate interactive and educational experiences for diverse audiences.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: Enhanced the cultural tourism appeal of participating cities by offering innovative digital experiences.

B3. Community Empowerment: Encouraged public participation in the exploration and interpretation of museum collections, empowering users to contribute to cultural narratives.

C1. Protection of Cultural Heritage: Digitised and preserved artifacts, ensuring their longevity and wider accessibility.

C2. Visitor Interpretation: Provided interactive and explorative platforms for audiences to engage deeply with cultural content.

D1. Conserving Resources: Reduced the need for physical travel and resource consumption by offering digital access to collections.

b. "Hybrid is the Future!" Workshop



Website: https://hybridspacelab.net/hybrid-is-the-future-at-kulturstiftung-des-bundes/

Description: As part of the "*dive in. Programme for Digital Interactions*" initiated by the *Kulturstiftung des Bundes*, the "*Hybrid is the Future!*" workshop was conducted to explore innovative hybrid formats for art and cultural practices. The workshop speculated on hybrid spaces that combine physical and digital elements, aiming to develop engaging, inclusive, and sustainable cultural experiences. It emphasised co-creative processes and the fusion of various artistic disciplines to foster new forms of public engagement.

Place: Berlin, Germany.

Year: 2021.

Field of Action: Digital innovation, cultural participation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustainable development.

GSTC Criteria:

A1. Sustainability Management System: Developed structured methodologies for hybrid cultural programming, reducing the reliance on physical infrastructure.

A5. Visitor Management: Used digital formats to expand audience engagement while minimising the carbon footprint of cultural events.

B1. Economic Benefits for Local Communities: Encouraged new business models for digital and hybrid cultural participation, supporting local artists and institutions.

B3. Community Empowerment: Strengthened digital inclusion by ensuring that cultural experiences are accessible to diverse audiences.

C2. Visitor Interpretation: Created immersive and participatory cultural formats, bridging physical and digital interactions to enhance audience engagement.

D1. Conserving Resources: Reduced resource consumption by shifting parts of cultural programming to digital platforms.

Annex: GSTC Attraction Criteria

GSTC Attraction Criteria

Criteria	Indicators	SDGs
SECTION A: Demonstrate effective sustainable management		
A1. Sustainability Management System The attraction has a long-term Sustainability Management System (SMS) that is suitable to its size and scope, addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, governance, quality, human rights, health, safety, risk, and crisis management issues and drives continuous improvement.	1. The attraction has a clearly documented Sustainability Management System that is reviewed and updated annually. 2. The Sustainability Management System includes environmental, social, cultural, economic, governance, quality, human rights, health, safety, risk, and crisis management issues. 3. The Sustainability Management System identifies the attraction's key stakeholders. 4. The Sustainability Management System includes a set of measurable sustainability goals for the short-term (1 year), medium-term (3 years) and long-term (5 years and beyond), taking into account the tenure of the attraction. 5. The Sustainability Management System includes plans to address and manage risks and crisis situations. 6. The attraction provides documented evidence of the implementation, performance monitoring, review and update of the Sustainability Management System. 7. The Sustainability Management System includes a process for sustainability performance review, achievement of goals and continuous improvement. 8. The Sustainability Management System identifies and defines the roles and responsibilities for sustainability planning and implementation within the attraction. 9. The Sustainability Management System includes a visitor management strategy.	
A2. Legal compliance The attraction complies with all applicable local, national, and international legislation and/or regulations, where relevant including, among others, health, safety, labor, environmental, and animal welfare aspects.	1. The attraction maintains and makes available an up-to-date list of relevant applicable legal requirements. 2. The attraction provides valid certificates and/or documentary evidence of relevant applicable legal compliance.	

