

Tools for Sustainability and Communication

The basics of sustainable tourism



Visit Finland



Front and back cover photo: Janne Ylitalo
Spread: Lauren Bath

Why?

Tourism is a growing global industry with known potential for positive change. The industry's various metrics for success include visitor numbers, accommodation statistics, revenue comparable to export, multiplier impacts for other industries, such as retail, employment figures and growth rates for all the above.

Successful travel businesses are target-oriented and operate according to set strategies, scorecards, budgets and balances. As you can see, the travel industry relies mostly on quantitative and financial metrics to evaluate success.

The success of any business is admittedly based on economic merits, but modern companies should also consider other factors of sustainable development. Economic, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability alongside ethical, safe practices form a solid foundation for a successful business.

Travellers and business partners alike make value-based decisions, which encourages travel businesses to showcase the sustainability of their actions and core values more and more. Sustainable businesses that can fluently communicate their values and actions to the customers will be tomorrow's victors. In fact, sustainability certificates or plans are already required for co-operation with some international tour operators.

Sustainability often brings along financial savings and stabilises fluctuations as well. You should also note that most companies are already sustainable, but might neglect advertising their efforts. Sustainable travel is not a form of tourism, it is a way of doing business, and it should concern all businesses and organisations.

What?

Sustainable practices are the most relevant indicator of sustainability in business. Creating sustainable practices requires strategic planning, logging of processes and implementing your plan at every level of operations. You should share your efforts with your partners and customers at every touchpoint and prove your dedication through actions.

Sustainability is founded on acquiring information, applying it into practice and monitoring your actions constantly – but also making your efforts known through marketing. Remember that actions speak louder than words: always keep your word.

1. You can acquire information from training, studies and benchmarking.
2. Acquired information is put into practice by creating a sustainability plan and other necessary supporting documents, such as a safety plan and safety rota. Utilise premade templates and see whether suitable certifications are available for your purposes.
3. Make sure your plans are implemented by systematically training your personnel. Ensure everyone is committed to your core values by welcoming your staff into the process from the start.
4. Monitoring sustainability is part of your overall plan for consistent development, which should react to feedback from your personnel and customers as well as new information acquired from regular training.
5. Your sustainability efforts should be promoted both publicly and within your company.

Many environmental initiatives that include certification are available in Finland. We strongly urge any businesses that are aiming for or are already active on international markets to take part in a sustainability program that provides certification. Make use of any certifications and their logos in your communications as well.

Certification creates a structured, systematic and simple way to develop your business sustainably. The logo allows you to easily convey your environmental efforts to your customers. Many programs also include various communication tools for businesses.

Read more about certification (in Finnish) at www.visitfinland.fi -> Vastuullisuus -> Ympäristösertifiointit.

This guidebook provides you with the tools necessary to acknowledge sustainability in your operations, helping you start the journey towards sustainable development and making your efforts known as well.

How

– Sustainability tools

Sustainability is not a stable state. You cannot just create a plan and then let it sit. Update your plans. Constantly re-evaluate your practices. Be brave and publish your future goals for different aspects of sustainability. Remember, the forms and instructions are easy to download and update.

- 1) The first tool is used to evaluate your present situation, set future goals and update them as you go.
- 2) The second tool is a commitment that can be included in your onboarding materials.
- 3) The third tool is a template for your marketing plan.

Take the challenge and lead the change!

Tool #1: Planning a sustainable business

Subject	Where are you now?	What could be done differently?	What should you do first?	Schedule	Person in charge	What should you do next?	Schedule	Person in charge	Signature
<p>Waste management:</p> <p>What is recycled?</p> <p>Can customers find the collection points?</p>									
<p>Waste management:</p> <p>Minimising waste – food waste, disposable containers, plates and cups</p>									

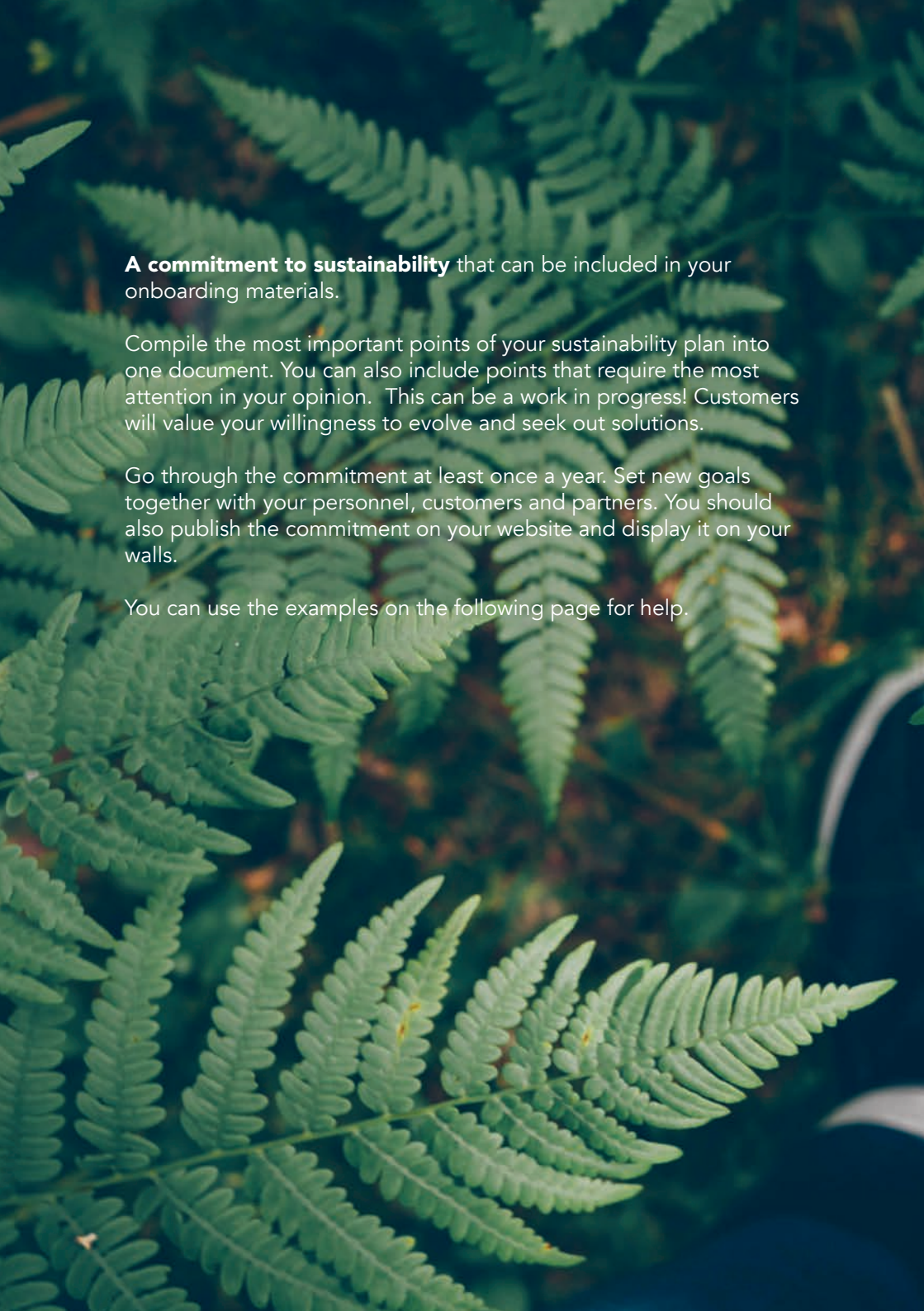
Subject	Where are you now?	What could be done differently?	What should you do first?	Schedule	Person in charge	What should you do next?	Schedule	Person in charge	Signature
<p>Water: Is water consumption tracked? Are leaks reported automatically?</p> <p>Ways to cut down</p>									
<p>Water: Controlling water use (faucets, toilets) and increasing awareness</p>									

Ethical sustainability

Subject	Where are you now?	What could be done differently?	What should you do first?	Schedule	Person in charge	What should you do next?	Schedule	Person in charge	Signature
Are your services accessible for all?									
Do you provide equal pay for equal work?									

A person is sitting on a dark rock in the foreground, looking out over a large body of water towards a sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow and a shimmering reflection on the water's surface. The sky is a mix of light blue and orange. In the distance, there are some dark silhouettes of land or islands. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Tool #2: Internal commitment for sustainable businesses



A commitment to sustainability that can be included in your onboarding materials.

Compile the most important points of your sustainability plan into one document. You can also include points that require the most attention in your opinion. This can be a work in progress! Customers will value your willingness to evolve and seek out solutions.

Go through the commitment at least once a year. Set new goals together with your personnel, customers and partners. You should also publish the commitment on your website and display it on your walls.

You can use the examples on the following page for help.

Our business is committed to the following pledges that promote sustainability in travel:

- √ We will reduce waste
 - Person in charge:
 - Recorded value, date:
 - Goal, date:
 - Ways to reach our goal:

- √ We will reduce water use
 - Person in charge:
 - Recorded value, date:
 - Goal, date:
 - Ways to reach our goal:

- √ We will adopt renewable energy and reduce power consumption
 - Person in charge:
 - Current energy source:
 - Renewable energy source of choice:
 - Date:

- √ We will favour organic and local products whenever possible
 - Person in charge:
 - Which organic and local products will be used:

- √ We will proactively guard your safety
 - Person in charge:
 - All personnel are trained in first aid
 - All personnel hold a Safety Passport

- √ We will ensure the safety of our partners – how:

- √ We will consider the local community
 - Person in charge:
 - How our consideration is manifested:



Tool #3: Marketing plan for sustainable businesses

Photo: Jaakko Tähti

Marketing plan

Travellers and partners increasingly value businesses that make sustainability part of their planning and operations. In fact, sustainability is a requirement for co-operation with many international tour operators. Many potential partners will ask for your certifications, which is why you should develop your sustainability according to the following path:

1. Get training for sustainability in travel, acquire information from books, online and on social media platforms. Keep updating your skills.
2. Create a sustainability plan for your business.
3. Find the most useful program, certification or criteria for environmental or sustainable development and adopt it.
4. Implement the plan throughout your company and include sustainability training in your onboarding materials.
5. Make your sustainability efforts known through marketing.

