

## **Leading Travel Companies Commit To Sustainable Tourism through the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria**

*The Global Sustainable Tourism Council announces the first GSTC-Recognized Standards*

**Washington, D.C. Jan 16, 2012** - The Global Sustainable Tourism Council announces that Amadeus, Melia, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd, Sabre Holdings and TUI Travel are among the first group of global Travel and Tourism corporations to publicly commit to promoting sustainable tourism products and services recognized by the GSTC. Furthermore each of these companies has committed to using the GSTC Criteria – the first and only global framework for defining a sustainable travel benchmark – as the reference for sustainable travel.

The objective of the program is to recognize and reward genuine practitioners of sustainable tourism, which in turn builds confidence and credibility with consumers. The commitment from these organizations demonstrates their belief that sustainable tourism is an important component of their business practice and that the widespread adoption of sustainable tourism standards is relevant.

"Amadeus, Melia, Sabre, Royal Caribbean and TUI Travel have shown remarkable leadership in making this public commitment to sustainable travel. Their pledge supports the development of consumer confidence and a credible marketplace for sustainable travel and tourism," said former U.S. Senator Timothy E. Wirth, president of the U.N. Foundation.

Today the GSTC is also pleased to announce the first GSTC-Recognized standards:

- Bundesministerium für Land - und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft (BMLFUW)'s **Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism (Österreichisches Umweltzeichen)**
- Costa Rica Tourist Board (ICT)'s **Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST)**
- Ecotourism Australia's **Advanced EcoCertification**
- Ecotourism Ireland's **Ecotourism Ireland Label**
- European Ecotourism Knowledge Network's **European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS)**
- **Fair Trade in Tourism for South Africa (FTTSA)**
- Instituto de Turismo Responsable's **Biosphere Hotels**
- Japan Ecolodge Association's **Environmentally sustainable accommodations standard**
- Rainforest Alliance's **Standard for Tourism Operations**
- Sustainable Travel International's **Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program (STEP)**

Each standard went through a rigorous review and authorization procedure and are considered equivalent to the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are the worldwide minimum requirements for tourism businesses of all size to approach sustainability.

Today marks a significant milestone in the development of credible sustainable travel and tourism products. The GSTC-Recognized standards are the cornerstone and first step of a 3-stage GSTC Process. Stage 1 recognizes that a standard, which is a written statement that can be verified, is compatible with the GSTC Criteria. Stage 2 is the evaluation of the processes for certification to ensure they are transparent, impartial and conducted by people with technical competence. The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage is called GSTC Approval of a certification program that uses a GSTC-recognized standard. The third and final stage is full accreditation (GSTC-Accredited) and will begin implementation in December of 2014. To learn more about the GSTC Process please visit the GSTC website.

"Travelers and agencies need simple tools to find and purchase sustainable travel offerings. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria helps by harmonizing the numerous global certification programs in the marketplace to provide travelers with clear and trustworthy sustainable travel choices. Sabre and Travelocity's Green Hotel program help people easily pick certified "sustainable" hotels from a full list of hotel offerings, and we'll continue to expand our programs to offer more sustainable travel options and additional tools to measure and report on travel impact. Tomorrow's travellers expect this, and we need to be ready to offer them this choice," said Leilani Latimer, Director, Sustainability Initiatives, Sabre Holdings and GSTC Board Member.

The GSTC Council congratulates these first standards for achieving GSTC-Recognized status. The GSTC will continue to work with standard owners around the world to provide GSTC recognition. An initial call for standard applications was successful, with almost 30 standards applying for recognition, GSTC hopes to soon announce the next recognized standards. All standards are encouraged to apply for GSTC-Recognized status and all certification programs to apply for Approval. For more information click [here](#).

#### **About the GSTC Council**

[The Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#) is a global initiative dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism efforts around the world. The GSTC works to expand understanding of and access to sustainable tourism practices; helps identify and generate markets for sustainable tourism; educates about and advocates for a set of universal principles, as defined by the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. The Criteria, a set of voluntary principles that provide a framework for the sustainability of tourism businesses across the globe, is the keystone of this initiative. For more information click [here](#). [<http://www.new.gstcouncil.org>].

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