

TOP 10 SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS IN 2026



As the number of tourists who care about their ecological footprint grows every year, the 2026 Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index), a ranking of the most sustainable cities produced by the GDS-Movement and based on Destination Management Organisation's (DMO) activity, can serve as an informative guide for the conscious traveler. The report scores DMOs and connected

sectors in four categories, Destination Management, Supplier Performance, Social Progress, and Environmental Performance, with 74 indicators in total, covering management and certification practices, governance, supply chain management, social indicators (mostly relying on external data sources), climate change management, renewable energy use, sustainable transport, air quality, biodiversity, and more.

Overall, the 2026 rankings are positive for most of the destinations that participate in the program, with nearly 89% of destinations improving their score in comparison with the previous year, the average score reaching its peak, and the performance gap between the Top 10 and the rest being the smallest to date. With Nordic cities dominating the competition, the GDS-Index saw an increase in represented countries, with the UK, Australia, Canada, and Iceland, hosting a considerable amount of destinations that made to the final list. Below are ten sustainable destinations that managed to achieve the best results in 2026.

10/ Reykjavik, Iceland - 86.59%

The only representative of Iceland on the list, Reykjavik has demonstrated strong environmental performance and has improved its score among the sustainable destinations compared to previous years. The country's unique geography and strong focus on renewable energy have helped the capital to provide a unique experience for its visitors while still being mindful of the environment.

9/ Montreal, Canada - 86.59%

Montreal has demonstrated excellence across all categories of sustainable destination management, with a special focus on strategic planning, making it to the first place in the Destination Management category with a nearly perfect score. With several Canadian entries across the top 20, North America saw the most significant improvement among destinations outside Europe.

8/ Belfast, United Kingdom - 87.06%

Shared with Sydney, Belfast has also improved dramatically this year and has demonstrated strong performance across several categories. While the city has focused its efforts on general destination management and supplier management practices, its commitment to environmental performance has earned it a spot in the global top 10.

7/ Sydney, Australia - 87.06%

Making its way into the top 10 for the first time in recent years, Sydney is the only representative of

Oceania in the ranking. The city has seen a particularly strong performance gain across environmental categories and has improved its overall score dramatically compared to the past year, securing the 7th position among the most sustainable destinations in the world.

6/ Glasgow, United Kingdom - 87.53%

The first British city to make it to the top 5 is Glasgow. Outperforming the rest of the UK's entries, Glasgow has shown to be a serious contender this year with special focus on its strong destination management practices and environmental performance.

5/ Aalborg, Denmark - 88.24%

Another Danish city that made it to the top 5 is Aalborg. Compared to the rest of its Nordic counterparts, Aalborg has a slight edge in terms of environmental performance, and its strategic approach to destination management has received special praise from the GDS-Movement.

4/ Aarhus, Denmark - 90.12%

With the help of a well-structured sustainability policy and excellent performance across all categories, Aarhus has joined the ranks of the world's top three most sustainable destinations. The city scored particularly high in destination management and supplier management, and it has overtaken several Nordic competitors to claim the 4th position.

3/ Copenhagen, Denmark - 90.35%

The capital of Denmark has been waiting for its turn at the top spot, and it appears that 2026 is the year of Copenhagen. Consistently strong across all categories, its sustainability strategy has focused on environmental performance while managing to improve its destination management practices in the past few years.

2/ Gothenburg, Sweden - 91.29%

Sweden is represented in the top 3 by its second-largest city of Gothenburg. Similar to other Nordic contenders, Gothenburg has a strong strategy in terms of supplier management and environmental performance, as well as a close collaboration between the city's DMO and local businesses to reach the shared vision of a sustainable destination.

1/ Helsinki, Finland - 92.94%

The capital of Finland has secured the first position for the third year running. Consistently high across all categories, Helsinki's sustainability performance relies on its climate action strategy, extensive environmental certification of hotels, efficient transport, and well-developed destination management strategies that take into account the needs of both tourists and locals. Other Nordic countries may have an advantage in terms of sustainability, but Helsinki appears to have the edge when it comes to strategic planning and transparency.

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