World Congress for Sustainable Tourism hosted by Sweden in 2024

It has been revealed that the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), which was initiated by, among others, the UN, has chosen to hold their world congress in Stockholm, Sweden on April 23-25, 2024.

Sweden has ambitious goals for a growing sustainable tourism industry by 2030 – and to succeed requires cooperation.

Visit Sweden, together with the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, applied for Sweden to act as host for the GSTC's World Congress in 2024.

Why GSTC has chosen Sweden for the congress is partly because Sweden has a proven and purposeful track record of working with sustainability and already has several destinations that work, or want to start working, according to GSTC's criteria for sustainable tourism.

- *Visit Sweden's overall goal that Sweden should be seen as the world's most attractive destination by leading towards a more conscious travel, underpins all our work. It is, therefore, extra gratifying that Sweden has been chosen as the host nation for GSTC's world congress*, says Susanne Andersson, CEO of Visit Sweden

-*This gives us the opportunity, together with the Swedish business community, to continue working with sustainable development to create long-term perspective and competitiveness. The World Congress gives Sweden the opportunity to highlight the development that is taking place, on the international stage*, Susanne continues.

The GSTC's annual global congress brings together international and national players from around the world. The purpose of arranging the congress in Sweden is for Visit Sweden, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Visit Stockholm and Royal Djurgården's Stakeholders to inspire sustainable development, share knowledge about Sweden as a destination and highlight those in Sweden who have come a long way in their sustainability work.

- *Since GSTC provides a framework for systematic sustainability work and development for destinations. The congress will hopefully also inspire more people to have a more structured approach to their sustainability development, to increase their implementation power, create conditions that increase competitiveness and to contribute to Sweden's overall long-term goals,* says Visit Sweden's Sustainability Manager Linda Mannerby.

The 2024 congress gives Visit Sweden and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth the opportunity to work together with the Swedish business community for sustainable development both before, during and after the congress based on more conscious travel to create a long-term perspective for Sweden as a destination.

- *Through this, Sweden can share innovative solutions and collaborations on sustainable tourism and the green transition that is taking place in northern Sweden, where the hospitality industry is an important part of long-term societal development*, concludes Linda Mannerby.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council is responsible for the global GSTC standard for sustainable travel and tourism and provides international accreditation by sustainable tourism certification bodies.

GSTC was formed in 2007 as a partnership for sustainable tourism and was initiated by the Rainforest Alliance, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Foundation (UN Foundation), and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), along with a coalition of 32 partners in the tourism industry. The aim was to create common, universal and global sustainability principles for tourism activities and standardisation for sustainable tourism.

Sweden is at the forefront:

- Sweden has a clear, sustainable vision for Swedish tourism and the hospitality industry: "By 2030, Sweden will be the world's most sustainable and attractive destination built on innovation".
- Sweden is a country associated with accessible nature experiences and Sweden has been ranked as the most sustainable destination in the world, two years in a row according to international research firm Euromonitor International's Sustainable Travel Index.
- Northern Sweden has become an arena for sustainable development and the spirit of the future with new, innovative companies and sustainability initiatives. The hospitality industry here plays a significant role in the development of the region in order to create long-term favourable conditions for growth and an attractive society. Not only for visitors but also to attract new labour and knowledge to the region.

- In Sweden, there is a growing interest in working according to GSTC's sustainability criteria. Destinations such as Järvsö, Västerbotten and Royal Djurgården are already working with them.
- Already in 2002, Svenska Nature's Best was launched, which became one of the first quality labels for ecotourism in the world. Nature's Best has been an important stakeholder in the development of GSTC.
- Gothenburg has been named the world's most sustainable destination for the sixth year in a row by the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI).
- Stockholm is an international forerunner for global environmental and climate initiatives. Stockholm has been named the world's most sustainable city 2022 according to the economy and sustainability magazine Corporate Knights and is one of Europe's climate-smartest cities according to a study conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit.
- As an important part of Stockholm, Royal Djurgården welcomes over 15 million visitors every year. Djurgården works broadly for long-term sustainable development and in September this year, Royal Djurgården was recognised as one of two metropolitan destinations in the world, receiving GSTC's Green Destination Platinum Award for its structured work with sustainability.

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About Visit Sweden
Visit Sweden has been given an official assignment from the Swedish government to market Sweden as a tourist destination. Our vision is that Sweden by 2030 is the world's most sustainable and attractive travel destination built on innovation. Now more than ever, purposeful travel needs to be meaningful, conscious, and create lasting value for our guests, the local community and our planet. Welcome to Sweden. www.visitsweden.com

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