



# Global Ecosphere Retreats® Standard



**Version March 31<sup>st</sup> 2019**

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### Key info about this standard

Title	Global Ecosphere Retreats® Standard
Owner	The Long Run
Scope	Applicable for Long Run Fellow Members globally
Version	3
Effective date	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019
Contact person	Dr Delphine Malleret King
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## About the Long Run

The Long Run is a charitable membership organisation, bringing together a community of properties, travel partners and experts committed to protecting and regenerating ecosystems for the benefit of all. The organisation supports, connects and inspires members to operate according to a balance of the 4Cs — Conservation, Community, Culture and Commerce. By supporting members on this journey, The Long Run ensures that travel experiences have a positive impact, and that conservation is socially and financially sustainable. In 2020, collectively, Long Run members safeguarded over 23 million acres of ecosystems, protected more than 400 endangered species, and touched the lives of 750,000 people.

## Introduction to the standard

This standard document contains the requirements for properties who wish to become recognised as Global Ecosphere Retreats® (GER), which represents the highest level of membership in The Long Run community. Properties join The Long Run as Fellow Members and strive to become GER®.

The standard is used as a basis during the compliance assessment of candidate GER®. It can also be used by any tourism related destination aspiring to operate according to the highest sustainability criteria. The overarching idea reflected in the requirements of this standard is that the GER® must sustainably manage its destination, working to highest standard of performance in all of the 4Cs in an integrated and balanced way. It is important for the GER® to consider their impacts on the four Cs together and seek innovative ways to strengthen the performance in each C without making excessive compromises within others.

The requirements of this standard consist of five sections. In the true spirit of a comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainability, the first section links the other four together and provides overarching requirements for quality and monitoring performance. Subsequently one section is dedicated to each of the four focal areas of the 4C – Conservation, Community, Culture and Commerce. Linkages between the areas of 4Cs are evident throughout and references between criteria are provided where relevant.

The requirements are structured on two levels. Under each of the five sections there are **principles**. The principles are broad but provide the context and central focus for each topic. Each principle has a list of uniquely numbered **criteria** that form the main level of requirements for evaluating compliance.

During the on-site assessment, the assessors will evaluate compliance with each criterion and will determine one of the following levels of compliance:

- **Level 0** - indicates the criterion is not applicable in the specific destination or at the time of evaluation.
- **Level 1** - indicates direct **non-compliance** with the criterion. The non-compliance is raised and needs to be addressed by the destination, before the GER® recognition can be granted. It is important to know that it is required to implement the activities to address non-compliance before the recognition can be granted (rather than only make plans to address the non-compliances).
- **Level 2** - indicates a **weakness** against the criterion, however the gap is of minor nature or clear and adequate plans are already in place but have not yet been fully implemented. The weaknesses need to be addressed within a defined time frame after recognition. Note that

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the text in the column “Implementation guidance” and given in ***bold italics***, explains the minimum expectations for compliance level, which would allow recognition.

- **Level 3** - indicates full compliance with the criterion. Recommendations to strengthen and support the destinations in its journey of improvements may be provided.

The requirements include principles and qualitative thresholds to be achieved. Precise quantitative thresholds are too specific for global application, since situations and contexts greatly vary across the world.

The standard focuses on the actual performance of the destinations under evaluation, rather than on the means to achieve this. For example, the competence and knowledge of the people working in the destination is the goal. Having a documented training protocol with participants’ signatures is only a means to achieve this goal. While useful in some cases, having such protocol may not always be paramount to achieve the actual goal. Being too directive can also impede creativity and innovation needed to drive continuous improvement and raising the bar. Therefore, the standard emphasises the desired results and seeks to avoid being over prescriptive about means and methods. Nonetheless some level of procedures, systems and documentation is required as best practice. Also certain evidence needs to exist for the assessors to evaluate compliance. Where specific documentation is essential, the requirement for such evidence is made clear directly in the criterion.

The foundation of the GER® standard evolved from a benchmark developed by Zeitz Foundation (the host organisation at the time) drawing on the experience of working with the nine founding members of The Long Run, as well as other members and partners. Relevant standards were also consulted (see references section).