A3. Reporting and Communication The attraction communicates its sustainability policy, actions and performance to stakeholders.	1. The attraction publishes an annual sustainability performance report online, shares it with all stakeholders, and makes the report available in an offline format upon request. 2. The attraction includes sustainability policies and practices in its internal communications. 3. The attraction includes sustainability policies and practices in its external communications.	
A4. Staff engagement Staff are engaged in the development and implementation of the sustainability management system and receive periodic guidance and training regarding their roles and responsibilities in its delivery.	1. Evidence of staff involvement in the development of the Sustainability Management System is available. 2. Evidence of staff involvement in the implementation of the Sustainability Management System is available. 3. Records including attendance of courses, orientation, and on-the-job training are available. 4. Staff training and instructional materials are available in appropriate languages and formats accessible to people with disabilities as needed. 5. Staff hold valid certificates and qualifications in relevant disciplines/skills where necessary and appropriate.	
A5. Visitor experience Visitor experience, including aspects of sustainability, is monitored, analyzed and corrective action is taken.	1. A visitor feedback system is in place. 2. The attraction records and analyzes feedback and responses. 3. The attraction provides evidence of improvements and/or corrective action taken.	
A6. Stakeholder engagement The attraction engages with its stakeholders in its sustainability policies and practices and is involved in sustainable tourism planning and development in the destination.	1. The attraction provides evidence that it takes part in meetings/platforms that raise common issues related to the destination or contributes to any destination improvement solutions. 2. The attraction is an active member of local stakeholder communities, such as NGOs, and other local public or private bodies, where these exist. 3. The attraction takes into account results and decisions of the meetings and interaction with relevant stakeholders for destination management. 4. The attraction has formal mechanisms for engaging stakeholders to solicit feedback and input on sustainability policies, practices and initiatives. 5. The attraction conducts initiatives to raise awareness among stakeholders and customers about sustainability issues, policies, practices and initiatives. 6. Contracts with tenants/lessees are to include sustainability requirements pertinent and relevant to each tenant/lessee.	

A7. Information and interpretation The attraction provides information about and interpretation of its own offerings, products and services, the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage, as well as an explanation of appropriate behavior on and around its premises.	1. The attraction makes available information and interpretation material of its offerings, products and services, site and local area, including but not limited to natural and cultural heritage. 2. The attraction informs and trains staff about the natural and cultural heritage of the site and/or local area. 3. The attraction provides visitors information regarding proper and expected conduct within its premises, facilities, and the surrounding local area and prevents undesirable behavior and actions that could harm and/or put at risk the environment, animals, local wildlife, staff, visitors and stakeholders. 4. Information, interpretative and instructional material is available in relevant languages. 5. Information and interpretive materials including guidelines for appropriate behavior are prepared in consultation with the local community. 6. The attraction prioritizes the use of digital media for communication and information dissemination.	
A8. Accurate promotion The attraction promotes and communicates itself, its sustainability claims, its products and services accurately and transparently and does not promise more than what is being delivered.	1. Texts and audiovisual material used in promotion are actual experiences and accurate representations. 2. Sustainability claims are based on evidence and records of past performance. 3. Sustainability claims are truthful and substantiated.	
A9. Site selection, planning, and development Site selection, planning, and development of all facilities and activities take into account the capacity, integrity, and impact to the natural and cultural environment, including any new builds, additions, alterations, and upgrades to existing attractions.	1. All relevant and required licenses and permits are valid and up-to-date and are made available. 2. The attraction consults the local community and addresses any concerns raised. 3. The attraction optimizes the use of key resources, i.e. rainwater harvesting, renewable energy, energy-efficient infrastructure, composting, etc. 4. The attraction gives priority and preference to local and sustainable materials, practices, and crafts. 5. Site selection, size, design, and access have taken into account visual amenities, landscape, cultural, and natural heritage. 6. Preservation of archaeological, cultural heritage, and sacred sites has been documented. 7. Preservation of connectivity and integrity of natural sites and protected areas has been documented. 8. Potential impacts on threatened or protected species have been assessed, and plans have subsequently been adjusted to mitigate and/or eliminate any impact on the threatened or protected species. 9. Watercourses/catchments/wetlands are not altered and run-off is reduced.	

