



VICTORIA NAMED MOST SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION IN NORTH AMERICA

Global Destination Sustainability-Index results show strong commitment to balancing sustainable tourism growth with environmental stewardship and community well-being

Victoria, B.C. (October 22, 2024) – The 2024 annual [Global Destination Sustainability-Index](#) (GDS-Index) benchmarking results are out, and Victoria has earned the ranking of most sustainable destination in North America.

The GDS-Index is one of the world's leading sustainability performance programs for business events tourism destinations. Used by over 100 cities globally, the GDS-Index measures the environmental and social sustainability performance and strategies of the city, its tourism supply chain, and the destination management organization (DMO).

In 2024, the GDS-Index measured a range of factors including regenerative tourism, circular economy practices, and climate action initiatives. This criteria address the current trends and necessities in sustainable tourism. This year, the Index found that many locations have significantly improved their efforts in these areas, demonstrating a strong commitment to balancing sustainable tourism growth with environmental stewardship and community well-being.

Of the top five regional leaders in North America, Victoria took the top spot, ahead of other Canadian cities: Montreal, Quebec City, Edmonton, and Ottawa. Victoria also ranked 22nd globally, placing the city firmly in the international top 40 list. Notably, the city was also the third highest ranking small city worldwide. This is DGV's second year participating in the GDS-Index benchmarking, and the first time Victoria has secured a spot on the international top 40 list.

The exceptional results for 2024 were achieved through a close collaboration between Destination Greater Victoria and the City of Victoria and are indicative of strong alignment and shared commitment amongst industry partners, local government, and the community at large who, with DGV, share a commitment to social and environmental sustainability for long-term.

Victoria stands out due to a combination of factors that set it apart from other destinations. A significant portion of the city's strong performance comes from progressive actions by the City of Victoria and the Province, such as the development of extensive bike lanes, high walkability, a clean energy grid, a safe and reliable water supply, and comprehensive climate action plans. From an industry standpoint, one factor that sets Victoria apart is the high percentage of hotels with recognized sustainability certifications, reflecting the local tourism industry's commitment to environmental responsibility. Additionally, the Victoria Conference Centre's designation as a carbon neutral venue contributes to the city's standout status. Destination Greater Victoria's own internal policies and strategies, along with its ongoing support and capacity-building efforts for members, have played a key role.

This year, Victoria was also a finalist for the GDS Innovation Award for its innovative partnership with the City of Victoria and the Greater Victoria Housing Society to fund an affordable housing project using the Municipal Regional District Tax from online accommodation platforms. This funding will fill an equity gap in a previously approved project, which will result in 40 units of below-market housing prioritized for hotel and hospitality workers, addressing a critical need for workforce housing.

In March of 2023, Destination Greater Victoria – the first carbon-neutral Destination Management Organization in North America – broke new ground when it became the first urban destination in North America to earn the Responsible Tourism Institute’s coveted Biosphere certification that recognizes commitment to environmental sustainability, cultural diversity, equity, and social responsibility. Critical components of the program include providing no-cost DGV-member access to the Biosphere platform to support them as they advance their own sustainability plans, and progress toward certification at the organizational level.

While Victoria is already highly regarded by meeting planners around the world, the GDS-Index result will enhance our competitiveness in securing meetings and conference bids. By positioning Victoria as a leader in sustainable tourism, we can attract more high-value business, particularly during off-peak seasons, thereby contributing to the steady growth of the local visitor economy.

The GDS-Index provides an operating system to guide and drive transformation across the city, the supply chain, and the destination management organization. Taking a multiple benchmark approach has been proven to accelerate change and has the potential to improve positive impact more comprehensively than a single, standalone certification might. The GDS-Index will help DGV track how our destination compares with others on their sustainability journey and provide insight into where we can improve.

[Download photos of Victoria](#)

Quotes:

“Our city has set high standards for sustainability, not just in North America but globally. The GDX-Index recognition highlights our collective efforts to create a city that prioritizes the well-being of its residents, protects our environment, and fosters responsible tourism. We’re committed to continuing this work, ensuring Victoria remains a dynamic, sustainable destination for generations to come.” – Marianne Alto, Mayor, City of Victoria.

"I am immensely proud of the strategic direction and oversight that has led us to this achievement. DGV has been actively involved in sustainability efforts since the 1990s, when the organization’s first Environment Committee was established. Today, our board is committed to integrating sustainability into every facet of DGV’s operations, ensuring that the organization’s actions resonate with the community’s values and aspirations. This recognition by the GDS-Index is a validation of our collective long-term vision and the diligent efforts of our team." – Chris Watson, Board Chair, Destination Greater Victoria.

"We are honoured to lead the way in sustainable tourism and to share our journey with the world. Sustainability is core to our community values. As an organization, we chose to put sustainability at the centre of our brand in 2020 because it reflects who we are as a community, and our commitment to taking care of this place that we love for future generations of residents and visitors. Greater Victoria’s tourism brand has flourished since that decision. We are confident our ongoing dedication to responsible practices will continue to attract travellers seeking more environmentally friendly experiences." – Paul Nurse, CEO, Destination Greater Victoria.

“Destination Greater Victoria is making waves in the destination management organization (DMO) space. By embracing regenerative tourism in its day-to-day operations, DGV is positively transforming

the guest experience by embracing all that Victoria has to offer. I am so proud to be part of this evolution. At a time when ‘going green’ or ‘sustainability’ can often be misapplied, DGV is embracing accountability and transparency to redefine what it truly means to honour and respect the environments in which we live and work.” – Brett Soberg, Chair, Destination Greater Victoria’s Sustainability Committee.

About Destination Greater Victoria: Destination Greater Victoria (Greater Victoria Visitors and Convention Bureau) has proudly served as our region's official, not-for-profit destination marketing and management organization for half a century. As we celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2024, we continue to work hand-in-hand with nearly 1,000 businesses and municipalities in Greater Victoria to promote, enhance, and manage our vibrant destination. We look forward to another 50 years of supporting the visitor economy that brings vitality to our region. For more information, visit the Destination Greater Victoria [website](#).

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