The GER® standard seeks to be a corporate leadership standard and does not aim to be a third-party standard. Stakeholders such as The Long Run members and selected organisations involved in sustainable tourism certifications (including GSTC, FLA, STI) were consulted for their feedback to develop the first version of the standard, which was field tested and became effective on the **1<sup>st</sup> of March 2015**. The GER® standard is reviewed and updated as necessary, every three years, to ensure it evolves in keeping with best practice. This includes continuously meeting any changes to the GSTC Industry standard requirements. The standard was last amended and approved by the GSTC on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

The standard is publicly available on the Long Run website ([www.thelongrun.com](http://www.thelongrun.com)). Comments are welcome at any time and can be sent to [info@thelongrun.com](mailto:info@thelongrun.com). Submitted comments will be considered at latest during next scheduled standard revision.

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## Scope

This standard is applicable to tourism-related destinations who wish to be recognised as Global Ecosphere Retreats® (GER). In order to achieve the recognition, the candidates have to comply with all the criteria in this standard at minimum on level 2 (see Introduction section for explanations of the levels 1-4).

A destination, in the context of this GER® Standard, is a landscape or seascape of ecological importance owned, managed or significantly influenced by tourism and other enterprise(s), including any affiliated entities such as trust, conservancy, foundation, agriculture farm, livestock operation and others, seeking to deliver 4Cs and in compliance with the requirements of the GER® Standard'. In this requirement, the term destination refers to the management entity of the said destination.

In order to be eligible for evaluation and recognition by The Long Run, the operation has to first become a Fellow Member (see background in the section above about The Long Run). **The recognition is valid for 6 years, and is granted by The Long Run recognition committee on the basis of an external assessment. Mid-term evaluations will be carried out for the purpose of evaluating progress and sustained compliance.**

All parts of this standard are considered to be normative for the purpose of GER® recognition, meaning they have to be complied with in order for the recognition to be granted.

## References

- **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (GSTC-D)** (version 1.0) by *Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)*.
- **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators** (version 3- 2016) by *Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)*.
- **Principles of Fair Labour & Responsible Sourcing** by *Fair Labour Association*.
- **Self-Help Manual for Global Ecosphere Retreats® Certification**. A guidance document for GER® candidate operations helping them to understand and prepare for the evaluation. This has been revised and is available from The Long Run upon request.
- **The Long Run Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**. Sets the generic broad requirements for any tourism related destination that desires to become recognized as GER®. It has been replaced by the Recognition Agreement that has to be signed by destination prior to recognition.

## 1. General requirements

This section relates to the commitment and quality system the GER® has put in place to maximise its positive impacts and minimise its negative impacts across the four areas of Conservation, Community, Culture and Commerce in a balanced and integrated way. In practice it also means that the GER® compliance in one given 'C' shall not be at the risk of non-compliance or undue compromise of performance in other Cs. The section sets some baseline requirements that apply across all the 4Cs.

### 1.1. Commitment to sustainability

**Principle 1.1.** The GER® shall publicly commit to responsible and sustainable management of its destination. As a pre-requisite, it shall have undisputed tenure, management rights or demonstrate significant influence over the management of areas under assessment, and shall possess sufficient knowledge about the area under its management or influence. The GER® shall respect the valid legal requirements and internationally accepted basic norms as the minimum starting benchmark for any activities.

#### Criteria

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- 1.1.1. The GER® shall maintain a publicly available written commitment, endorsed by the executive level, towards sustainable management of its destination covering all of the 4Cs, including the rationale behind its commitment.
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- 1.1.2. The GER® shall have a written overview of the areas it manages or has influence over, including: a) total area in acres or ha; b) maps of the areas showing exact geographic boundaries and any applicable zoning info; c) tenure and ownership documentation.
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- 1.1.3. The right of the GER® to manage, or its influence over the management of the areas, shall be clearly documented, commonly accepted and undisputed. In case of a dispute occurring, it shall be resolved through mutual dialogue and evidence of resolution shall be provided. The principles of free, prior and informed consent shall be respected in acquisition of any related rights.
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- 1.1.4. The GER® shall comply with all applicable local and national legal requirements and shall have a mechanism for keeping itself updated about any relevant changes in applicable legislation.
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- 1.1.5. In areas where national legal requirements are commonly known to be below internationally accepted norms, the GER® shall comply with the internationally acknowledged best practices and norms, including the ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights, Human Rights and CITES.

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## 1.2. Capacity and responsibilities

**Principle 1.2.** The GER® shall have sufficient human capacity to realise its commitment to sustainability. The personnel shall be adequately informed about its responsibilities and provided with relevant information and support. Availability of written guidance, including policies and procedures shall be sufficient to support consistent performance and implementation.

### Criteria

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- 1.2.1. The GER® shall identify a focus person for overall compliance with this standard and, if relevant, additional people for ensuring compliance with areas covered by the standard.

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  - 1.2.2. The people responsible for activities and tasks related to this standard shall have sufficient awareness, competence and capacity.

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  - 1.2.3. The GER® shall develop, maintain and make accessible sufficient written policies, procedures and implementation guidance to facilitate consistent compliance with the requirements of this standard.

## 1.3. Performance monitoring

**Principle 1.3.** The GER® shall aspire towards continuously improving its sustainability performance across all the 4Cs and take responsibility to act on the identified areas of weaknesses. The GER® shall maintain relevant information and records to systematically evaluate and measure its performance and shall incorporate improvement goals into its overall decision making system.

### Criteria

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- 1.3.1. The GER® shall periodically (at least annually) evaluate its progress towards the fulfilment of the standard requirement. Results of the progress review shall be considered and incorporated into the planning of the GER® activities for the next period.

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  - 1.3.2. The GER® shall maintain and implement an E4C plan, indicating specific impacts and results for the whole 6 year period of the recognition cycle as well as annually for upcoming period. The GER® shall annually update the plan and submit it to The Long Run for review.
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- 1.3.3. Upon recognition, the GER® shall submit an annual report, indicating progress towards annual targets and E4C plan achievements. The annual report shall be accompanied by a an activity plan for the subsequent year
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- 1.3.4. The GER® shall have a system in place to document, analyse and address any identified non-compliances in a timely manner. The GER® shall maintain related evidence.
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- 1.3.5. The GER® shall maintain sufficient evidence and records necessary to evaluate and document compliance with this standard, during a period of at least three years.

## 2. Conservation

The central focus of the conservation section is conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem values in the areas managed and influenced by the destination and supporting conservation in areas which the destination influences, or on which the destination depends (e.g. community forests or wilderness areas). This goes hand in hand with implementing sound environmental management practices in relation to water, energy, carbon emissions and waste management with the aim of no net loss and preferably a net positive impact on biodiversity, ecosystems and ultimately the biosphere.

### 2.1. Biodiversity conservation

**Principle 2.1.** The GER® shall be aware of biodiversity and ecosystem values within and directly adjacent to the area under its influence or management and of their importance to community. The GER® shall seek to conserve and enhance these values while considering the need for a balanced approach to support the local community and operate an economically sustainable destination.

#### Criteria

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- 2.1.1. The GER® shall have sufficiently up to date and credible documented information about the plant and animal species in its area to safeguard the biodiversity and ecological functions provided and needed by these species. This shall include at least, information about any endangered, rare, endemic or keystone species, including also large mammals
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- 2.1.2. The GER® shall have good knowledge of major threats to biodiversity. The threat assessment shall consider both direct and indirect threats to endangered and rare species and to their habitats.
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- 2.1.3. The GER® shall develop and implement an action plan, in collaboration with key stakeholders, to mitigate the identified threats.
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- 2.1.4. The GER® shall develop and implement a monitoring system to track the population, survival and health of the species identified as conservation priority. The information gathered shall be used to adapt current activities and plan future activities.
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- 2.1.5. The GER® shall have and maintain documented information about other environmental values (besides species) present within or directly adjacent to the area it manages or influences. The information shall include the location and description of the values, including threats (such as pollution, land use change, erosion).
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- 2.1.6. The GER® shall monitor the impacts of its activities and demonstrate that they do not have a negative impact on the environmental values. The destination shall make efforts to enhance or restore the values, where appropriate.
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- 2.1.7. The GER® shall identify and make efforts to coordinate its conservation activities and threat mitigation efforts with other locally active organisations and individuals. Consideration shall be given to conservation organisations, public authorities, local community and other relevant stakeholders.
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- 2.1.8. The GER® shall have an overall conservation plan in place.
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- 2.1.9. Prior to utilising commercially indigenous fauna or plant species, the GER® shall ensure and demonstrate that the scale and methods used shall not endanger the survival of the species, reduce its population to an unsustainable level or cause negative impact to a species natural habitat.
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- 2.1.10. The GER® shall give preference to the use of indigenous species, and shall not use any invasive alien species or any alien species that are known to constitute a threat to the local ecosystem. The GER® should take active measures to control and preferably eradicate invasive species.
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- 2.1.11. The GER® shall not acquire, breed or keep any wild animals in captivity, except temporarily, by authorized and suitably equipped persons, for the purpose of their recovery or for other conservation purpose in compliance with local and international law. Any such cases shall be justified and the housing, care and handling of all wild and domestic animals meets the highest standards of animal welfare.
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- 2.1.12. The GER® shall seek to increase awareness and support its staff, visitors and community to conserve the unique ecological values of the area.
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## 2.2. Environmental management