	10. Risk factors (including climate change, natural phenomena, and visitor safety) have been assessed, and plans have subsequently been adjusted to minimize and/or eliminate risk. 11. All development plans have taken into account the environmental and social footprint. 12. Impact assessment (including cumulative impacts) has been undertaken and documented as required by local government regulations.	
A10. Buildings, construction, and infrastructure Buildings, construction, and infrastructure development of the attraction have taken into account the local culture, ecosystems, and biodiversity, including any new builds, additions, alterations, and upgrades to existing attractions.	1. The attraction gives priority and preference to local and sustainable materials, practices, methods and crafts. 2. Native and/or endemic plants obtained from sustainable sources are used in landscaping and decoration. 3. The attraction avoids invasive species in landscaping and decoration. 4. The attraction has identified, minimized and mitigated the adverse impact on wildlife habitats and local communities. 5. Run-off is reduced where possible, and any residue is captured or channeled and filtered and cleaned. 6. The attraction selects plants for their ability to tolerate prevailing or anticipated conditions e.g., drought-tolerant plants. 7. The attraction sorts and disposes of the waste from construction in an environmentally sound manner.	  

A11. Land, water and property rights The attraction has acquired and used land, water, and property legally and compliant with local community and Indigenous rights, including their free, prior, and informed consent, and involuntary resettlement is averted and not required.	1. Land ownership and tenure rights are documented. 2. User and access rights for key resources, including land and water, are documented where applicable. 3. There is documentary evidence of communication, consultation, and engagement with local and Indigenous communities. 4. Free, prior and informed consent of local communities is documented, where relevant (showing no involuntary resettlement or land acquisition).	

A12. Access for all Where practical and appropriate, site, facilities and services, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to people of all abilities. Information is made available on the accessibility of sites, facilities, and services.	1. Site, buildings, and activities are accessible to people of all abilities, persons with physical disabilities and other special needs, as appropriate to the nature of the operation. 2. There is evidence of programs to improve accessibility for individuals with various access requirements, such as people with disabilities, pregnant and nursing mothers, people with allergies, and the elderly. 3. Where sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access is provided through the design and implementation of solutions that take into account both the integrity of the site and reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements that can be achieved. 4. Upon request, the attraction consults stakeholders and provides additional accessibility services or equipment when feasible. 5. The attraction shares information about accessibility and how to request accessibility services and assistance with visitors prior to and on arrival. 6. The communication materials of the attraction that are relevant to people with special needs are provided in accessible formats. 7. Details on levels of accessibility within the site and facilities are provided on arrival and as necessary throughout the site. 8. The attraction provides staff with guidance and training regarding their roles and responsibilities related to accessibility. Records of training or guidance are available. 9. The attraction seeks feedback from visitors, staff and stakeholders about accessibility. Such feedback is analyzed and used for continuous improvement and future upgrades.	 
A13. Managing visitor volumes and activities The attraction has a visitor management strategy which is regularly reviewed.	1. The attraction has a documented visitor management strategy. 2. The visitor management strategy monitors and identifies seasonal visitor variations, traffic flow, crowd distribution, and visitor impact on entry, exit, and movement within the attraction throughout the year. 3. The attraction monitors and addresses visitor mobility such as high traffic seasons, high-traffic areas, and choke or congestion points within the attraction. 4. The attraction identifies, monitors and addresses the impacts of visitor volumes and activities on culture and environment, including through observation and stakeholder feedback.	 

