



Awards & Certification Program

Audit Report

Åsnen



9 June 2022



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1. Introduction and background

This report presents the results of evaluating the destination of **Åsnen** against the Green Destinations Standard.

The Green Destinations Standard is 'Recognised' by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council to be aligned with commonly agreed and regularly updated set of guidelines (GSTC-Destination criteria) that define sustainability of tourism destinations.

Evaluation with the Green Destinations Standard aims to:

- Assist destinations in identifying and analysing weak elements in their policies, as a basis for an agenda for improvement;
- Inform consumers and the travel industry on the sustainability levels of participating destinations.

The system enables destinations to show how exactly they “make a difference” when they receive recognition through the Awards program or become certified. In combination with the Green Destinations Reporting System, this destination award and certification program provides transparency on all issues that consumers associate with sustainability.

The system informs the creation of quality and sustainability maps for destination policymakers and stakeholders. In addition, it enables consumers to compare destinations through performance; this can help consumers in the process of holiday selecting their next holiday destination.

This report sets out how the Awards and Certification are attributed; the details of the audit; the assessment results and remarks on non-compliances; and presents the auditors' final conclusions.

Green Destinations Assessment & Certification

Green Destinations offers two types of recognition for sustainability good practice:

1. ‘Certification’ is attributed in case all mandatory Green Destinations Standard criteria are fully complied with.
2. ‘Awards’ (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum) are attributed based on scores that calculated from compliance to the Green Destinations Standard Criteria.

Attribution of Ratings and Awards



Scores are assigned to all Green Destinations Standard criteria, ranging from 0 to 2:

- “0” (red) means non-compliant (or not sufficient motivation/information/evidence provided)
- “1” (orange) means partially compliant, or compliance is expected in the near future (e.g. policy is being drafted, there is evidence that this is being executed)
- “2” (green) indicates full compliance for a criterion.

These scores are re-calculated to 6 GD Standard Theme scores on a 10-point scale.

Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum awards

The simple average of the 6 themes provides the Overall Score, which defines the Award level:

Total Overall Score	Award	
>5.9	Bronze	
>6.9	Silver	
>7.9	Gold	
>8.9	Platinum	
100% GD Standard Compliant	Certified	

Awards are branded as 'QualityCoast Award' or 'Green Destinations Awards'; as benchmark in the process towards destination Certification.

If the compliance to the mandatory criteria is approaching 100%, the destination qualifies for “Green Destinations Certified”. Applicants for this recognition undergo a rigorous audit and are required to have solid evidence of compliance to all criteria. *GD Certified* destinations are entitled to carry the logo of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) – the UN body that oversees and accredits sustainability certification in the tourism sector.

Assessment Results and Follow-up

Green Destinations issues this Report with an overview of criteria scores and with suggestions for further improvements. Successful applicants will be featured on our websites. No public reference will be made about unsuccessful applications.

Successful applicants become Awarded Destinations

Applicants who achieve Bronze or higher Award levels will be invited to one of our international events,

where they will receive the Award Certificate, and an Award Flag. Awarded Destinations can order extra flags and banners, which can be displayed throughout the destination's territory during the validity of their Award (24 months) or Certified (36 months) status.

Prior to the lapsing of their Award or Certification validity period, applicants will be encouraged to submit an application for Renewal. The assessment of the new application will take into consideration the coherence between the improvements indicated in the previous one and the integration of the suggestions and the recommendations made by the Auditor.

Appeals & Complaints

An appeal is a formal, written request by an applicant that deals with a formal reconsideration of an Award or certification decision, following receipt of their audit result or any further feedback provided regarding post-audit improvement evidence, made by Green Destinations.

A complaint is a formal written communication of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by Applicants, Auditors, and other relevant stakeholders, relating to the activities of Green Destinations staff, contractors, auditors, or Members holding a Green Destinations Award or Certification where a response from Green Destinations is expected.

Applicants can make Appeals within 90 days after any award or certification decision made by Green Destinations, following communication of the audit result and during the initial period granted for the submission of improvements, which is within 90 days of the communication. Green Destinations reserves the right to refuse any appeal which is not submitted within this timescale.

