

Sustainability Policy 2024: Destination Zurich

Vision: Zurich is one of the most sustainable city destinations in the world by 2030.

Mission: Zürich Tourism strengthens the positive impacts of tourism in Zurich and reduces the negative ones to a minimum.

Introduction

The strategy, “Zurich Takes Responsibility”, was developed in 2022 as the result of a comprehensive materiality analysis and with the involvement of all the relevant stakeholders. The strategy is based on the existing Sustainability Policy, which identifies current and socially relevant impacts of tourism within the destination. Furthermore, the Sustainability Guidelines serve to ensure and implement minimum social and ecological standards in daily operations.

Definition of the Term “Sustainable Tourism”

Sustainability is the practice of using natural resources responsibly today, so they are also available to future generations to an equal degree tomorrow (United Nations, 1987). The term “sustainable tourism” therefore refers to all tourism activities that fully respect current and future economic, socio-cultural, and environmental issues, while at the same time addressing the needs of all stakeholders involved in tourism. The three dimensions of sustainability are given equal consideration and a balance is struck between them. (GSTC, 2022).

Scope of Application: Zurich

Zurich lies in the heart of Europe and is an important economic, cultural, and social hub of Switzerland. Zurich is a lively and dynamic small metropolis. More than 400,000 people live in Switzerland’s largest city. Just over 30 percent of the population have a foreign passport. Zurich is proud of this diversity of mentalities and lifestyles, of its cosmopolitanism, and of the fruitful coexistence of different nationalities and cultures. As a municipality, the City of Zurich enjoys considerable decision-making freedom and autonomy within the Swiss political system. The electorate not only elect political office-holders, but also make decisions on law amendments by means of referendums and can exert their own influence through referendums and initiatives. They thus play a key role in shaping the policies of the City of Zurich and are involved in all decisions relating to sustainable tourism within the destination (environment, social affairs, culture, economy). The administration authority of the City of Zurich is made up of nine departments and the associated service departments. It is headed by the City Council, whose nine members are elected by the people. The private association, Zürich Tourism (ZT), is responsible for tourism, and in particular destination marketing and profiling the touristic brand of the City and Region of Zurich as a highly diverse tourist destination. The organization employs around 66 members of staff and approximately 50 freelance tour guides and is active in various markets worldwide.

Challenges in Tourism

Tourism activities can not only have a positive impact in the countries and destinations visited, but also bring with them challenges for nature, culture, and the population.

Environment

Tourism is very susceptible to climate change, but at the same time also contributes to it. It is currently responsible for around 8% of global CO₂ emissions, and the trend is rising. The threats posed by anthropogenic global warming are manifold and affect humanity both directly and indirectly. Besides the air pollution caused by travel, resulting from the use of modes of transportation such as automobiles and planes, major drivers in tourism are the consumption of energy and water (e.g. for accommodation and vacation resorts), the impairment of biodiversity and natural areas due to the expansion of infrastructure, and the large quantities of waste produced. In addition, people on vacation tend to indulge themselves more and pay less attention to sustainable production and certification of services, thereby multiplying both their own carbon footprint and that of the destination. It is therefore all the more important for destinations to offer sustainable tourist offers.

People

The intercultural and diverse encounters created by tourism not only strengthen a global educational exchange, but also values such as acceptance, tolerance, and inclusion among guests and locals alike. Unfortunately, there is often a lack of appropriate offers that take special guest needs into account. The permanent, excessive presence of other cultures can quickly lead to the irretrievable loss of local culture with its idiosyncratic behavior, customs, and traditions, while large crowds (overtourism) and a high density of events can result in strain and dissatisfaction among the local population.

Despite the diversity of employment opportunities, the sector is repeatedly criticized for the lack of social security for employees and poor working conditions (Tourism Watch, 2019).

Economy

Tourism accounts for around 10% of global GDP, making it one of the most important economic sectors worldwide (UNWTO, 2019). As a service- and labor-intensive sector, the tourism industry creates (directly and indirectly) over 230 million jobs. In many countries, it is therefore the main source of foreign currency and a prerequisite for being able to participate in the global market, which quickly leads to a high level of dependency and little resilience in crisis situations (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022). In particular when the relationship between guests and residents is no longer a healthy one, local conditions can be permanently disrupted. Original economic sectors die out because they are no longer lucrative, such as local crafts and agriculture. The uniqueness and therefore attractiveness of a region is lost. This makes it all the more important to promote and integrate local value added. Furthermore, disproportionately rising tourism figures can lead to a surge in prices in the destination country (Statista, 2023).

Relevant for Zürich Tourism

The social urgency and relevance of sustainable tourism are reflected in various political frameworks and objectives at global, national, and local level. For example, the United Nations has anchored sustainable tourism in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its 2030 Agenda. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has also established internationally valid criteria for sustainable development in the tourism sector, while the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has defined Ten Principles in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET). At national level, the Swiss Confederation's Federal Tourism Strategy and Switzerland Tourism's Swisstainable Strategy are of relevance for Zürich Tourism (ZT). The Objectives of the City and Canton of Zurich (Zurich Strategies 2035, climate neutrality by 2040, Smart City Zurich) include measures in the sphere of tourism at destination level. As a destination marketing and management organization, ZT contributes towards achieving all of these objectives.