A14. Climate change adaptation The attraction identifies and assesses risks and opportunities associated with climate change impacts through proactive measures to mitigate risks while leveraging opportunities for sustainable tourism development.	1. The attraction has identified relevant climate change impacts and adaptation requirements or aligned with the national/international climate change strategies/action plans. 2. The attraction takes into account climate change adaptation in the development and operation of its site and facilities. 3. The attraction has an action plan to cope with the identified negative impacts and makes such a plan available and accessible to stakeholders.	
A15. Risk and crisis management The attraction has a risk reduction, crisis management, and emergency response plan that is appropriate to its site and facilities. Key and relevant elements are communicated to visitors, staff, and suppliers. Procedures and resources are established for implementing the plan and are updated regularly.	1. The attraction has a documented risk reduction, crisis management, and emergency response plan for the site and facilities. 2. The plan recognizes a wide range of risks, including natural disasters, terrorism, health, resource depletion, animal welfare and others appropriate to the location and operation. 3. The plan includes emergency communications and response procedures with relevant crisis management stakeholders. 4. The attraction conducts periodic and timely reviews, updates and improvements to the plan. 5. The plan includes staff training on risk and crisis management including emergency response.	

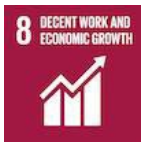
A16. Sourcing and purchasing The attraction's sourcing and purchasing policies favor sustainable, local, and fair-trade suppliers and products. Purchasing procedures are managed to minimize impact on the environment.	1. The attraction has a written sustainable sourcing and purchasing policy that prefers sustainable, local and/or fair-trade suppliers and products and addresses all products and services used by and channeled through the site subject to public procurement laws. 2. The sustainable purchasing policy includes food & beverage, building materials, temporary structures, promotional items, consumables, and souvenirs/merchandise purchased directly by the attraction. 3. The attraction's sustainable sourcing and purchasing policy prefers reusable, returnable, and repurposable goods over consumable or disposable goods. 4. The attraction's sustainable purchasing policy favors recyclable or recycled-content products when the purchase of consumable or disposable goods is unavoidable. 5. The sustainable purchasing policy is being actively implemented and monitored. 6. Contracts with suppliers are to include environmental sustainability requirements pertinent and relevant to each supplier. 7. The attraction regularly reviews and evaluates the sources of sustainable, local, and fair-trade products.	

	8. The attraction measures, monitors and manages the proportion of goods and services purchased from locally owned and operated businesses. 9. All signage, on-site displays, marketing, promotions and communications materials are posted electronically, reusable for future use and/or printed on local recycled materials and/or recyclable materials. 10. The attraction avoids and reduces single use items, especially plastics (in all instances like trade shows, retail/commercial environments) and promotes the same to their suppliers. 11. The attraction avoids unnecessary packaging (especially from plastic), with a preference to buy in bulk as appropriate. 12. The attraction does not use or sell threatened or endangered species.	

Criteria	Indicators	SDGs
SECTION B: Maximize social and economic benefits and minimize negative impacts		
B1. Community support The attraction actively supports initiatives for local community benefit. Such initiatives shall include but not be limited to education, training, health and sanitation and projects which address the impacts of climate change.	1. The attraction shows evidence that it engages with the local community in identifying needs and opportunities for community support and development and evaluating their potential benefit/impact. 2. The attraction consults and supports the local community financially and/or in-kind. Examples of support include contributions to projects led by local partners relating to the local infrastructure, environment, culture, education, training, small business development, health, or sanitation. 3. The attraction continually records and improves the level and nature of contributions made to initiatives / programs in the local community. 4. The attraction offers the local community the opportunity to access its site and facilities. Examples of offers include differentiated pricing, special concession periods or organized visits for schools and less-fortunate groups for local residents.	  
B2. Local employment Local residents are given opportunities for employment, including temporary and management positions.	1. The attraction has a policy to prefer local, non-transient residents for all permanent and temporary positions. 2. The policy is being actively implemented. 3. Local residents are given equal opportunity for advancement and employment in management positions. 4. The attraction measures, monitors, and manages the proportion of local non-transient inhabitants of the local community with its total staff strength. 5. The attraction measures, monitors, and manages the proportion of local non-transient inhabitants of the local community in management positions. 6. The attraction offers training to local residents to enhance their employability.	 