**Principle 2.2.** The GER® shall determine and quantify its environmental footprint. It shall develop and implement a plan to reduce its environmental footprint and any negative environmental impacts, while, ideally, seeking to have a net positive environmental footprint.

### Criteria

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2.2.1. The GER® shall have a good knowledge of the potential negative environmental impacts of its operations. The GER® shall prevent and, where appropriate, mitigate identified negative impacts and seek to have positive impacts. The GER® shall have clear targets and verifiable indicators to avoid, minimize and mitigate negative environmental impacts.

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2.2.2. The GER® shall measure and manage its GHG footprint, reducing it to the minimum level possible, taking into consideration its suppliers and visitors.

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2.2.3. The GER® shall continuously seek to reduce its energy footprint and shift, where feasible, from non-renewable to renewable energy sources. The GER® shall have a measured baseline, indicating energy sources, and quantitative reduction or management targets.

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2.2.4. The GER® shall continuously seek to optimize its freshwater consumption and usage, including the use of drinking water and natural freshwater. It shall also ensure that its water consumption is sustainable and does not adversely affect the environmental flow.. The GER® shall have a measured baseline indicating water sources and quantitative reduction or management targets.

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2.2.5. The GER® shall continuously seek to optimize its wastewater discharges and shall dispose or recycle any residual wastewater in a way that is most environmentally friendly. The GER® shall have a measured baseline and quantitative reduction or management targets.

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2.2.6. The GER® shall ensure that wastewater effluent measurements are carried out on regular basis, including measurements of BOD, COD, suspended solids, pH, grease and oils and bacteria (including faecal coliforms). Where measurements results exceed legally prescribed norms, the GER® shall plan and implement appropriate measures.

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2.2.7. The GER® shall seek to continuously reduce solid waste, including food waste, increasing reuse and recycling when feasible. The GER® shall have a measured baseline and quantitative reduction or management targets. The GER® shall ensure that its waste disposal does not have adverse effects on the local community or on the environment.

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2.2.8. The GER® shall avoid and minimise the usage of hazardous chemicals and substances, with the ultimate purpose to phase out such usage. Whenever such substances are used, the GER® shall ensure their safe handling, storage, and disposal.

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- 2.2.9. The GER® shall be aware of the possible negative impacts caused by noise, odour, heat, surface water runoff, smoke or light originating from its operations and shall minimize any identified negative impacts.
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- 2.2.10. The GER® shall strive to source its goods, building materials, products, food and consumables from sustainable sources. Where possible, preference shall be given to sources certified against credible and recognized sustainability schemes or locally produced goods known to originate from responsible sources.
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- 2.2.11. The GER® shall have in place an overall environmental management plan.
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- 2.2.12. The GER® shall provide information about the key aspects of its environmental management policies, commitments and efforts to visitors, employees and other interested stakeholders, including the quantitative targets set by the destination.

### 3. Community

The aim of community section is for the destination to be a responsible, responsive and supportive member of the local community by maintaining good relationships, contributing to the social and economic wellbeing of local community and providing an exciting and rewarding workplace.

#### 3.1. Community relations

**Principle 3.1.** The Long Run shall maintain regular communication with representatives and individuals who are accountable to the broader local community with the aim of enhancing mutual understanding, respect, collaboration and peace.

##### Criteria

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- 3.1.1. The GER® shall have clearly defined, mapped and have a good understanding of the community which is affected by or affect its activities, and shall maintain updated information about it.
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- 3.1.2. The GER® shall maintain regular communication with the community, including providing updates about any planned activities or changes that may have significant positive or negative effect on the community.
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- 3.1.3. The GER® shall maintain cordial, harmonious and mutually supportive relationships with the local community.
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3.1.4. The GER® shall maintain regular communication with representatives of relevant public authorities at the scale and frequency appropriate for the size and type or the destination.

