**SUSTAINABILITY AS A COMMUNITY OBJECTIVE: VALSUGANA**

In August 2019  **Valsugana,** a tourist area in eastern Trentino consisting of 24 municipalities with a population of 62,000 residents,became the first and only destination with **sustainable tourism certification** in accordance with the criteria identified by the non-profit organisation Global Sustainable Tourism Council ([**GSTC**](https://www.gstcouncil.org/for-destinations/)). This accolade came at the end of a participatory process in which the certifying body investigated and assessed all factors linked to tourism — economic, socio-cultural and environmental — and sustainable destination management, in accordance with a model which places the entire community at its centre to lead it towards a new development model, which is still capable of meeting the needs of a high-quality tourist market. After all, the first and most credible ambassador for a sustainable lifestyle to be shared and promoted is the same community that lives responsibly on the land and puts its welfare first.

This certification outlines and rewards the intrinsic characteristics of Valsugana not just as a tourist destination, but as a territory which has paid great attention to matters of sustainability and in connection with climate change. An example of the care shown to the environment here can be seen in the extremely high percentages — 70% on average, but with peaks of over 80% — of separated waste; in the fact that the production of electricity from renewable sources exceeds the needs of the territory; and in the promotion of green and slow tourist experiences, as well as the protection and welfare of the community.

Today, the focus is on strengthening a number of actions in line with EU and participatory values which favour active exchanges between those who provide services to benefit citizens and tourists based on positive, sustainable models, as the key to high-quality and conscientious tourism. Examples include initiatives to raise awareness on the topic of sustainability, which involved a number of local businesses as well as farms, such as the project to contain greenhouse gasses in the Alpine farmsteads of the Vezzena Plateau.

Among the possible actions proposed to flesh out the concept of sustainability, the following are deemed to have the highest priority:

* Raising awareness among operators, residents and tourists of issues related to sustainability: thanks to the "***Giovani Ambasciatori del Territorio***” project (Young Land Ambassadors), a number of young people had the chance to take courses and enjoy close contact with the valley, spreading their knowledge;
* The production of a protocol for organising "**plastic-free**" events where the priority is safeguarding the environment and raising awareness among participants;
* Supporting events that promote awareness of issues related to sustainability;
* Monitoring the economic, cultural and environmental indicators of the destination, collecting data on which to base future initiatives;
* Support for economic activities in the mountain to guarantee care for the landscape and the protection of biodiversity. Thanks to the ***Vacanze in Baita*** (“Lodge Holidays”) initiative, a number of buildings which had no other usewere renovated and transformed into new forms of accommodation; ***Adotta una Mucca***(“Adopt a Cow”), on the other hand, allowed dairy managers to supplement their income while at the same time offering participants a unique experience: the chance to meet "their" cow, to help process its milk and to enjoy the delicious dairy produce.
* Operators and public administrations working together to encourage collaboration and convergence on projects intended to have a positive impact on the territory.

The certification of this destination was re-confirmed in March 2021.

**What is the GSTC - Global Sustainable Tourism Council**

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council **(GSTC)** is a non-profit organisation that represents a diverse range of members across the world, including the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), NGOs, national and local governments and operators in various fields, all brought together by the shared desire to achieve best practices in sustainable tourism. This body has set itself the target of defining and managing global standards for assessing the sustainability criteria of destinations, tour operators and accommodations. Even **Booking.com** recently chose it to certify the facilities that it offers.

The criteria on which GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) certification are based were developed from the United Nations [**17 Sustainable Development Goals**](http://tourism4sdgs.org/) which, through the work of a number of organisations including the UNWTO, were transformed into over 100 concrete and specific indicators for tourist destinations, tour operators and accommodations.

**Info:** <https://www.visitvalsugana.it/en/sustainability/>