B3. Local suppliers & businesses The attraction cooperates with locally-owned suppliers and businesses in the development and sale of sustainable products and services that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture.	1. The attraction gives locally-owned businesses access to its premises and visitors for commercial activity, where appropriate. 2. The attraction provides feedback and advice to locally-owned suppliers, businesses and service providers with whom it engages in the quality and sustainability of their products and services. 3. The attraction considers and pursues opportunities for financial, collaborative and cooperative joint ventures, investments and/or partnerships with local entrepreneurs and local businesses, where appropriate.	

B4. Exploitation, harassment and human trafficking The attraction has implemented a policy against sexual or any form of exploitation or harassment and human trafficking, particularly of children, youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, people with disabilities and all vulnerable groups.	1. The attraction includes procedurey for monitoring, reporting, whistleblowing and responding to incidents of exploitation, harassment, and human trafficking, including forced labor in the policy. 2. The attraction communicates the policy internally (examples: onboarding or orientation programs, staff handbooks, management policies) and externally to stakeholders (examples: for visitors: customer care charter; for suppliers and service providers: purchasing policies, purchasing orders, supplier contracts). 3. The attraction provides staff with guidance or training relevant to their roles in recognizing and reporting incidents of exploitation or harassment. Records or evidence of training or guidance is made available. 4. The attraction consults and engages with the local community, if possible with women-led and youth-led groups, and relevant stakeholders in working against exploitation, harassment and human trafficking, including forced labor. 5. The attraction updates and maintains records of all staff, particularly their respective ages, as evidence of their undertaking not to support child labor as defined and prescribed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions. 6. The attraction takes action to prevent and respond to any forms of exploitation and/or abuse of, including but not limited to children (people under 18 years old) in travel and tourism.	

B5. Employment inclusion and equality The attraction promotes inclusion and equal employment opportunities at all levels and positions, without discriminating against gender, age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability and/or in other ways.	1. The attraction undertakes to practice, uphold and maintain an inclusive and equal employment policy at all times. 2. The attraction has identified groups at risk of discrimination, including but not limited to women and local minorities, and monitors the proportion of staff drawn from these groups. 3. Staff have been trained to recognize bias and discrimination and to identify groups at risk of discrimination, including women, local minorities, Indigenous Peoples, and people with disabilities. 4. The attraction offers employment and advancement opportunities, including in management positions, without discrimination based on race, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, parental status, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation, or other non-merit-based factors.	 

B6. Decent work Labor rights are respected, a safe and secure working environment is provided, and staff are paid at least a living or fair wage that is commensurate with their skills, competencies and qualifications. Staff are offered regular training, experience, and opportunities for advancement.	1. The attraction demonstrates awareness of and compliance with national labor regulations and/or International Labor Organization (ILO) standards and regulations. 2. The attraction pays staff no less than the legal minimum wage prescribed by local and national regulations. Where such minimum wages are not regulated, the attraction pays staff a fair wage commensurate with their skills, competencies and qualifications comparable to local wages for similar work. 3. The attraction offers training appropriate to the staff roles and relevant advancement and/or job enlargement opportunities. Training records are maintained for all staff, showing the level and frequency of training received. 4. The attraction provides full-time staff with health insurance (if healthcare is not provided universally in the country where the attraction is based) and participates in the national social security program, if available. The attraction has a program to cover costs for staff for job-related injuries and illnesses. 5. The attraction provides all staff with a safe and secure working environment. 6. Water, sanitation, hygiene, workplace safety, and personal safety such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and first aid amenities are provided for and accessible by all staff. 7. Staff satisfaction is monitored, reviewed and managed. 8. A staff grievance mechanism, issue and/or case escalation process is in place, documented in a human resource or staff handbook and communicated to all staff. 9. The attraction maintains, updates and communicates a human resource or staff handbook covering the code of ethics and code of conduct, and employment processes and procedures for recruitment, selection, promotion, termination, retirement and disciplinary action, which is available and accessible to all staff. 10. The attraction has a Whistleblower Policy.	
B7. Community services The activities of the attraction do not jeopardize the provision of basic services to local and neighboring communities. A feedback mechanism is in place for local communities and any reduction in the availability of basic services caused by the attraction is addressed.	1. The attraction monitors, reviews and manages its impact on the availability of basic services, such as food, water, energy, security, safety, health care, medical care, sanitation and/or emergency services. 2. A communication mechanism is in place for local communities to report any reduction, restriction, and/or encumbrance in the availability of basic services. 3. The attraction addresses and takes corrective action to any reduction, restriction and/or encumbrance in the availability of basic services to local communities. Such actions, including consultation and/or follow-up with affected stakeholders, are to be documented.	

B8. Local livelihoods and traditional access The attraction's activities do not adversely affect local traditional access to livelihoods, including land and aquatic resource use, rights-of-way, transport, and housing.	1. Local and traditional access to livelihoods is considered in the development and operational decisions. 2. A communication mechanism is in place for local communities to report any instance of reduced, restricted and/or encumbered access to transport, local residences and local livelihoods. 3. The attraction takes corrective action where appropriate, documents it, and consults the affected stakeholders for feedback. 4. The operations and activities of the attraction do not restrict or adversely affect access to local residences, rights-of-way and transport.	 
B9. Code of conduct The attraction has a code of conduct to guide the behavior and actions of staff, suppliers and visitors.	1. The code of conduct reflects the attraction's policies regarding appropriate behavior, and approaches to prevent the risks of exploitation, harassment, and human trafficking. 2. The code of conduct encourages respectful treatment of all people regardless of race, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, parental status, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation. The code of conduct shall include guidelines for verbal and non-verbal communications and interactions, appropriate physical contact and close proximity. 3. The code of conduct includes guidelines for interactions with children, including guidance on appropriate physical contact, close proximity, and verbal and non-verbal communications. In particular, taking photos or videos of children, and giving gifts to children is discouraged without the permission of the child and child's parent or legal guardian. 4. The code of conduct includes guidelines for interactions with vulnerable and marginalized groups, including people with disabilities. In particular, taking photos or videos of adults in the local community is discouraged without the subject's permission. 5. The attraction communicates the code of conduct internally (examples: onboarding or orientation programs, staff handbooks, management policies) and externally to stakeholders (examples: for visitors: customer care charter; for suppliers and service providers: purchasing policies, purchasing orders, supplier contracts). 6. The attraction provides staff guidance and training about the code of conduct. Records or evidence of training or guidance are available.	   

Criteria	Indicators	SDGs
SECTION C: Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts		
C1. Cultural interactions The attraction adheres to international and national good practices and engages and consults with local communities and stakeholders for agreed-upon interpretations and presentations of, and, visits to Indigenous, ethnic and local communities, as well as their culture, heritage, history and people, and culturally or historically sensitive sites. The attraction ensures authenticity, accuracy and objectivity, while minimizing adverse impacts and maximizing local benefits and visitor fulfilment.	1. The attraction demonstrates awareness of, and compliance with existing and/or prevailing international, national and local regulations, good practices and guidance for the interpretation and presentation of and visits to cultural, heritage and/or historical sites, as well as Indigenous, ethnic and local communities. 2. The attraction engages and consults with the Indigenous, ethnic and local communities and stakeholders in creating, interpreting and presenting the attraction's rendition of the culture, heritage, history and people of the subject site and/or community, reviewing guidance, and creating and agreeing upon additional guidelines as necessary. 3. The attraction provides all staff with guidance on appropriate behavior, as well as information and practices related to the local customs, traditions and etiquette. 4. The attraction takes measures to educate and advise visitors and prevent them from violating and disrespecting the local culture, heritage and traditions. 5. Measures are in place to avoid culturally inappropriate and disrespectful interaction with people of Indigenous, ethnic and local communities. 6. A communication mechanism is in place for local communities and Indigenous Peoples to report adverse impacts from visitors. 7. The attraction takes corrective action where appropriate, documents it, and consults the affected stakeholders for feedback.	
C2. Protecting cultural heritage and traditional access The attraction supports the protection, preservation and enhancement of local properties, sites, and traditions of historical, archaeological, cultural and spiritual significance. It does not impede access for local residents and stakeholders.	1. The attraction supports through policy and/or investment in the protection and enhancement of local cultural heritage located on its site and operations, where appropriate. 2. The attraction provides financial and/or in-kind support in the protection, preservation, enhancement and enjoyment of cultural heritage in the local area, where appropriate. 3. The attraction allows and does not impede nor restrict local traditional access to cultural heritage.	

C3. Presenting culture and heritage The attraction incorporates authentic and accurate elements of traditional and contemporary local culture in its operations, design, decoration, interpretation, presentation, cuisine, merchandise, and souvenirs while respecting and observing all intellectual property rights.	1. Local culture is reflected and presented authentically and accurately in the design, décor, furnishing, presentation and installations of the attraction. 2. Intangible cultural heritage and traditions are evident in amenities, such as shows, performances, music, food and beverage, souvenirs, merchandising and events. 3. All copyright and intellectual property rights have been respected, observed, and documented. 4. The attraction consults the local community and local stakeholders in the interpretation and presentation of local cultural heritage.	 
C4. Artifacts Historical, cultural and archaeological artifacts are not sold, traded or displayed, except as permitted by local and/or international regulations.	1. Any use of artifacts is declared and reported with documentary substantiation in accordance with local and/or international regulations and/or permissions. 2. Where artifacts are used, laws and bylaws have been identified and permissions of use have been granted. 3. Visitors are prevented from removing, damaging and/or disfiguring displayed or exhibited artifacts. 4. The attraction undertakes to educate with authentic and accurate information on the displayed or exhibited artifacts and takes measures to prevent visitors from violating and disrespecting artifacts, such as disfigurement and graffiti.	

Criteria	Indicators	SDGs
SECTION D: Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts		
D1 Conserving resources		
D1.1. Energy conservation Energy consumption is measured by type, and steps are taken to minimize overall consumption.	1. The attraction has a written energy conservation/efficiency policy. 2. The attraction uses renewable energy sources when available and measures the proportion of renewable energy in the total energy usage. 3. The proportion of renewable energy in total energy usage is monitored and managed. 4. The attraction pursues opportunities to produce renewable energy on-site where possible. 5. The attraction measures the energy used in its operations, and the energy use over which it has direct influence or control. Energy is measured by type, such as gas, electricity, transportation fuel, etc. Data may be measured directly by the attraction or collected from relevant stakeholders. 6. The attraction has annual energy consumption reduction targets. 7. The attraction takes steps to minimize the overall consumption of energy, such as using energy-efficient lighting, natural ventilation, heating, and cooling equipment and/or turning off equipment and vehicles that are not in use. 8. The attraction provides guidance to suppliers, visitors, and staff on minimizing energy use.	

D1.2. Water conservation The attraction assesses the Water Risk and measures and minimizes overall water consumption. In locations where Water Risk is high, the attraction identifies and pursues context-based water stewardship goals.	1. The attraction has identified, assessed and documented the Water Risk in the location of its operations (see GSTC Glossary). 2. In locations where Water Risk has been assessed as high, the attraction identifies and pursues water stewardship goals. 3. The attraction measures water used in its operations and the uses over which it has direct influence/control. Data may be measured directly by the attraction or collected from relevant stakeholders. 4. The attraction takes steps to minimize overall water consumption, including the use of water-saving equipment, devices and practices. 5. The attraction's water originates from a legal source which has not been previously affected, and is unlikely to affect them in the future. 6. The attraction has annual water consumption targets to reduce and minimize water usage and waste. 7. The attraction guides guidance to suppliers, visitors, and staff on minimizing water use.	

SECTION D: Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts

D2 Reducing pollution

D2.1. Greenhouse gas emissions The attraction measures its greenhouse gas emissions, sets reduction targets, and takes steps to avoid and reduce emissions. Offsetting of the attraction's remaining emissions is encouraged.	1. The attraction measures greenhouse gas emissions in Scope 1, and Scope 2 and areas of significant influence in Scope 3 where practical. 2. The attraction has greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets aligned with Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidance. 3. The attraction takes steps to avoid and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its operations and areas of influence. 4. The attraction encourages and collaborates with suppliers to avoid and reduce significant greenhouse gas emissions throughout the supply chain. 5. The attraction offsets its greenhouse gas emissions that remain after avoidance and reduction efforts have been exhausted, utilizing Carbon Credits recognized by national or global attractions (e.g., UNFCCC), where practicable. 6. The attraction has a policy to prefer offsets that are verified by a credible and independent organization. 7. The attraction encourages and collaborates with suppliers to avoid and reduce significant greenhouse gas emissions. 8. Where food is offered and/or sold, the attraction provides vegetarian/vegan options to reduce the carbon footprint of food services.	
D2.2. Transportation The attraction seeks to reduce transportation requirements and actively encourages the use of cleaner and more resource-efficient transport alternatives by visitors, staff, suppliers, and within its own operations.	1. The attraction actively encourages visitors to use the cleanest and most resource-efficient transport available. Information is provided prior to arrival. 2. The attraction actively encourages staff to use the cleanest and most resource-efficient transport options available. 3. The attraction provides resources such as specific information, itineraries, and incentives to encourage visitors' use of public transport. 4. The attraction favors local suppliers and minimizes multiple deliveries and extended supply chains.	 

D2.3. Wastewater Wastewater, including gray water, is effectively treated and is only reused or released safely, with no adverse effects on the local population or the environment.	1. The attraction documents the treatment arrangements for wastewater generated by the attraction's activities. 2. Wastewater from the attraction's operations and activities is disposed of to a municipal or government-approved treatment system, if available. 3. Where suitable municipal wastewater treatment is not available, the attraction works with local authorities to ensure that wastewater has no adverse impacts on people and the environment.	 
D2.4. Solid waste The attraction measures its waste and has mechanisms in place to reduce waste and reuse, donate, or recycle it. Action is taken to eliminate or reduce single-use items, especially plastics. Any residual waste disposal has no adverse effect on the local population or environment.	1. The attraction measures solid waste by relevant waste types, such as recyclables, food waste, waste to landfill, and waste to incinerators, as applicable. 2. The attraction has developed, documented, and implemented a solid waste management plan according to the Waste Hierarchy. The plan includes actions to reduce overall waste as well as reuse, recycle, or recover materials. The plan addresses food waste and construction materials where applicable. 3. The attraction takes action to eliminate/reduce single-use items, especially plastics. 4. Waste is disposed of in a government-run or approved facility. 5. Where suitable municipal waste treatment and disposal is not available, the attraction works with local authorities to ensure that waste disposal has no adverse impacts on people and the environment. 6. Staff are trained and guided to minimize, categorize, sort, and dispose of waste by its appropriate type. 7. Visitors are guided to minimize and dispose of waste by its appropriate type.	 
D2.5. Harmful substances The attraction minimizes the use of harmful substances including but not limited to pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials and substitutes when available with innocuous products or processes. All storage, use, handling, and disposal of chemicals are properly and safely managed.	1. The attraction maintains an inventory and safety data sheet (SDS) for all harmful substances, including but not limited to pesticides, paints, disinfectants, and cleaning materials. 2. The attraction substitutes the use of harmful substances with sustainability-certified alternatives when available. 3. The attraction stores, handles, and disposes of chemicals in accordance with appropriate standards and regulations. 4. The attraction posts relevant safety warnings about harmful substances for staff and visitors.	 

D2.6. Minimize pollution The attraction implements practices to minimize pollution from sound, light, access traffic, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting substances, and air, water, and soil contaminants.	1. The attraction identifies potential sources of pollution covered in the criterion, including through stakeholder consultation and feedback. 2. The attraction monitors and reviews potential sources of pollution covered in the criterion. 3. The attraction takes action to minimize and, where possible, eliminate pollution from sources covered in the criterion.	 