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3.1.5. The GER® shall respect the traditional access and use rights of local community groups and inhabitants, including traditionally established access to livelihoods, including land and aquatic resource use, rights-of-way, transport and housing.

### 3.2. Economic and social benefits

**Principle 3.2.** The GER® shall avoid any negative impacts of its operations on the socio-economic context of the local community and shall continually seek to enhance the community economic and social wellbeing by continuously identifying ways for positive collaboration, seeking opportunities for synergy and supporting activities that will improve well-being as identified in collaboration with the community.

#### Criteria

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3.2.1. The GER® shall have an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of its possible impacts on the local community, including on the availability and the quality of resources and services such as water, energy, soil, education, health, sanitation and land tenure.

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3.2.2. The GER® shall prevent and where appropriate mitigate any identified negative impacts of its activities to the community wellbeing.

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3.2.3. The GER® shall seek, to identify and develop opportunities or projects designed to enhance and increase community economic and social opportunities and well-being. This should be done in collaboration with the local community also including stakeholders such as public authorities and active NGOs in the area.

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3.2.4. The GER® shall consciously help the development of enterprise and sustainable supply chains among local community, especially if they are located in developing countries, in order to empower the community to engage actively in a market led economy.

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3.2.5. The GER® shall monitor the impact of its activities and efforts to enhance the socio economic well being of the community.

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3.2.6. The GER® shall seek ways to enable visitors to support the local economy by encouraging guests to purchase goods and services locally or facilitate their participation in events organised by local community groups.

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3.2.7. The GER® shall prefer local people for employment when possible, including managerial positions.

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### 3.3. Labour and work conditions

**Principle 3.3.** The GER® shall act and be recognised as an employer who provides a work place where people are treated with dignity, where their physical and emotional wellbeing is prioritized, where opportunities are sought and created for their development and where they receive fair living wages enabling them to improve their quality of life.

#### Criteria

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- 3.3.1. The GER® shall follow equal opportunity based recruitment practices. It shall have in place and follow documented policies for employment reflecting these principles and its commitment to recognising collective bargaining and avoiding forced labour, commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, child labour and discrimination.
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- 3.3.2. The GER® shall not discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or physical or mental handicaps. The GER® shall ensure gender equity among its staff.
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- 3.3.3. The GER® shall have written guidance in place for ethical conduct of its staff and avoiding corruption.
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- 3.3.4. Personnel shall be treated with respect and dignity at all times and in line with national and international requirements and guidelines, following the higher level of requirements.
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- 3.3.5. The GER® shall have documented terms of employment for staff including coverage of the principles for determining salary ranges, provision of benefits such as insurance, work time, overtime compensation, paid holiday and vacation time, terms for special leave such as maternity leave. The terms of employment shall be available to all staff at all times and shall be followed in practice.
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- 3.3.6. The GER® shall provide fair living wages to staff. The paid wages shall meet all legal requirements and shall meet or exceed the local and regional norms prevailing for similar positions and work tasks.
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- 3.3.7. The GER® shall pay the wages in full and in timely manner at regular intervals not exceeding one month. The GER® shall not withhold any part of the fixed wage as a disciplinary measure, or for other reasons.
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- 3.3.8. The GER® shall take responsibility for introducing the rights, tasks and responsibilities of each staff and seasonal worker when hired and before they are expected to start their duties. The GER® shall ensure that documented terms of reference are agreed with individual staff and are reviewed at minimum once per year.
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- 3.3.9. The GER® shall employ same standards to its seasonal workforce as for its staff in relation to minimum wages, treatment and lack of discrimination.
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3.3.10. The GER® shall have clear health and safety procedures in place and provide the staff with all personal protection equipment, tools and other equipment, as well as regular relevant trainings to ensure guest safety as and staff physical and emotional wellbeing in fulfilling the assigned tasks.

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3.3.11. The GER® shall have a formal mechanism in place that enables permanent staff and seasonal worker to take up issues, concerns or complaints without fear of intimidation and with confidence that the information will reach the appropriate level and will be considered and responded to in appropriate manner.

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3.3.12. The GER® shall identify, in consultation with the employees themselves, the training needs of staff and seasonal workers and shall implement an appropriate training plan with the aim to continuously build the skills of its employees to enable them to take higher levels of responsibilities over time.

