



Press Release

For immediate release

2023 GDS-Awards Celebrate Destination Sustainability Leaders and Innovators

VALENCIA, SPAIN – 5 October 2023

The Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDS-Movement) proudly announces the winners of the 2023 GDS-Awards, recognising outstanding efforts in destination sustainability. These prestigious awards, presented during the GDS-Awards ceremony in partnership with the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), were revealed during the 2023 GDS-Forum hosted in Valencia, Spain. The event was made possible by VISIT VALÈNCIA, City Destinations Alliance, and GDS-Movement.

GDS-Movement, renowned for its commitment to driving sustainability in the tourism and events industry, honours destinations that lead the way in sustainability initiatives, those that have shown remarkable improvements, and those that are pushing the boundaries of innovation and impact. In 2023, the awards ceremony featured an additional category, the GDS-Movement and #MEET4IMPACT Impact Award, in collaboration with #Meet4Impact.

The 2023 GDS-Awards Winners

The Leadership and Most Improved Destination award are based on GDS-Index results, the world's leading destination sustainability benchmarking and improvement programme.

The Leadership Award recognises the destination with the highest score on the GDS-Index, showcasing its continual commitment and measurable impacts.

2023 Winner: Gothenburg, Sweden, represented by Göteborg & Co

The 2023 GDS-Movement Leadership Award Winner's Quote

"We are immensely proud of winning this award. This is, again, a fantastic and important recognition of Gothenburg's long-term sustainability work, to us, as a destination, and to all contributing stakeholders. The GDS-Index has been a powerful lever in the development of our destination, and it is great to see, increasingly, more destinations joining in this crucial work."

- Peter Grönberg, CEO, Göteborg & Co

The Most Improved Destination Award acknowledges the participating GDS-Index destination with the highest score increase, regardless of its ranking.

2023 Winner: Liverpool, United Kingdom, represented by Liverpool Convention Bureau

The 2023 GDS-Movement Most Improved Destination Award Winner's Quote

"We are so pleased that Liverpool has been recognised as the Most Improved Destination at the GDS Awards for our GDS-Index score. The work undertaken by Jennifer Jensen for Liverpool Convention Bureau in collaboration with our partners and key stakeholders to improve Liverpool's score over the last few years shows how dedicated we are to sustainable tourism across the region. This is a huge confidence boost for the city's visitor economy and the start of our journey for making positive change and putting Liverpool on the map as a leading destination for sustainable tourism and events."

- Susan Finnegan, Acting Head of Visitor Economy for Marketing Liverpool

For the Innovation Award and the GDS-Movement and #MEET4IMPACT Impact Award the applications, selected internally by GDS-Movement changemakers, have been passed on to two external panels whose judges will select a winner for each.

Read more about jury and process [here](#).

Innovation Award

The Innovation Award celebrates destinations employing innovative solutions to enhance sustainability performance.

2023 Winner: Washington DC, United States of America, represented by Destination DC at Washington DC

The 2023 GDS-Movement Innovation Award Winner's Quote

"Destination DC is thrilled to win the GDS-Movement Innovation Award and honoured to be acknowledged for Destination DC's DEI Fellowship programme as a sustainable and positive solution in hospitality. By engaging closely with our destination's smaller businesses and community members we can ensure companies that don't have the financial wherewithal can take advantage of opportunities to get a piece of the pie that is the \$8 billion hospitality industry in DC alone. We are proud of this award and the advancement we are making to challenge our industry in DEI and sustainability."

- Elliott L. Ferguson, II, President and CEO, Destination DC

The GDS-Movement and #MEET4IMPACT Impact Award highlights a destination management organisation committed to building positive legacy and impact through business events.

2023 Winner: Sydney, Australia, represented by BESydney

The 2023 GDS-Movement and #MEET4IMPACT Impact Award Winner's Quote

"BESydney has been recognised as a leader in legacy research for decades and we want to build on this foundation to create social impact programmes that leverage business events to

generate and measure positive, long-term social, economic and environment impacts. We know business events have the potential to create incredible positive change for global communities - across all industries. BESydney is taking this responsibility very seriously and is very grateful and humbled by the recognition of our work to-date."

