



## Press Release

For immediate release

### The 2023 Global Destination Sustainability Index Results

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

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

#### The GDS-Index 2023 Results

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

#### Gothenburg tops the Global Destination Sustainability Index for the seventh time

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

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

## Growth in other regions

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

## Boost in newcomers

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

## Observed trends include

### 1. Increasing integration with climate strategies

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

### 2. Wider stakeholder engagement

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

### 3. Growing third-party certification

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

### 4. Formalising social impact strategies

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

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

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

### 6. Greater storytelling

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

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

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

Guy Bigwood, CEO, GDS-Movement

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

Full results here [www.gds.earth/2023-results](https://www.gds.earth/2023-results)

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment)