



# 2021-2025 STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN GENEVA

Geneva Tourism & Conventions Foundation



**GENEVA**

VISIT. MEET. REPEAT.



Switzerland's  
objective  
Carbon neutrality  
by 2050

## TIME FOR ACTION

According to the World Tourism Organisation, sustainable tourism development “meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future”. As a long-standing tourist destination, Switzerland has very much understood the sustainability issues related to the preservation of its exceptional natural heritage as well as the indispensable balance between available resources and economic activity. In 1999 it enshrined in its Constitution sustainable development as a political objective and since then has continued to be innovative in this area.

The authorities know that time is of the essence, however, as Switzerland features among the top 30 countries with the largest ecological footprint. In 2020, more determined than ever, the Swiss Federal Council took measures

aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and the Geneva State Council decided to strengthen cantonal objectives by declaring a “climate emergency”. In concrete terms, the aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 compared to their 1990 level.

The strategy for sustainable tourism in Geneva is perfectly in line with this perspective and constitutes an essential first step in rallying tourism players and laying the foundations for concerted action. Geneva’s future as a leading destination, both for business and leisure tourism, now depends on its ability to act in a sustainable manner and to satisfy the expectations of its increasingly demanding visitors.

# PRECISION WORK FOR AN AMBITIOUS VISION

Tourism stakeholders are also aware of the social and environmental impact of tourism and of the potential of their actions.

In this respect, the Geneva Tourism & Conventions Foundation (GT&CF) has adopted a clear and ambitious vision for the destination:

**Geneva will be recognised as one of the 10 most sustainable urban destinations in Europe by 2025.**

It has thus initiated the development and implementation of a strategy for sustainable tourism in Geneva based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as on regional and international collaboration.

The strategy is based on five pillars that underpin an ambitious action plan, the scope of which will be measured through regular monitoring.

In order to ensure the implementation and success of this project, the GT&CF is counting on the entire Geneva tourism ecosystem. Indeed, just like the different parts that make up the movement of a watch, each actor in the tourism sphere is called upon to play a decisive role by working, through concrete measures, for the sustainability of the destination.

For its part, the Foundation's mission is to rally and accompany the project's actors by raising their awareness of sustainability and providing them with appropriate tools.

The Foundation then promotes successful initiatives to motivate the various actors involved in their efforts and communicates the achievements of this approach in order to generate a positive impact.

**1.**  
Circular  
economy

**2.**  
Post-carbon  
economy

**3.**  
Local  
initiatives

**4.**  
Social and  
solidarity impact

**5.**  
Collaboration between  
the destination's tourism  
stakeholders



# GLOBAL FRAMEWORK, LOCAL ACTION

## The strategy is based on:

- > The principles of sustainable development of the Tourism Act.
- > The guidelines of the “Sustainable Development” charter of Switzerland Tourism.
- > The sustainable development strategies of Switzerland, the Canton and the City of Geneva.

The Foundation first created a Sustainability Task Force whose mission it was to establish the strategy based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in collaboration with the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index).

Consultation was carried out with Geneva’s stakeholders, in various forms, which helped to refine the action plan and to better define everyone’s role. This consultation revealed that a large majority of the actors agree that they want to integrate notions of sustainability in a tourism stimulus plan. Most stakeholders also want the GT&CF to promote sustainability measures and provide the necessary tools to implement them. Finally, it also emerged from the discussions that circular economy, mobility, transport and food are key areas to focus on.

### GLOBAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX



*The GDS-Index is a ranking designed to measure, compare and improve the sustainability performance of conventions, international event and business tourism destinations. The ranking is based on four areas: the city’s environmental strategy and infrastructure (energy, waste, air quality, etc.); the city’s social sustainability performance (inclusiveness, gender equality, health, etc.); the support of industry suppliers (hotels, restaurants, meeting venues, etc.); and the strategy and initiatives of the destination’s management body (reporting, marketing, engagement, etc.).*

The Foundation has been affiliated with the GDS-Index since 2016 and works every year to meet its criteria. Eventually, it aims to feature among the top ten destinations.

# 2021-2025 STRATEGY: 5 PILLARS, 12 OBJECTIVES

Following the stakeholder consultation process and input from the Sustainability Task Force, the Foundation used some of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to identify the challenges and priority areas for Geneva and establish a strategy based on:



## 5 MAIN PILLARS

1

Accelerating  
the shift  
to a circular  
economy

2

Accelerating  
the transition to  
a post-carbon  
economy

3

Promoting  
local initiatives

4

Fostering a  
social impact on  
and solidarity in  
the destination

5

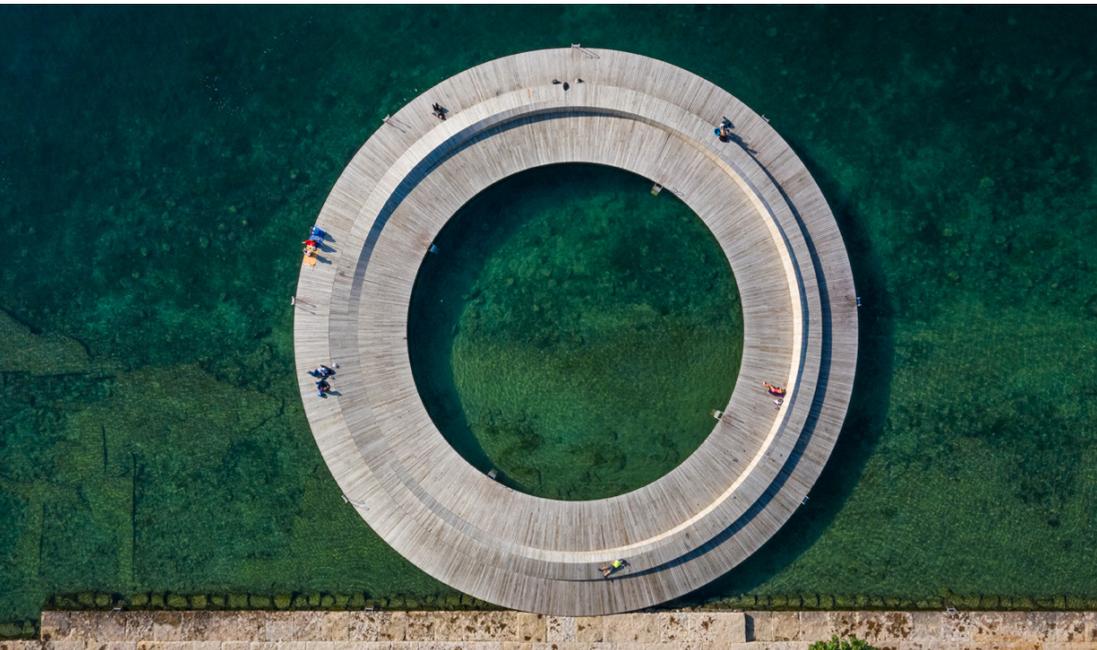
Strengthening  
collaboration  
between tourism  
stakeholders

# 1<sup>st</sup> PILLAR

## ACCELERATING THE SHIFT TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The circular economy offers new visions of the economy and eliminates the notion of “waste” by opposing the current linear system which basically follows a “take-make-dispose” model.

The GT&CF wishes to promote this new model and to enhance it among its partners through workshops, tools and guides. The circular economy opens up new opportunities in line with the principles of sustainable development, notably through the reduction, reuse and recycling of resources.



## Objectives

- > Reduce waste in the tourism sector by 30% by 2025 by applying the principles of the circular economy (5Rs\*)
- > Eliminate 70% of single-use waste with sustainable alternatives compatible with the operation of the tourism services concerned by 2025

## Commitments

- > Raise awareness of sorting techniques among tourist partners and visitors through information sheets
- > Promote the reduction of food waste
- > Create solutions, together with event organisers, to reduce the waste generated by events
- > Offer inspiring ways to partners to accelerate the development of the circular economy in the tourism sector

\*5Rs: Reflect, Refuse, Repair, Reuse, Recycle

# 2<sup>nd</sup> PILLAR

## ACCELERATING THE TRANSITION TO A POST-CARBON ECONOMY

Aware of its impact and that of tourism, the GT&CF wishes to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in line with the cantonal plan, which aims to reduce GHG emissions, in particular by encouraging low-carbon mobility, reducing the dependence of buildings on fossil fuels, promoting renewable energy and encouraging local and sustainable food.



## Objectives

- > Reduce GHG emissions by 60% by 2030 compared to 1990
- > Raise awareness among visitors from local markets\* to travel to and within Geneva using sustainable means of transport

## Commitments

- > Raise awareness among partners of GHG emissions linked to food, mobility and construction
- > Promote low carbon means of transport

*\*Local markets are defined according to the FG&CF's marketing strategy.*

# 3<sup>rd</sup> PILLAR

## PROMOTING LOCAL INITIATIVES

Local initiatives are an essential part of our strategy, as it is the local tourist industry, craftspeople, artists, producers and restaurateurs who bring Geneva to life.

The Foundation wishes to strengthen its collaboration with them while ensuring that they have a strong presence in the promotional activities. Thanks to this concerted approach, it will be possible to offer visitors unique and authentic experiences, while contributing to the prosperity of the local economy.



## Objectives

- > Encourage and promote the *made in Geneva* concept by supporting local events, local products, crafts and know-how
- > Integrate tourism into other sustainable development programmes in Geneva

## Commitments

- > Regularly promote Geneva events and local initiatives in the GT&CF's communication on social media
- > Promote local products, crafts and know-how
- > Support cultural, sporting and community initiatives and events

# 4<sup>th</sup> PILLAR

## FOSTERING A SOCIAL IMPACT ON AND SOLIDARITY IN THE DESTINATION

The aim of this pillar is to enhance the social and solidarity actions undertaken in Geneva and to encourage a globally inclusive approach. The satisfaction of visitors and residents of Geneva is also part of this pillar.

Covid-19 has changed the perception of tourism in our cities. It is essential to reconnect residents and tourists through initiatives in which solidarity and the social dimension play a major role. Furthermore, accessibility and inclusiveness are now priorities for the destination.

### Objectives

- > Reach 90% of favourable opinions on tourism among the inhabitants
- > Reach 85% of visitors satisfied with their experience in Geneva
- > Work on accessibility and inclusiveness for all

### Commitments

- > Make information available for people with reduced mobility
- > Create content for inclusiveness for all in the GT&CF's communication materials



# 5<sup>th</sup> PILLAR

## STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION BETWEEN TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS

Sustainable development must become an opportunity for all the actors of our destination as well as a tool to rally the partners around a common objective: to make tourism in Geneva more sustainable and to position the destination as a model of exemplarity.

### Objectives

- > Increase by 50% the number of actors with a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy and/or official certification
- > Participate in three joint actions for the Lake Geneva region
- > Integrate tourism into other sustainable development programmes in Geneva

### Commitment

- > Rally the actors of the destination through sustainable actions and initiatives





# SWISS MADE SUSTAINABILITY

The GT&CF's approach is in line with the broader strategy of Switzerland Tourism, which wishes to make a concrete contribution to the sustainable development of Swiss tourism with its Swisstainable sustainability programme and communication campaign.

## Programme's objectives

- > Collect, bundle and communicate the activities and offers of tourism providers in the field of sustainability
- > Support the commitment of service providers to the overall sustainability of Swiss tourism
- > Position Switzerland as a sustainable destination in the international travel market

## How to get involved

The programme offers three levels of action to all Swiss tourism businesses and organisations. They will be able to obtain Swisstainable certification once their commitment to sustainability has been confirmed and they have carried out a sustainability audit, taken concrete sustainability measures to be implemented within 24 months and provide evidence of sustainability.

## Goal of the GT&CF

In the short term, the GT&CF has decided to meet the requirements of the Swisstainable level 2 by joining the OK:GO initiative, taking appropriate measures to reduce the impact of events and offsetting its CO2 emissions.



Access the information directly by scanning this QR Code.



# GENEVA, A MODEL OF EXEMPLARITY

The strategy for sustainable tourism in Geneva is meant to respond to the social, environmental and economic challenges of the destination, while generating new opportunities and promoting Geneva's heritage and actors. Through the implementation of this strategy, the destination aims to innovate and become a model of sustainable tourism.

“Those who have the privilege of knowing have the duty to act.”

*Albert Einstein*

## Acknowledgements

The Geneva Tourism & Conventions Foundation would like to express its sincere thanks to all the members of the Sustainability Task Force and to all the individuals, companies and organisations that have contributed to the development of this strategy.

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