

WTTQ.ORG / DESTINATION CERTIFICATION METHODOLOGY

# The global standard for destination excellence.

WTTQ.Org Destination Certification recognizes destinations that demonstrate excellence in visitor experience, destination management, cultural preservation, community engagement, safety, sustainability, and tourism development.

An independent, evidence-based benchmark for governments, tourism boards, travelers, investors, and industry stakeholders worldwide.

**WTTQ.org**

The Global Standard for Destination Excellence.

**INTRODUCTION**

# The global standard for destination excellence.

WTTQ.Org Destination Certification is a structured, evidence-based assessment methodology designed to evaluate the overall quality, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability of a destination. It provides travelers, tourism boards, governments, investors, and tourism stakeholders with an independent benchmark of destination excellence.

## What is a Destination?

For the purpose of WTTQ.Org Certification, a destination may include:

- Cities
- Municipalities
- Towns
- Islands
- Regions
- Provinces
- States
- National Tourism Destinations
- UNESCO Heritage Destinations
- Tourism Development Areas

**THE EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK**

# Seven core pillars of destination excellence.

Destinations are assessed against seven foundational pillars — each defining a critical dimension of destination quality, competitiveness, and responsible tourism development.

## 1. Destination Management & Governance

The effectiveness of destination leadership, planning, stakeholder collaboration, and tourism management.

**Areas Evaluated:** Tourism strategy, Destination management organization (DMO), Tourism planning, Stakeholder collaboration, Visitor management, Performance measurement, Tourism investment, Destination branding

## 2. Visitor Experience

The quality of experiences available to visitors before, during, and after their visit.

**Areas Evaluated:** Accessibility, Visitor information, Signage and wayfinding, Customer service, Attractions and experiences, Digital visitor services, Visitor satisfaction, Destination reputation

## 3. Tourism Infrastructure & Quality

The quality and readiness of tourism infrastructure supporting visitors.

**Areas Evaluated:** Accommodation supply, Food and beverage offerings, Transportation systems, Public facilities, Accessibility for all visitors, Cleanliness, Public realm quality, Connectivity and technology

## 4. Culture, Heritage & Identity

The preservation, promotion, and celebration of local culture and heritage.

**Areas Evaluated:** Cultural authenticity, Heritage conservation, Museums and cultural assets, Local traditions, Architecture, Storytelling and interpretation, Festivals and events, Destination identity

## 5. Community & Economic Impact

The contribution of tourism to local communities and economic development.

**Areas Evaluated:** Local employment, Local business support, Community participation, Tourism benefits distribution, Local sourcing, Resident satisfaction, Tourism inclusiveness, Economic contribution

---

## 6. Safety, Health & Security

The destination's ability to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors and residents.

**Areas Evaluated:** Public safety, Crime prevention, Emergency preparedness, Healthcare access, Visitor safety information, Crisis management, Disaster preparedness, Risk management

---

## 7. Sustainability & Responsible Tourism

The destination's commitment to environmental stewardship and responsible tourism development.

**Areas Evaluated:** Environmental protection, Resource management, Water conservation, Energy efficiency, Waste management, Climate resilience, Biodiversity protection, Sustainable tourism policies

**ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

# Five stages of independent evaluation.

Each stage builds a complete portrait of destination quality — from application intake through field assessment.

## Stage 1 — Application & Registration

The destination submits its certification application and core information. The application is reviewed to determine eligibility and certification scope.

- Certification Application
- Destination Profile
- Tourism Statistics
- Governance Information
- Stakeholder Contact Information

## Stage 2 — Documentation Review

Destinations submit evidence supporting compliance with WTTQ.Org standards across six evidence categories.