## 4. Culture

Understanding and appreciating the local and regional cultural heritage and its expressions should form the basis for the GER® to promote, conserve and revive it where relevant. This however, can only be done in mutual collaboration with the custodians of the culture. By considering and incorporating traditional as well as contemporary cultural practices, arts and artifacts, the GER® will promote cultural exchange between the visitors, personnel and the custodians of the culture, thus leading to a mutually enriching experience.

### 4.1. Conserving cultural heritage sites

**Principle 4.1.** The GER® shall be knowledgeable about the cultural heritage sites and items (such as buildings, archaeological sites, works of monumental sculpture or painting, and cultural landscape features) present in the area under its management and in adjacent areas directly affecting or affected by the GER®. The GER® shall avoid any negative impacts and, to the extent possible, help and enable local community to preserve these cultural heritage sites at the discretion of the community and in an informed manner.

*Note: This principle is about physical, tangible cultural heritage sites and items. Section 4.2 focuses on cultural expressions and activities.*

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#### Criteria

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- 4.1.1. The GER® shall have and demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage sites present within and adjacent to the area under its management.
  - 4.1.2. The GER® shall identify potential negative impacts on cultural heritage sites, at minimum of its own operations, and secondarily of other developments within or adjacent to the area under its management.
  - 4.1.3. The GER® shall implement policies and plans to avoid and mitigate any negative impacts of its operations on local cultural heritage sites, and where possible, enhance cultural heritage sites.
  - 4.1.4. The GER® shall seek to develop and implement a system to monitor the status of identified cultural heritage sites including positive changes and evolutions.
  - 4.1.5. The GER® shall respect the traditional rights of local community groups and inhabitants to access cultural heritage sites present in the areas under its management and influence.
  - 4.1.6. The GER® shall ensure that it does not facilitate or contribute to the trade or sale of historical and archaeological artefacts taking place in violation of any legal requirements or commonly accepted best practices.
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## 4.2. Supporting cultural practices and expressions

**Principle 4.2.** The GER® shall harness the local culture’s unique combination of crafts, arts, language and tradition by suitably incorporating the various tangible and intangible cultural attributes in its product offerings to the mutual benefit of both the local community and the destination. To this end, the GER® shall actively engage in supporting, promoting and, where applicable, reviving traditional and contemporary cultural practices and expressions in collaboration with local community at their free will and discretion.

### Criteria

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- 4.2.1. The GER® shall have or acquire knowledge about the various forms of local, regional and national traditional and contemporary cultural practices and expressions.
  - 4.2.2. The GER® shall respect and internalise, where appropriate, local cultural traditions, building and other practices and expressions into its architecture, infrastructure, landscaping, interior design and cuisine as best as possible.
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- 4.2.3. Where applicable, the GER® shall seek to actively raise awareness of, engage in, enhance, restore, revive and promote traditional and contemporary cultural practices and expressions in collaboration with local community and other stakeholders while avoiding any negative impacts.
  - 4.2.4. The GER® shall not impose any cultural changes on community groups against their interest or wishes, while supporting the community in embracing desired changes, where applicable.
  - 4.2.5. The GER® shall monitor the impacts of its activities and efforts to optimally realise the potential of local culture for the benefits of the local people, visitors and society at large.
  - 4.2.6. Where the GER® directly benefits financially from the cultural expressions of local community, it shall ensure that a fair share of the income is given back to the community, commensurate with their input and value.
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### 4.3. Promoting cultural exchange with visitors

**Principle 4.3.** The GER® shall engage the local community and other custodians of the cultural heritage in mutually enriching cultural exchange with the destinations’ visitors.

#### Criteria

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- 4.3.1. The GER® shall promote local culture to its visitors in an appropriate and respectful way whilst respecting the community’s intellectual property rights.
  - 4.3.2. The GER® shall enable local people to profile and promote their culture on-site through events and activities of the destinations.
  - 4.3.3. Where relevant, the GER® shall provide visitors and others involved in cultural exchange activities with sufficient information to facilitate respectful and authentic exchange and avoid any conflicts or discomfort.
  - 4.3.4. The GER® shall evaluate and consider, in consultation with the local community, their satisfaction about the cultural exchange activities and make adjustments as appropriate.
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## 5. Commerce

The aim of the commerce section is to ensure that the destination is commercially viable to financially sustain both the business and its support to the implementation of the other Cs. This is based on the premise that a nature based enterprise like tourism can't be commercially viable without adequately addressing Conservation, Community and Culture and without employing good business management practices. Conversely, landscapes and seascapes of conservation value are more likely to be conserved in perpetuity if their conservation makes economic sense by supporting profitable, sustainable and responsible enterprise. Commerce is thus a key pillar of sustainability, and destinations must be financially viable for the environmental and social values under their management or influence to be protected in the long run; thereby demonstrating the socioeconomic value of nature.