- Lyn Lewis-Smith, CEO, Business Events Sydney (BESydney)

GDS-Movement quote

Guy Bigwood, CEO and Chief Changemaker of GDS-Movement, stated, "GDS-Movement salutes the 2023 GDS-Awards' winners for their profound achievements that inspire and inform. Sustainability is a systemic solution where everybody wins, and winning practices can be analysed, borrowed, adapted, and scaled for exponential positive impact. We encourage all destinations to take their cue from these leaders and work together with us to transform tourism and events into a tool for regeneration in every destination on earth."

Winners receive recognition with on-stage exposure at the 2023 GDS-Awards Ceremony, inclusion in the 2023 GDS-Index report, and the opportunity to present their initiatives at the dedicated GDS-Movement "Feeling the Pulse" webinar on October 11 and 12, 2023.

Attendees at the Feeling the Pulse webinar can expect to gain industry insights based on the most recent, verified data available, explore trends in destination sustainability practises, and learn from the winning destinations whose initiatives and efforts are deserving of international attention.

To learn more and register for the Feeling the Pulse webinar, please visit the following links:

October 11, 09h00 CET: [Registration Link](#)

October 12, 17h00 CET: [Registration Link](#)

For further information about the 2023 GDS-Awards and the Global Destination Sustainability Movement, please visit www.gds.earth

More information and results will be available on the 5th. www.gds.earth/results

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NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT THE GLOBAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX (GDS-Index)

The GDS-Index is a destination-level programme that measures, benchmarks, and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of tourism and events destinations. Co-founded in 2016 by ICCA Scandinavia, ICCA HQ, City Destinations Alliance (CityDNA), IMEX, and MCI, GDS-Index offers an unparalleled resource for visitors and event planners looking for destinations that offer the best in city, supplier, and destination management performance. It is the world's most-trusted benchmarking process to assess the progress of a destination's sustainability journey. www.gds.earth/index

ABOUT THE GLOBAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY MOVEMENT (GDS-Movement)

GDS-Movement envisions thriving places and communities activated by regenerative tourism and events. Its mission is to empower people with the mindsets, skill sets, and toolsets to create regenerative destinations to visit, meet, and live in. www.gds.earth

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS & CONVENTION ASSOCIATION (ICCA)

ICCA - the International Congress and Convention Association - is the global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry. ICCA represents the world's top destinations and most experienced and leading suppliers specialising in handling, transporting, and accommodating international meetings and events, and comprises over 1,100 member companies and organisations in 92 countries and territories worldwide. Since its establishment in 1963, ICCA specialises in the international association meetings sector, offering unrivalled data, communication channels, and business development opportunities. www.iccaworld.org.

ABOUT IMEX

The IMEX Group, based in the UK, has just one mission: to unite and advance the meetings industry – doing everything it can to educate, innovate and help everyone in the business events industry make powerful connections with the right people. The IMEX team serves this mission, and the industry we love, by delivering two market-leading trade shows every year - one in Frankfurt each spring and one in Las Vegas each autumn. www.imexexhibitions.com

ABOUT MCI

MCI is the global leader in engaging and activating audiences. Our business is founded on a simple human insight: When people come together, magic happens. This magic is called community. Since 1987 we have been bringing people together through inspiring meetings, events, congresses and association management. MCI helps organisations harness the power of community by applying our strategic engagement and activation solutions to build unforgettable online and offline experiences that foster change, inspire, educate and enhance business performance. MCI is an independently owned company headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and boasts a global presence with 2,500+ professionals in 60 offices and 31 countries, who work with clients across Europe, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, India and the Middle East. www.mci-group.com

ABOUT CITY DESTINATIONS ALLIANCE (CityDNA)

City Destinations Alliance is a knowledge sharing network for cities and urban regions working to unfold the potential of the visitor economy. Its vision is for all cities in Europe to flourish as great places to live, work, meet and explore. As a community of professionals, its promise to each participant is to always be curious and forward thinking, share its inspiration and never stop learning. www.citydestinationsalliance.eu

ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

In 2015, 193 countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs are a blueprint and a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment