



Sustainable
Tourism

FINAL REPORT

Sustainable Tourism Destination
Certification

Prepared for:
Tourism Kingston

— *Tourism* —
KINGSTON

February, 2024

OVERVIEW & TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tourism Kingston has successfully achieved GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification for Kingston, Ontario. The certification builds upon efforts to integrate sustainability into all aspects of destination planning, management, and marketing. This final report serves to summarize the certification process and outcomes, which includes the following elements:

<u>Overview & Table of Contents</u>	2
<u>Destination Background Summary</u>	3
<u>Summary of the Certification Process</u>	5
<u>Sustainable Tourism Assessment</u>	7
<u>Grading</u>	8
<u>Sustainability Action Plan</u>	10
<u>References</u>	14

© 2023 Greenstep Solutions Inc. All rights reserved.



DESTINATION BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The Kingston tourism region is situated on the northern shore of Lake Ontario, at the point where Lake Ontario flows into the St. Lawrence River. Kingston is approximately halfway between Toronto and Montreal, making it a strategically positioned city in the eastern part of the province of Ontario. Popular draws to the tourism region include the water access to Lake Ontario cruise ships, events and festivals, dining, shopping, and the region's rich history.[1] The 451-square-kilometre region is home to the urban centre of Kingston, surrounding rural communities and over 160,000 residents.[2]

TOURISM'S ECONOMIC IMPACT

Provincially - Ontario (2019).[3]

Kingston, Ontario (2022).[4]



Supports **88,000** tourism businesses

Supports **7,000** tourism businesses



Employs **396,000** people across all tourism regions

4,200 people employed in tourism



Adds **\$36.8 billion** dollars in value to provincial gross domestic product

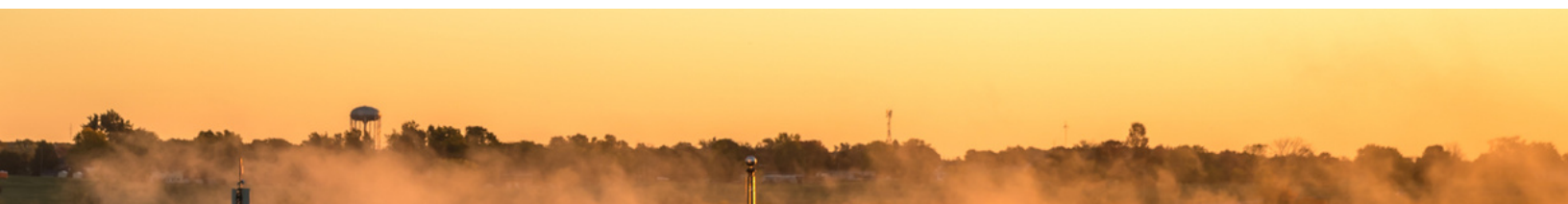
Generated **\$493 million dollars** in GDP



Contributes **\$5.8 billion** dollars in provincial taxes and **\$1.5 billion** in municipal

Welcomed **1.67 million visitors** in 2022

Note. 2019 data was chosen to describe tourism's provincial economic impact as 2020 and 2021 were abnormal tourism years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



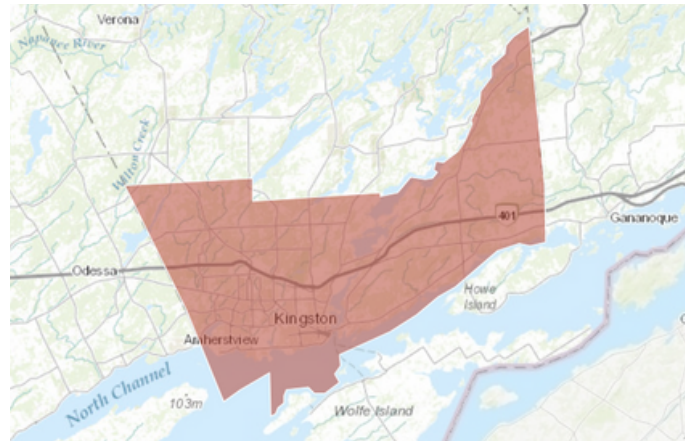
DESTINATION BACKGROUND SUMMARY

About Tourism Kingston

Tourism Kingston is directed by a diverse, industry-led board of seventeen leaders and fifteen full-time staff working to uphold Tourism Kingston's vision to be recognized as a premier destination for individuals, groups, and businesses.

Programming & Initiatives [5]

- Love Kingston Marketplace
- Infrastructure & Development
- Winter Lights
- Katarokwi Indigenous Market
- Community Advocacy
- Kingstonlicious Partnerships
- Business Events & Travel Trade
- Visitor Information Services
- Media & Marketing
- Stakeholder Committees



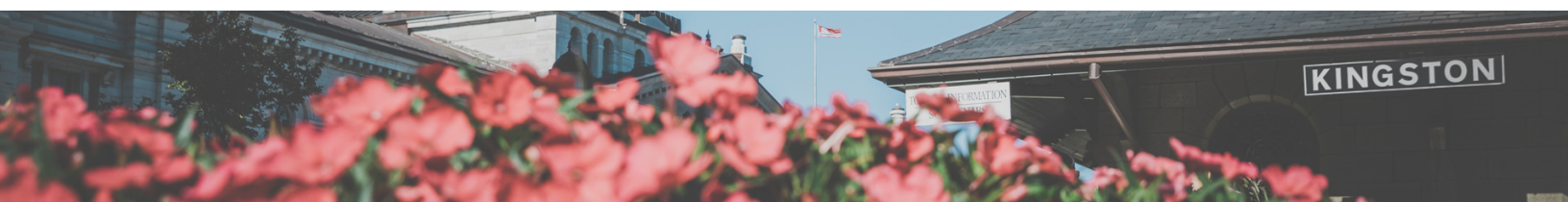
Tourism Kingston's mission is to develop:

"To promote Kingston, Ontario as a uniquely historic and hip destination to explore year-round."

Tourism Kingston's vision is to:
"Excel in creating, promoting, and growing opportunities for Kingston, Ontario to be a premier destination for individuals, groups, and businesses; to leverage tourism as a key driver of a healthy economy of Kingston; and to champion Kingston as a destination for local, regional, national, and international tourism."

Governance & Funding

Tourism Kingston is funded through combined funding from the City of Kingston and the Municipal Accommodation Tax of 4% charged for short-term stays under 30 days in the region. Funding for the organization is also received via grant funding from all local, provincial and federal governments.



SUMMARY OF CERTIFICATION PROCESS

ONBOARDING CALL
& PRESENTATION



COMMITMENT TO CERTIFICATION
LETTER SIGNED

DESTINATION SELF-ASSESSMENT
& EVIDENCE COLLECTION



CHECK IN CALL

PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE REVIEW



INTERIM REPORT

ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT



FINAL REPORT, GRADING, AND
CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT



CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The certification process is based on a commitment to build capacity and knowledge around sustainability within the destination, to acquire a baseline measurement of performance, to set goals to improve this performance over time, and to fulfill clear objectives, through the implementation of a sustainability action plan.

Certification Requirements:

There are three requirements to achieve destination certification:

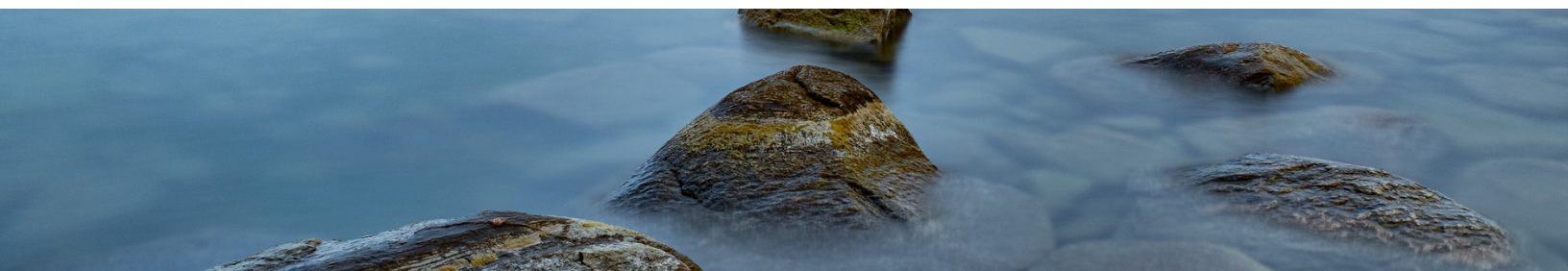
1. Achieve a minimum score of 35%
2. Provide evidence for all responses to the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Destination Assessment
3. Form a Destination Sustainability Stakeholder Committee

Following an extensive evidence review and verification process, Tourism Kingston has successfully met these requirements

Next Steps & Implementation:

Certification is just one of many steps in a journey to improving the social, economic, natural, cultural, and environmental sustainability of a destination. As an outcome of the process, Tourism Kingston has been provided with a three year sustainability action plan for ongoing implementation, designed to improve sustainability performance over time.

To maintain certification, Tourism Kingston must undergo a recertification assessment every three years, which will require the submission and verification of new evidence based on any new initiatives or progress on the sustainability action plan. It is expected that there will be an improvement in overall score at the time of reassessment.



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ASSESSMENT

The GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Destination Assessment is formally recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and was developed in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UNWTO Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations.

These global best practices have been developed to maximize the positive benefits of tourism while minimizing negative impacts to people, culture, and the environment. The assessment consists of 117 questions and several hundred answer options/potential actions that measures baseline sustainability performance in the following areas of sustainability:

MANAGEMENT

- Sustainability Management System
- Risk, Crisis, and Emergency Management
- Land Use Planning and Infrastructure Management
- Business and Resident Engagement
- Visitor Engagement
- Marketing and Communications

CULTURAL & NATURAL INTERACTIONS

- Cultural Heritage
- Local Environment, Biodiversity, and Wildlife

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC

- Social Wellbeing
- Impacts of Tourism on Residents
- Local Employment and Labour Rights
- Economic Impacts
- Supporting Local and Sustainable Businesses
- Accessibility

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Energy
- Water Conservation
- Solid Waste
- Wastewater
- Emissions and Pollution



GRADING

The GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Destination Assessment is graded based on weighted answer options, which are used to calculate the overall score out of 261 total available points. Upon verification of all answered responses, a scorecard is presented that shows the total score in each category and subcategory of the assessment, as well as the overall score, shown as a percentage.

The grading levels are as follows:

Platinum | 90% - 100%

Gold | 75% - 89%

Silver | 55% - 74%

Bronze | 35% - 54%

*Upon completion of the certification process, Tourism Kingston has successfully achieved a grading level of **SILVER** with an overall score of **64%** for Kingston, Ontario.*



GRADING

Your Grading:		SILVER	Your Score: 64%	
			Platinum: 90 - 100 %	
			Gold: 75 - 89 %	
			Silver: 55 - 74 %	
			Bronze: 35 - 54 %	
Section	Measure	Points Scored	Points Available	%
Management		63	84	75%
A.	Sustainability Management System	13	15	86%
B.	Risk, Crisis, and Emergency Management	10	10	98%
C.	Land Use Planning and Infrastructure Management	13	18	72%
D.	Business and Resident Engagement	9	10	88%
E.	Visitor Engagement	8	17	45%
F.	Marketing and Communications	11	14	76%
Social & Economic Impacts		39	65	60%
G.	Social Wellbeing	10	10	100%
H.	Impacts of Tourism on Residents	1	8	9%
I.	Local Employment and Labour Rights	3	9	31%
J.	Economic Impacts	18	24	76%
K.	Supporting Local and Sustainable Businesses	4	8	49%
L.	Accessibility	3	6	52%
Natural & Cultural Interactions		21	31	68%
M.	Cultural Heritage	11	13	81%
N.	Local Environment, Biodiversity, and Wildlife	11	18	59%
Environmental Impacts		43	81	54%
O.	Energy	6	15	43%
P.	Water Conservation	5	17	31%
Q.	Solid Waste	12	18	64%
R.	Wastewater	11	13	82%
S.	Emissions and Pollution	10	18	53%
TOTAL		166	261	64%

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

Subcategory: Sustainability Management System

Actions:



Achieve GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification.



Each quarter, select a sustainability theme for ongoing team-building, education and advocacy.



Select sustainability key performance indicators to help measure progress towards your goals.



Incorporate sustainability planning and tracking within existing committees.



Publish and share progress towards sustainability action plan on the sustainability micro-site, industry newsletter, consumer newsletter, and social media.



SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

Subcategory: **Supporting Local and Sustainable Businesses**

Actions:

- Share relevant programs, grants, funding opportunities, news and stories to amplify other sustainability-related work occurring in the destination.
- Encourage businesses to measure and improve their sustainability performance.
- Review the "Website in a box" for digital accessibility considerations.
- Promote sustainably certified businesses and vendors within Kingston on website and social media channels.



SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

Subcategory: Cultural Heritage, Local Environment, Biodiversity, and Wildlife

Actions:

- Support development of Indigenous cultural experiences and businesses.
- Continue to communicate with businesses to support integration of environmental education and interpretation into visitor experience.
- Increase marketing and support for local farmers and producers, to improve agri-tourism experiences for visitors and enhance local food security.
- Consider opportunities to gather donations at the Visitor Centre that support cultural and natural sustainability.
- Support rural surrounding communities through strategic marketing to alleviate pressure from visitor volumes.



SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

Subcategory: Emissions, Pollution & Energy

Actions:

- Commit resources to calculate the total percentage of GHG emissions attributable to tourism within Kingston.
- Engage with entities in the energy conservation sector to better understand what supports exist for the tourism industry to reduce overall consumption.
- Promote offsetting programs or incentives for businesses and/or visitors.



REFERENCES

- 1 | Tourism Kingston (2022). A Year In Review, 2022. <https://www.visitkingston.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/23-009-annualreport-04-24-web.pdf>
- 2 | Statistics Canada (2026). Census Profile, 2016 Kingston, City [Census subdivision], Ontario and Kingston [Census metropolitan area]. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3510010&Geo2=CMACA&Code2=521&Data=Count&SearchText=kingston&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1>
- 3 | Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. (2022). *Tourism Research Statistics*. Ontario.Ca. <http://www.ontario.ca/page/tourism-research-statistics>
- 4 | Tourism Kingston. *The impact of tourism in Kingston*. (2022) <https://hamiltonhaltonbrant.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MHSTCI-RTO-3-Summary-Report.pdf>
- 5 | Tourism Kingston. *Missions and strategies. 2022 Annual General Meeting Deck* (2022). <https://www.visitkingston.ca/about-tourism-kingston/mission-and-strategies/>



GreenStep | Sustainable
Tourism

Phone | +1 800 469 7830

Email | support@greenstep.ca

Our headquarters are located at
200-346 Lawrence Avenue, Kelowna, BC V1Y 6L4,
on the traditional territory of the
Syilx/Okanagan People.