Appeals and complaints are requested to be sent by email to contact@greendestinations.org, marking the subject line with 'Appeal' or 'Complaint'.

It is not possible to make any appeals by telephone, fax or other communication channels.

Appeals and Complaints will be reviewed by an Appeals & Complaints Panel that will be appointed by the Programme Manager and consist of a Senior Auditor and two members of the GD Appeals & Complaints Committee with sustainable tourism and certification experience.

2. Evaluation and audit process: On-site Audit

The Awards and Certification are issued for periods of two years. For pre-certification Awards, destinations require an on-site audit every 4 years; and a desk-audit every 2 years. For Certification, an on-site audit is required every 2 years. In this case, **Åsnen** received an **on-site audit**.

Evaluation of the application of **Åsnen** started with the submission of a self-assessment on the online platform. The Green Destinations Secretariat subsequently performed a 'Technical Check' to evaluate whether the self-assessment was complete; and has reported back to the Destination on any missing aspects. When the self-assessment was deemed sufficiently complete by the secretariat, the audit was ordered.

During the audit, information relevant to the audit objectives, scope and criteria, including information relating to interfaces between functions, activities and processes was collected and recorded by appropriate sampling. Only verifiable information has been used as audit evidence. The audit evidence is based on samples of the documented information and information provided by staff members. Therefore there is an element of uncertainty in auditing, and those acting upon the audit conclusions should be aware of this uncertainty. All objective evidence is contained in the online reporting and audit system.

The audit was performed in two phases. During the first step (desk verification), all documentation and documented proof such as procedures, policies, contracts, statistics, etc. provided by the destination were checked to confirm: existence and implementation of the sustainability management system, consistency in the implementation of policies and procedures, and compliance to the minimum required by the Green Destinations standard. The auditor prepared a number of remarks for any inconsistencies, insufficiently documented compliance or other unclear explanations.

During the second step, the auditor has visited the destination of **Åsnen**. Relevant staff and stakeholders were interviewed, several areas and sites have been visited and inspected, and hard-copy and/or physical evidence was checked.

Based on the on-site audit, the auditor has drawn up his/her final verdict on criteria compliance (non-compliant, partially compliant or fully compliant) and indicator performance; which was presented as 'recommendation' to the Certification Committee. The Committee has reviewed the auditor recommendations and made the final decision on criteria compliance and indicator performance.

Confidentiality

Unless required by law, the audit team, the Committee and those responsible for managing the audit program will not disclose the contents of documents, any other information obtained during the audit, or the audit report, to any other party without the explicit approval of the audit client. If disclosure of the contents of an audit document is required, the audited client will be informed as soon as possible.

3. QualityCoast & Green Destinations Awards

QualityCoast and Green Destinations Awards are labels indicating achievement levels against the **Green Destinations Standard**. QualityCoast Awards were initiated in 2007 by the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) as program to measure the success of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) for coastal communities, towns and islands.



In 2016, the successful QualityCoast sustainability assessment methodology was made available to non-coastal destinations through the **Green Destinations Standard** which received 'Recognised' status by the UN body for sustainable tourism – the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for adhering to globally agreed standards for sustainable destination management. In 2017 QualityCoast became part of Green Destinations' Assessment & Certification Programme, which in 2018 received 'Accredited' status by the GSTC for adhering to procedures for sustainability certification. In the same year, the '**Green Destinations Award**' was launched: equivalent to the QualityCoast Award but applicable to non-coastal destinations.

The importance of QualityCoast and Green Destinations Awards for tourism sustainability

Participation of destination management organisations in the Award program improves their awareness performance and achievements in an international context. The comparison with other awarded destinations provides the community with a good picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The assessment and recommendations provide the local authority with guidance to be considered in an agenda for improvement.

QualityCoast and Green Destinations Awarded destinations join a network of like-minded communities and share their experiences and best practices in order to improve sustainability and social responsibility in tourism. Their performance in these fields is connected to international tourism marketing through certification under the supervision of the GSTC Accredited Green Destinations Certification Body issuing the Awards.

Promotional benefits of participation in Green Destinations Awards & Certification Program

Green Destinations carries out marketing & communication of the Awarded destinations to promote them as the most attractive destinations for visitors interested in nature and landscape, environment, and cultural identity; and to highlight their performance in tourism quality and sustainability. The marketing includes:

- invitation to present a Good Practice Story at yearly Global Green Destinations Days conferences
- social media publicity campaign
- dissemination in 'Kust&Zee gids' (200.000 for Dutch destinations only)
- promotion via the yearly Top 100 competition (Awarded destinations automatically pre-qualify for Top 100 selection - www.greendestinations.org/top100)
- newsletters
- a page on www.goodtravel.guide - a Green Destinations affiliate platform to promote sustainable destinations and committed businesses to consumers

The destination's own international tourism marketing can profit from the status of QualityCoast or Green Destinations Awarded destination. Experience in several countries learns that this will continue to generate media publicity nationally and internationally. Sustainability-based marketing efforts will increase the "green profile" of the destination both externally and internally and this will help to mainstream sustainability on local policy and decision making. Contact certification@greendestinations.org for promotional materials such as flags, banners, high-resolution logos, imagery etc.

"QualityCoast" is registered by Coastal & Marine Union - EUCC as a European Union trademark; the use of the name is restricted under European law. However, QualityCoast and Green Destinations Awards are open for applications from all continents.

4. Audit details

General

Name destination	Åsnen
Lead auditor name	Emil Selse
Additional auditors	-
Date(s) onsite audit	May 15-16, 2022 (additional interviews May 18-19)
Scope of the certification	Green Destinations Awards
Scope of the audit	Destination Åsnen

Locations visited

Name	Location	Date
Urshults BnB	Urshult	15-05-2022
Lunnabacken Hembygdsgård och vandringsled	Sånnahult	15-05-2022
Åsnen Nationalpark	Sunnabron	16-05-2022
Huseby bruk	Huseby	16-05-2022
Alvestra municipality	Alvastra	16-05-2022
Region Kronoberg	Växjö	16-05-2022

Persons met / consulted

Name	Position	Date
Robert Augustsson	Owner Urshult BnB	15-05-2022
Karin Nilsson	Sustainability Coordinator	16-05-2022
Karin Palmér	Samordnare Näringsliv Region Kronoberg	16-05-2022
Helene Wieslander	Hållbar Besöksnäring Region Kronoberg	16-05-2022

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Sofie Magnusson	Manager Huseby Bruk	16-05-2022
Per Ribacke	Head of Alvestra Municipality (KSO)	16-05-2022
Jessica Karlsson	Development Manager Alvestra Municipality	16-05-2022
Alexandra Nielsen	Naturförvaltare Länsstyrelsen i Kronoberg	18-05-2022
Ingrid Olsson	Owner Getnö Lake Åsnen Resort	19-05-2022
Camilla Norrman	Miljö- och byggnadschef Tingsryds kommun	20-05-2022

5. Audit results

The audit and evaluation have generated the following results.

The **Total Score** is generated by the simple average of the scores on each of the 6 themes.

The **Award level** is defined by the Total Score value: >5.9 = **Bronze**; >6.9= **Silver**; >7.9= **Gold**; >8.9 = **Platinum**

Award scores	
Destination Management	9.2
Nature & Scenery	10.0
Environment & Climate	9.4
Culture & Tradition	10.0
Social Well-being	8.9
Business & Communication	7.3
Total	9.1

Total	9.1
Award level	Platinum Award
“GSTC Certified” Compliance level*	83.8%

*The “GSTC Certified Compliance level” indicates how many of the mandatory criteria from the Green Destinations Standard are fully complied with, and thereby indicates how far the destination is from full “GSTC Certified” level. “Certified” destinations are committed to full compliance to the Green Destinations Standard compulsory criteria, and will receive worldwide recognition through the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) – the UN body that has accredited the Green Destinations Certification Program.

Green Destinations Standard Scores

The overview below indicates compliance with the Green Destinations policy standard.

- **Green:** # compliant criteria
- **Orange:** # partially compliant criteria
- **Red:** # non-compliant criteria
- **Grey:** # non-audited criteria (e.g. optional or N/A)

Theme	Criteria	Achievements
0. Destination Characteristics	13	13
1. Destination Management	20	16 3 1
2. Nature & Scenery	8	8
3. Environment & Climate	20	16 2 2
4. Culture & Tradition	6	5 1
5. Social Well-being	18	15 2 1
6. Business & Communication	12	7 2 2 1

6. Remarks & non compliances

This section lists remarks that have been formulated by the auditor and Certification Committee for specific criteria. Criteria without remarks are not included in this section.

Remarks can be of the following types:

- Remarks to 'compliant' criteria
 - Positive remark recognising particular best practice performance
 - Criteria compliance approved but additional information (evidence) will be required upon award renewal

- Remarks to 'partially compliant' or 'non-compliant' criteria:
 - Recommendation to improve in the short term: aspects that are not in order or in place; but can be solved or improved with limited efforts
 - Recommendation to improve in the mid-term: aspects that require more thorough action to improve on and should be considered of high importance for the next application in 24 months

To qualify for "Green Destinations Certified" only mandatory criteria that are not yet compliant should be addressed. Improving non-compliant criteria will improve award level, but not the GD Certification compliance percentage.

Please note that the indicated deadlines for completion are suggestions in order to assist planning ahead for the next Award renewal.










✓ Approved ✓^R Partial compliance ✗ Non compliance

1. Destination Management		
Commitment & organisation		
1.1. Sustainability coordinator	✓	Provided documents sufficient.
1.2. Management structure	✓	Clear explanation provided.
1.3. Trained coordinator/ team	✓ ^R	The coordinator is very well trained, but there is no plan for in-depth training of the rest of the responsible persons. However - all people within Destination Småland has a sustainability training - Gröna Tråden - which is described in https://www.regionkronoberg.se/gronakronoberg/arbetsmetod/ . This is on a basic level, and what is missing is a plan for more in depth training (like GSTC) for more people in the destination organisation. Very much is now dependent of

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		one person - Karin Nilsson.
1.4. Stakeholder involvement (prev. Tourism sector involvement)	✓	In the meeting protocols it is clear that the tourism sector is very much involved in practice and decisions. This is also confirmed in the onsite meetings and interviews.
Planning & development		
1.5. Inventory of destination assets	✓	Informative webpages, also in english, with the information written in an inspirational way. The list is based on information from each municipality, but also filtered by the destinations organisation where members of the destination (part of decision, well trained, networking etc) will be more highlighted in the material
1.6. Tourism Impact Assessment	✓ _R	Good overall plan. Please use the template in the guidance "GD Tourism Impact Assessment worksheet" to describe or at least verify that all topics is covered and handled.
1.8. Tourism action plan	✓	There is a valid action plan available, see https://destinationasnen.se/app/uploads/2022/05/Handlingsplan-2022_med-prioriteringar-t-webben.pdf Please update this and upload valid version before next audit.
Visitor Management		
1.11. Visitor satisfaction	✓ _R	No measurements done since last report.
1.12. Managing visitor pressure (GDS v1 title: Seasonality)	✓	This can be used as Best Practices - the guide book is not only existing, it is obviously used according to stakeholders interviewed and web pages visited.
1.13. Visitor management for destination assets	✓	During On-site visit at Huseby and National Park, this was explained. Same for another site - Getnö Resort. Also very well described on web page
1.14. Visitor behaviour at sensitive sites	✓	Missing proof how this is communicated on sites. During on-site visit at Huseby, Lunnabacken and National Park it was clear that information was in place in a sufficient way, through signage and through guides. Upload proof for next audit.
2. Nature & Scenery		

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Nature & conservation		
2.2. Tourism impacts on nature		Good and clear. Do not access " https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=18tKhbOsw9BJGBgmjYxPtI1D6yXiUAZXH&usp=sharing ". Please provide screenshot of this example instead/as well.
Nature & animal experience		
2.7. Nature & wildlife interactions		Could also add proof of signs in nature how the ban is communicated. Like - Fågelskyddsområde etc.
3. Environment & Climate		
Land use & pollution		
3.1. Noise		Clear and concise description. Good that also Jetskis are included now. What about electrical boats - is there a plan to ban two-stroke or even four-stroke motors in the national park or the whole lake area?
3.2. Light pollution		No big risk according to www.lightpollutionmap.info
3.3. Land use & planning		There is a new proposition/law regarding protection of land close to water (Strandskydd) in Sweden. To next reporting it may be good to explain how this will impact Åsnen.
Water management		
3.4. Water sourcing		The destination experienced drought in 2018 and flooding in 2019, and water sourcing was handled in an ok way during those hard times. Existing procedures is working.
3.5. Water consumption reduction		Missing quantitative goals and a strategy how water-saving measures is implemented. Not enough to just inform about how to use it wisely. This is generally not a problem in the area, but it could be in a near future so better be prepared.
3.6. Water quality monitoring & response		Excellent description of the monitoring system, which evidently functions well in Åsnen.
3.7. Waste water treatment		Good description. Only missing if something extrem happens - what if there is flooding in the area and wastewater cannot be handled the normal way. Is there a Plan B from the

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		municipalities?
Waste and recycling		
3.8. Solid waste reduction	✓	Could be more transparent what the reduction targets are for visitors. Suggestion is to use same targets as for inhabitants, like -25% of food waste 2025 vs 2015. For next audit it could be good to have measurements methods for entrepreneurs presented and also measurements done.
3.9. Waste separation & recycling	✓	More than 70% of the waste is burned and only energy is reused. But there are clear goals to reduce this. And very small part will be added to landfills. Goal for 2025: Reduce unsorted waste and food waste by 25% for all inhabitants, and 70% of all biological waste should be handled separately.
3.11. Littering	✗	Missing concrete measures. After interviews with several stakeholders, littering is not seen as a big problem, and is handled in a good way. Signs on waste bins are clear and explanations in several languages where needed. Still - no measures exist.
Energy, Sustainable Mobility & Climate Change		
3.12. GHG emissions and climate change mitigation	✓ _R	Difficult to see how the goal may be measured and how to follow up. But the target is clear.
3.13. Reducing transport emissions from travel	✓ _R	A lot of targets and good initiatives are already in place. However difficult to measure.
3.14. Low-impact mobility	✓	Good plan for 2022 - interesting to see how this is finally working! And according to the stakeholders interviewed, both the bus and the electric bikes will be well used and good promoted.
3.16. Reducing energy consumption	✓	Good on municipality level. A suggestion is to pick some of the goals (?) in the provided documents and put them here for monitoring and progress report.
3.17. Renewable Energy	✓	Clear on municipality level. A suggestion is to pick some of the list of goals in the provided documents and put them here for monitoring and progress report.
3.18. Effective carbon compensation	—	Measures to compensate added, but even more

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		important are the added examples how to avoid the need. Good!
Climate change adaptation		
3.19. Responding to climate risks	✓	Very comprehensive description. Some of the parts may be added to other parts as well, like 3.4 and 3.7.
3.20. Climate change information	✓	Evidence provided, very active in this topic.
4. Culture & Tradition		
Cultural heritage		
4.2. Managing tourism impacts on culture	✓	Updated description including handling the comment from previous years
People & tradition		
4.5. Respecting authenticity	✓	Evidence and proofs added.
5. Social Well-being		
Human respect		
5.6. Accessibility	✓	Great examples provided. And also verified on site for at least 3 sites.
Community participation		
5.7. Community involvement in planning	✓	Proof and evidence provided.
5.8. Resident engagement and feedback	✓	Evidence and proof sufficient.
5.9. Stakeholder contributions	✓	Good example.
5.10. Inhabitant satisfaction	✗	The monitoring is added in the action plan. No compliance yet.
Local economy		
5.11. Monitoring economic impacts	✓ _R	Visitor volume is just partly covered (accommodations only), and visitor expenditure is not measured yet. Total number of visitor/guests and a total sum of what the visitors/guests give back to local economy. Turnover is also difficult to measure for a destination like this, but number of employments should give a good indication. Hard to find numbers from the attached files, and probably difficult or impossible to get data for.

