

Fact Sheet #7: Tourism & Certification Competitive and Sustainable Tourism in Sinaloa Sur



Relevant issues: *The demand for sustainable tourism and authenticity*

There is strong and rapidly increasing demand for environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic sustainability by tourism wholesalers and European and North American tourists. However, because of concerns about “greenwashing” and self-assessment, many tourists are cynical about claims by tourism businesses that they are “green”, “ecological”, or “sustainable”.¹ As a result, large wholesalers and global distribution systems are beginning to require certification by reputable and verified certifiers.²



In addition, there is a strong consumer trend towards high value, culturally authentic tourism, and respectful contact with local communities. Good practice guidelines can help guide businesses and communities towards mutually beneficial authentic tourism. To capture this sector of tourism, Sinaloa should develop according to international sustainability standards.



Overview of tourism certification and guidelines globally and in Mexico

In order to establish the credibility of green or sustainability claims, independent **certification** of tourism activities has been developed, following strict international rules and guidelines to ensure transparency and impartiality, as well as truly measuring sustainability.



There are over 140 different standards for sustainable tourism certification in the world, but not all of them follow these rules or measure all the aspects of sustainability: socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental impacts. The most credible standards have been recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council as complying with all the **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria**, the international baseline for credible standards for hotels, tour operators, and destinations.³ The following table shows the sustainable tourism standards that are currently used in Mexico:



International Norms Recognized by the GSTC		
Biosphere Responsible Tourism	Lodging, restaurants, events, parks, destinations, rural housing	www.biospheretourism.com
EarthCheck	Lodging, restaurants, convention centers , golf courses, cruises, casinos, and 25 other tourism business categories	www.earthcheck.org
Green Globe	Lodging, resorts, cruises, attractions, convention centers, tour operators, destinations	www.greenglobe.com
Rainforest Alliance	Lodging, tour operators, community-based companies, restaurants	www.rainforest-alliance.org/es/tourism/verification
STEP	Lodging, tour operators, attractions, diving, cruise excursion operators	www.sustainabletravel.org/program/step-eco-certification-standard
Travelife	Lodging, tour operators , travel agencies	www.travelife.org
Mexican Norms for Tourism		
NMX-AA-119	Beaches	http://200.77.231.100/work/normas/nmx/
NMX-AA-133	Ecotourism	http://200.77.231.100/work/normas/nmx/2006/nmx-aa-133-scfi-2006.pdf



NMX-AA-120	Marinas	http://200.77.231.100/work/normas/nmx/
NMX-AA-157	Real Estate Developments of Tourism in Yucatan	www.seduma.yucatan.gob.mx/archivos/noticias/documento/201007294337.pdf

In addition to these standards, there are a number of other reputable possibilities, such as Blue Flag for beaches and marinas; golf standards from Audubon; and a new standard for vacation homes. Many of these programs offer guidance to businesses seeking certification, especially small and micro-businesses. In addition there is a Mexican federal program “Liderazgo Ambiental para la Competitividad” for hotels and SMEs as part of the Acuerdo Nacional por el Turismo.⁴

Certification now provides a gateway to preferential marketing from European tour operators and online travel agencies and distribution systems, such as Travelocity-Sabre, Amadeus, and TripAdvisor.

The way forward in Sinaloa

Certification is voluntary; when it is mandatory, it becomes a regulation. However it is possible to use incentives from governments to make it strongly beneficial for businesses and destinations to seek certification. The Sinaloa municipal and state governments could offer incentives, such as preferential access to permits for new development, lower taxes, and promotion.

For Sinaloa, the GSTC Destinations Criteria can define the role and activities of the destination management organizations in terms of demonstrating sustainable destination management; maximizing economic benefits to the host community, visitors, and cultural heritage; and maximizing benefits to the environment.

Good practice guidelines for coastal tourism and shore excursions have been developed by MARTI, IUCN, Rainforest Alliance, UNWTO, UNEP, TIES, ALCOSTA, and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. These should be applied as the core of the training and capacity-building curriculums in the region, to ensure the quality of service to be offered, the sustainability of the sensitive ecosystems, and benefits for the local communities. Once good practice guidelines have been applied, certification is a simple process.

Sustainability criteria should be required for permitting new tourism development, using certification or the Inter-American Development Bank’s Tourism Sustainability Scorecard to ensure that the destination of Sinaloa remains attractive for tourism and its inhabitants long into the future.⁵

RESOURCES



¹ TripAdvisor encuesta de clientes, 2013, <http://www.globalsustainabletourism.com/News/87-3rd-Partners-Symposium-Presentations-2013.html>

² TUI Travel Sustainability Survey, 2010 y Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2012, www.gstcouncil.org

³ www.gstcouncil.org/sustainable-tourism-gstc-criteria/criteria-for-destinations.html and

www.gstcouncil.org/sustainable-tourism-gstc-criteria/criteria-for-hotels-and-tour-operators.html

⁴ "Alternative Development Models and Good Practices for Sustainable Coastal Tourism: A Framework for Decision Makers in Mexico",

www.responsibletravel.org/resources/documents/reports/Alternative%20Coastal%20Tourism%20in%20Mexico.pdf

⁵ www.iadb.org/tourismscorecard