Create a plan of action:

What to do	Detailed plan	Person in charge	Schedule	Notes
Skill level / training in sustainable travel				
Program, certification or criteria for environmental or sustainable development				
Onboarding and internal communication				
External communication*				

*) Create a marketing plan.

- Where and how is your sustainability promoted?
- Who is in charge of content production, updating and sharing?
- Who is in charge of internal communication and which channels are being used?

Sustainability on your channels

You can get the most views on your website. It also pays to share related news on social media. If sustainability is represented well on your website, it's easy to simply share a link to your site on different channels.

Tips for content:

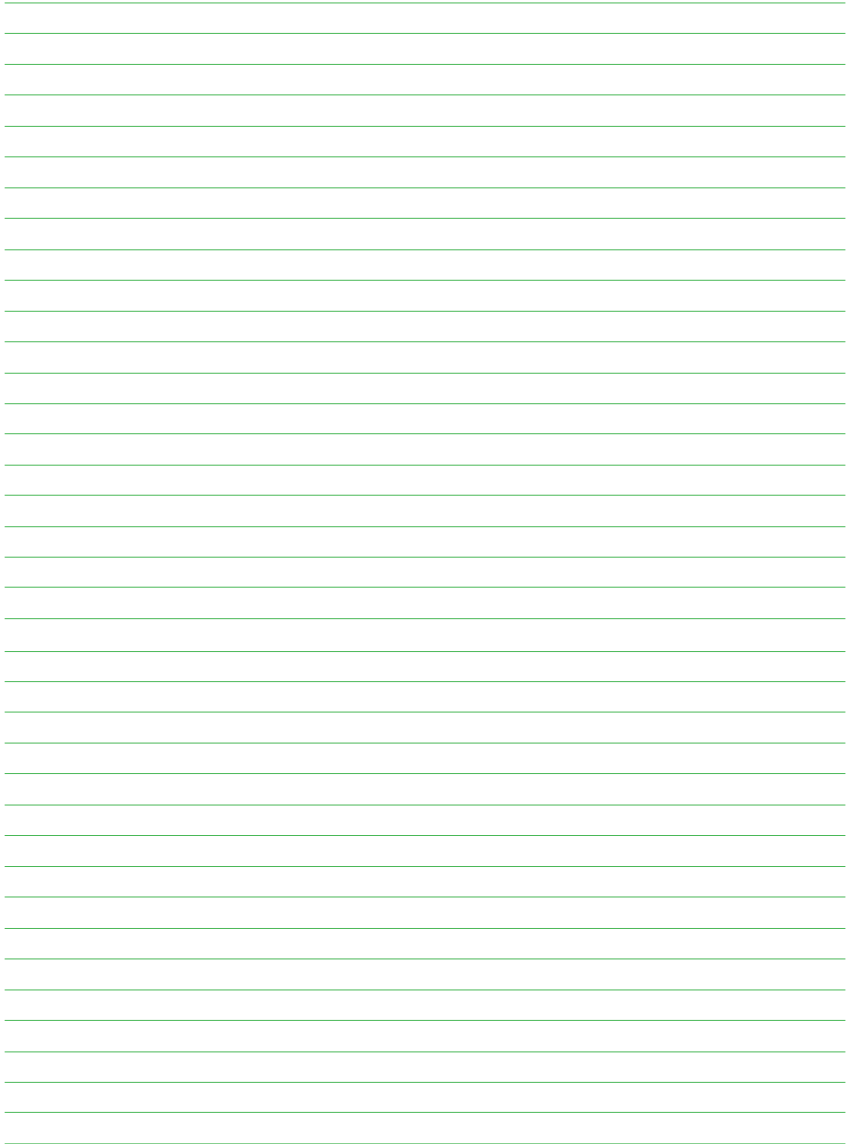
Build a dedicated section for sustainability on your website.

- Include sections for different aspects under Sustainability:
 - Environmental
 - Economic
 - Socio-cultural
 - Ethical
 - Safety
- Choose the subjects you can provide insight and examples on.
- Explain how you include sustainable development into your planning and what measures you take.
- Give examples, showcase feedback and include photos.
- Do not make claims that can't be backed up in reality.
- You can also share goals you're committed to.
- Check out #sitoumus2050, join in and share how your business can make a commitment to the campaign.
- If your business follows the principles of social responsibility and/or donates to a specific cause, tell the world!
- Include logos for certification and other partners (e.g. Finnish Association for Fair Tourism etc.) on your website.
- Remember to localise your content as well – at least an English version.
- Compare your website to others in the industry (benchmarking).
- Share your website link actively and promote your sustainability efforts through all the channels at your disposal.

Travellers are increasingly choosing their service providers based on values, conducting research and making their purchases where information is easiest to find. Make use of feedback and comments from travellers on social media as well as in person. Remember to thank your customers for feedback, comments and shares on social media.

Give your customers a chance to make a difference. Guide and encourage travellers to make environmentally conscious and sustainable choices.

Be successful!





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