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5.12. Supporting local entrepreneurs	✓	Good example on web page.
5.13. Promoting local products and services	✓	Good promotion on web page.
Socio-Economic Impact		
5.15. Avoiding overtourism	✓ _R	Still lacking some evidences, like measurements. But proactive actions described.
Health & safety		
5.17. Health & safety	✓	Should be added to map and all signs where nearest defibrillator is, and other where to find a doctor or vet.
5.18. Risk and crisis management	✓	Good in general, but should have more specific about the destination. Alerts on web page is working good for things like fire ban, low water etc. What is missing is - what to do if you see a fire/ what if a petrol truck runs into water or whatever could be a disaster. And flooding - could be mentioned separate. After interviews it was clear that this was tested in the drought summer of 2018 and the extreme high water in spring 2019. It turned out well at that time.
6. Business & Communication		
Business involvement		
6.1. Promoting sustainability among enterprises	✓	Clear and good examples provided.
6.2. Sustainability standards	✓	Evidence for whole region provided, and also specifics for Åsnen.
6.3. Publication of certified enterprises	✓	A list is present with certified companies on web page.
6.4. Water consumption (enterprises)	✓ _R	Monitoring still not possible.
6.5. Solid waste (enterprises)	✓ _R	Still no measurement on enterprise level
6.6. Energy consumption (enterprises)	✗	Not possible to measure, and nothing that the destination can do much about.
6.7. Greenhouse gas emissions (enterprises)	✗	Need to explain how enterprises are encouraged towards, and informed about, reducing and reporting on GHG emissions from their operations. Add a plan or program to explain.
6.9. Activity providers code of practice	✗	Improved since last reporting. It would be good to know where activity providers and tour

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		guides have a relevant code of practice and where it is not a requirement. For instance within the National park and at Huseby bruk. This should be communicated somehow. Doing that it is easier for the visitors to pick "right".
Information & marketing		
6.10. Respectful & Accurate promotion	✓	Very good approach, practices and performance
6.11. Sustainability information to visitors	✓	Sustainability described to visitors in a good way. Getnö Resort provided additional examples that may be added as good examples: A training for children (in 4 different languages) how to behave in nature and name of species etc. They are also planning for an accessible nature trail where this is explained and showed for all.

7. Auditor recommendations and conclusions

Overall impression

Åsnen is strongly committed in the preservation of its natural assets and in the protection of the environment in general. The stakeholders involvement and commitment is strong and plans for climate change and risk management in place. Information to visitors and the use of 100% fossil free public transportation can be used as Best Practices.

The week parts is within measurements, where the responsibility is on municipality levels for water and energi where this is not possible to do today. Water is not really an issue in this area. The pandemic was the reason for no visitor satisfaction measurement.

Additional remarks

Last report regarding risk management is handled, and also verified after the drought in 2018 and flooding in 2019. There is a continuous dialogue with all stakeholders, like the County Administrative Board, how to deal with risks and changes regarding land use. The organisation has been able to work as planned also during the pandemic, even though meetings had to be digital.

Auditor recommendation

A recommendation is to make sure that the destination is not dependent on one single person (Karin Nilsson) as it is today. There should be at least one more person in that organisation (Destination Småland) that are trained in GSTC and know how to use Green Destination.

Another recommendation is to monitor visitor and inhabitant satisfaction, in order to found any risk of conflicts/unattractive parts or unbalanced tourism.

Signature

The report was electronically signed within the Green Destinations online system.

Karin Nilsson, Sustainability coordinator, signed on 09 June, 2022

Emil Selse , Green Destinations auditor, signed on 07 June, 2022