### Governance & Planning

- Tourism Master Plan
- Destination Strategy
- Tourism Development Plans
- Visitor Management Plans
- Annual Tourism Reports

### Visitor Experience

- Visitor Guides
- Marketing Materials
- Destination Websites
- Visitor Satisfaction Studies
- Accessibility Information

### Culture & Heritage

- Heritage Conservation Plans
- Cultural Programs
- Festival Documentation
- Museum Information
- Cultural Asset Inventories

### Community & Economic Development

- Community Engagement Programs
- Economic Impact Studies
- Local Supplier Programs
- Workforce Development Initiatives

### **Safety & Security**

- Emergency Plans
- Risk Assessments
- Public Safety Reports
- Healthcare Access Information

### **Sustainability**

- Sustainability Strategy
- Environmental Policies
- Waste Management Plans
- Climate Action Plans
- Sustainability Reports

## Stage 3 — Destination Excellence Questionnaire

Destinations complete the WTTQ.Org Destination Excellence Assessment. The assessment evaluates performance across all seven certification pillars. Each criterion is scored using the WTTQ.Org assessment scale.

### Scoring Scale

Score	Rating
0	Not Available / Non-Compliant
1	Poor
2	Basic
3	Good
4	Very Good
5	Excellent / Best Practice

## Stage 4 — Evidence Verification

WTTQ.Org reviewers independently verify submitted information. Additional evidence may be requested where necessary.

- Documentation review
- Website evaluation
- Tourism data analysis
- Stakeholder interviews
- Visitor feedback analysis
- Public information review

## Stage 5 — Destination Audit

Depending on destination size and certification level, WTTQ.Org may conduct one or more audit formats.

### Remote Audit

Review of submitted evidence and supporting documentation.

### Virtual Audit

Online meetings, stakeholder interviews, and virtual inspections.

### On-Site Assessment

Field visits and destination inspections conducted by WTTQ.Org assessors. Areas reviewed may include:

- Visitor facilities
- Attractions

- Public spaces
- Tourism infrastructure
- Safety systems
- Heritage sites
- Sustainability initiatives

## CERTIFICATION LEVELS

# Three tiers. One destination benchmark.

## CERTIFIED QUALITY DESTINATION

## Bronze

**Score Range: 70 – 79**

Recognizes destinations that meet established tourism quality standards and provide a reliable and enjoyable visitor experience.

## CERTIFIED DESTINATION EXCELLENCE

## Silver

**Score Range: 80 – 89**

Recognizes destinations that consistently exceed visitor expectations and demonstrate strong destination management, community engagement, and tourism performance.

## CERTIFIED WORLD-CLASS DESTINATION EXCELLENCE

## Gold

**Score Range: 90 – 100**

Recognizes destinations that demonstrate exceptional performance, international competitiveness, sustainable tourism leadership, and outstanding visitor experiences. Additional Gold requirements may apply.

## Gold Destination Certification — Additional Requirements

Destinations seeking Gold Certification may be required to provide additional evidence demonstrating leadership and excellence.

- Destination Excellence Report
- Tourism Performance Data
- Sustainability Performance Indicators
- Community Impact Evidence
- Visitor Satisfaction Results
- International Recognition
- Innovation Programs
- Stakeholder Testimonials

**CERTIFICATION VALIDITY**

# Maintained, monitored, and renewed.

WTTQ.Org Destination Certification is valid for a defined certification period and may be subject to:

- Annual performance reviews
- Monitoring of destination indicators
- Compliance verification
- Renewal assessments

*Certified destinations are expected to maintain standards throughout the certification period.*

## Why WTTQ.Org Destination Certification?

WTTQ.Org Destination Certification goes beyond visitor numbers and marketing performance. It evaluates how effectively a destination:

- Serves visitors
- Supports local communities
- Protects culture and heritage
- Ensures safety and wellbeing
- Promotes sustainability
- Delivers memorable experiences
- Creates long-term tourism value

The result is a trusted, internationally benchmarked certification that recognizes destinations committed to excellence and responsible tourism development.

**THE GLOBAL STANDARD**

## Excellence in destination management.

WTTQ.Org Destination Certification provides governments, tourism boards, and stakeholders with a transparent, evidence-based standard for destination excellence — recognizing places that serve visitors, support communities, protect culture and heritage, ensure safety, and lead in sustainability.

**WTTQ.org**

The Global Standard for Destination Excellence.