

Sustainable Development of Protected Areas of Ukraine

Sustainable Tourism

Standards & Benefits for Communities
and Protection of Natural Areas

Carpathian National Nature Park | 2025

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Tourism at a Crossroads



1.4B

international tourist arrivals
globally in 2023



10%

of global GDP
linked to tourism



∞

natural areas under
increasing visitor pressure

Protected areas face a paradox: tourism funds conservation but also threatens it. The question isn't *whether* to welcome visitors — it's *how* to do it right. **Standards are the answer.**

Introducing GSTC

Global Sustainable Tourism Council

Founded by UNEP, UNWTO,
Rainforest Alliance & National Geographic

Sets and manages **global benchmarks** for sustainable
tourism across all sectors

Raises awareness, advocates and **trains** about
sustainable tourism standards.

Not a certifier itself — it **accredits** certification bodies
and **recognizes** standards worldwide

Used by governments, parks, businesses & investors in
100+ countries



The Role of GSTC



Develops & owns the global criteria



Accredits independent certifiers



Maintains public registry of certified
destinations & businesses



The common language of sustainable tourism
worldwide

Who Are the Standards For?

Sector-specific criteria — one shared philosophy, tailored for each stakeholder



Destinations

Parks, regions,
municipalities



Hotels & Accommodation

Lodges, B&Bs,
eco-stays, hotels



Tour Operators

Tour companies,
DMCs & activity
providers



Attractions

Visitor sites
& experiences



MICE

Events, meetings
& conferences

For this audience: Carpathian NNP = Destination | Lodges, guides & tour operators nearby = Businesses

GSTC Criteria Framework

A

Sustainable Management

Governance, policies, planning, monitoring & stakeholder engagement

B

Socioeconomic Benefits

Local employment, fair supply chains & community inclusion

C

Cultural Heritage

Preservation of traditions, sacred sites & local identity

D

Environmental Protection

Ecosystems, wildlife, water, waste & climate resilience

All four pillars apply directly to protected area management and surrounding tourism businesses

Benefits for Protected Areas & Park Management



Structured Framework

Manage visitor pressure and carrying capacity with evidence-based tools



Better Monitoring

Data to justify decisions, track progress and secure international funding



International Credibility

Recognition by conservation bodies, donors and EU funding programmes



Capacity Building

Staff development and long-term institutional knowledge



Post-War Signal

Certification signals resilience, readiness and commitment to recovery



Legal Alignment

Prepare for EU accession requirements and international standards

Benefits for Tourism Businesses

Hotels, lodges, tour operators & guides in and around the park



Clear Operational Roadmap

Know exactly what 'sustainable' means in practice. No guesswork — just measurable criteria.



Resource Efficiency

Reduce costs through energy, water and waste optimization — sustainability pays.



Competitive Differentiation

Certified businesses attract conscious travelers willing to pay a premium for verified quality.



Community Relationships

A social license to operate. Local loyalty and community support as a competitive asset.



International Market Access

EU tour operators and booking platforms increasingly require sustainability credentials for listing.



EU Regulation Ready

EmpCom Directive 2026: green claims must be substantiated. Certification = compliance.

Benefits for Local Communities



Revenue Stays Local

Certified destinations prioritize local suppliers, guides and artisans — money circulates in the community.



Voice in Governance

Communities gain real participation in tourism planning, not just low-wage seasonal jobs.



Cultural Heritage Valorized

Local traditions and cultural identity are preserved and celebrated, not commodified or diluted.



Long-Term Resilience

Builds stable, year-round livelihoods rather than fragile dependence on peak-season visitor flows.

The EU Regulatory Tailwind

EU Empowering Consumers Directive — 2026

Vague "eco", "green" and "nature-friendly" claims are now BANNED across the EU without independently verified proof.



Any business selling to EU markets or targeting EU visitors must substantiate sustainability claims with certified evidence



For Ukraine's EU accession path — aligning with GSTC now means being ready for EU market entry requirements



The window to act proactively — before compliance becomes mandatory — is now open

How Does Certification Work?

Applies to both destinations (park-level) and individual tourism businesses

1

Self-Assessment

Assess current status against GSTC criteria. Identify gaps and opportunities.

2

Choose Certifier

Select an accredited, independent certification body from the GSTC / EU registry.

3

Audit & Review

Documentation review and on-site audit by independent assessors.

4

Certification

Receive certificate and public listing on the GSTC global database.

5

Re-Certification

Regular re-assessment ensures continuous improvement and validity.

Plitvice Lakes National Park

Croatia — UNESCO World Heritage Site — From Silver to Gold

The Journey

- 2023** **Silver Award**
Joined Green Destinations program
- 2024** **Top 100 Story**
Submitted Top 100 Sustainability Story for Lika Destination branding initiative
- 2025** **Gold Award ★**
75 criteria assessed, independent on-site audit completed

Why Plitvice is Relevant for Carpathian NNP

- ✓ Mountain national park — similar ecosystem type
- ✓ Dense forests, karst landscape, UNESCO-level heritage
- ✓ Post-conflict recovery context (Croatia 1990s)
- ✓ Silver → Gold progression: incremental & achievable
- ✓ 75 criteria: same framework available to you today
- ✓ Certification drove international visibility & funding

NEXT STEPS

Call to Action



FOR PARK ADMINISTRATION

Begin with a GSTC self-assessment — criteria are free to download at gstcouncil.org



FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

Explore sector-specific criteria (Hotels, Tour Operators, Attractions) and identify a credible certifier



FOR NGOS & GOVERNMENT

Support a coordinated national approach — Travindy is ready to help facilitate the process

The Pathway:

Awareness



Self-Assessment



Capacity Building



Certification

Thank You

Questions & Discussion

Useful Resources

GSTC Criteria (free download): gstcouncil.org

Green Destinations: greendestinations.org

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