Commitment of Zürich Tourism

Zürich Tourism is committed to making tourism in Zurich more sustainable and to making the greatest possible contribution to sustainable destination development. Together with employees and with increased collaboration with service providers, the City and the Canton of Zurich, and with the involvement of the local population, it aims to further strengthen the positive impacts of tourism and address negative impacts at an early stage. ZT's Sustainability Policy demonstrates its commitment in terms of current topics and challenges in the field of tourism, which are identified within the framework of an annually reviewed relevance analysis. In the event of changes, the Policy is adapted and the revised document is shared with all stakeholder groups of relevance to ZT. The challenges identified in the Policy serve as the basis for the Sustainability Strategy, in which concrete goals are defined, as well as for the Sustainability Guidelines. Only true information is used in all Zürich Tourism documents and records. In addition to its internal Objectives, Zürich Tourism has committed itself to measuring all areas relevant to Earthcheck on an annual basis and to continuously improve them.

Environment

Zürich Tourism is committed to a more conscious use of energy and the use of renewable sources. Wherever possible, ZT reduces its CO₂ emissions to a minimum and is emulating the City of Zurich's objective of achieving net zero emissions by 2040. An overall CO₂ footprint of the company's activities is calculated annually. ZT assumes responsibility for the unavoidable greenhouse gas emissions generated by voluntarily providing financial support to climate protection projects in Switzerland that measurably reduce CO₂. Guests also have the opportunity to make a financial contribution in support of a climate protection project ("Cause we care") to compensate for the CO₂ emissions caused by participating in a city tour or event.

In addition, ZT is committed to eco-friendly mobility solutions for travel to, during, and from events, for example through proactive communication and corresponding incentives, such as a cost-reduced Zürich Card or booking a hotel within walking distance of the nearest convention venue (see also "Stadtverkehr 2025").

ZT is pursuing the goal of becoming a zero-waste company. The amount of waste generated internally and at events is reduced to a minimum and, where possible, recycled or disposed of correctly. In order to tackle food waste in particular, ZT has defined in its Sustainability Guidelines specific principles for the organization of catering services. Leftovers are made available to local initiatives, and tips on avoiding waste of all kinds are also passed on to partner companies. In an effort to avoid any negative impact on the environmental resources of water and biodiversity, ZT consistently reduces water consumption and encourages guests and partner companies to do the same (see also “Circular Zurich”).

Zurich is characterized by a high level of biodiversity in urban areas, green spaces, and lakes, as well as by various nature experience zones. ZT draws the attention of guests, employees, and locals to the topic through relevant tourist offers and promotes the use of organically produced food at events (see also “Reichtum für Zurich”).

ZT is committed to striving towards an annual improvement in all environmentally relevant Earthcheck key performance areas (KPAs) in order to achieve values above the regional average.

People

Zurich offers a high quality of living and is one of the most expensive travel destinations in the world. The risk of overtourism is therefore considered to be low. The promotion of around 17 target markets and the focus on both leisure and business guests also ensures a diverse and well-distributed flow of visitors throughout the year.

Zurich has a rich cultural history. The Canton of Zurich has set itself the goal of not only protecting and examining its cultural heritage, but also making it accessible to everyone. Special regulations therefore apply to all monuments, archaeological sites, memorials, and cultural landscapes. The platform, “mein Kulturerbe vor der Haustür” (my cultural heritage on my doorstep), offers interested citizens the opportunity to become active themselves and record instances of cultural heritage. Zürich Tourism creates awareness among guests and locals by specifically addressing local culture in marketing materials and by organizing events and supporting programs.

A major concern for ZT is the promotion of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) within the destination. Zurich should be equally accessible to all people regardless of their origin, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or physical or mental limitations. To this end, all offers are designed inclusively with this fact clearly indicated, as well as include the corresponding accessibility data; similarly our partner companies are also asked to publish such information with their tourist offers. Furthermore, the creation of inclusive jobs is to be promoted by awarding contracts to social institutions.

In order to guarantee modern and attractive working conditions for employees, ZT also attaches great importance internally to issues such as equal pay, occupational safety, health, training and further education, work-life balance, and the promotion of diversity in terms of culture, age, gender, and people with disabilities. It upholds an open internal suggestions policy and employees play an active role in shaping the organization. For example, an inhouse Sustainability Circle was launched, composed of one person from each ZT department. The official language is Swiss German. Outside the organization, active stakeholder management is promoted through good networking, and regular dialogue is proactively sought with tourism-related stakeholders. Locals and guests are also asked annually about

their satisfaction with tourism in Zurich, and their input is incorporated into the following year's measures roadmap. Partner businesses and tourism service providers in the region benefit from regular sustainability tips and events through their membership.

Economy

By organizing its tourism activities in a sustainable manner, the sector makes a significant contribution to maintaining regional value added in the long term. Tourism is one of the largest economic sectors in Zurich, with a local gross value added from day visitors and overnight guests of around 3.3 billion (2022) and a share of jobs in tourism of around 3.7 % (2019 figures). In order to maintain the resilience of the industry even in crisis situations, it is ensured that the costs of developing and maintaining tourism offers are in a positive relation to the desired economic effects. For this reason, in future the average length of stay within the destination will be increased to up to 2 nights. The value added and attractiveness of the stay for guests is promoted by maintaining a high quality of touristic offers by means of unique and innovative activities in the region, and tourism innovations will be developed by supporting pilot projects. Special attention is also paid to the use and promotion of local and regional products wherever possible, as well as their consideration and promotion among employees, guests, locals, and members and at events organized by ZT. In order to achieve the objectives set and make a sustainable lifestyle and sustainable travel visible in Zurich, the 10 tips are highlighted and actively promoted in all documents and at all events.

Commitment:

Zürich, 11.4.2024



Guglielmo Brentel, President



Thomas Wüthrich, Director