### 5.1. Financial viability

**Principle 5.1.** The GER® commercial operation shall be or shall strive to be financially viable to generate sufficient income to meet its operating expenses, its financial obligations, provide for future growth and contribute positively to other Cs.

#### Criteria

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|--------|--|
| 5.1.1. | The GER® shall maintain clear and documented annual financial records. These records shall accurately and truthfully reflect the actual financial situation of the destination and shall have been independently verified.                           |
| 5.1.2. | The commercial components of the GER® shall be financially viable or there shall be a plan in place to become viable within a defined timeframe.   |
| 5.1.3. | The GER® shall have a budget available for the ongoing financial period, including clear revenue, expenditure and profit estimate. The GER® shall monitor expenses and take corrective actions when significant discrepancies are identified         |
| 5.1.4. | The commercial operation of the GER® shall contribute positively to the balanced improvement of the performance across the other three areas of the 4C. GER® shall maintain documentation about the extent of investments made into each of the 4Cs. |

### 5.2. Responsible business practices

**Principle 5.2.** The GER® shall be operated responsibly and following the commonly acknowledged best business practices. The section is about the destination using responsible practices to achieve financial viability (e.g being transparent in its marketing, being respectful of costumers) and securing the future of the landscape/seascape under its management or influence.

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### Criteria

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- 5.2.1. The GER® shall have a succession plan to ensure the long term perpetuity of the destination.
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- 5.2.2. The GER® promotion materials shall provide accurate information and include key information about the sustainability efforts relevant to all four areas of the 4C.
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- 5.2.3. The GER® shall develop and implement a system to gather feedback from visitors, monitoring the customer satisfaction and using this feedback to adapt management.
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- 5.2.4. The GER® shall have a written system for registering and responding to complaints from, partners, suppliers, local community, public authorities or any other stakeholder. The mechanism for responding to complaints shall be appropriate for the type of stakeholder and the nature of the complaint.
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- 5.2.5. If the GER® commercially produces and sells goods and products the GER® shall follow internationally recognised best practice to protect consumer interests.
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- 5.2.6. The GER® shall strive to provide access to its facilities and services also for visitors with special needs.
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- 5.2.7. The GER® shall have developed a systematic and comprehensive approach to reducing the negative impacts from both internal and external risks and events that may affect the destination.
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## Glossary

This section explains selected key terms used in the standard. The interpretations and explanations provided in this section are considered by The Long Run and assessors in the recognition process.

**Alien Invasive Species** are defined by IUCN as animals, plants or other organisms introduced by man into places out of their natural range of distribution, where they become established and disperse, generating a negative impact on the local ecosystem and species ( see [www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/iucnmed/iucn\\_med\\_programme/species/invasive\\_species/](http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/iucnmed/iucn_med_programme/species/invasive_species/) ). Lists of invasive species and guidelines on how to control the spread of these species can be found on:

- Global invasive species database <http://www.issg.org/database/welcome/content.asp>; [http://www.issg.org/pdf/guidelines\\_iucn.pdf](http://www.issg.org/pdf/guidelines_iucn.pdf);
- European Network on Alien invasive species <http://www.nobanis.org/>

**Community** is defined as a group of interacting people sharing an environment. Community in this standard refers to the broader community in which the destination is located, which shares same natural resources and possibly infrastructure, and which directly impacts or is impacted by the destination operations. It includes all stakeholders within it (people of different ethnic origin, religious beliefs, local authorities, NGOs, neighbours and staff etc).

**Internal Community.** Where the number of permanent and temporary staff of the destination hailing from the local community is significant, this will be referred to as the “internal” community to differentiate it from the broader community.

**Cultural heritage.** (International Charter for Cultural Tourism (1999)): Heritage includes the natural and cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as biodiversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. It is the essence of diverse national, regional, indigenous and local identities and is an integral part of modern life. It is irreplaceable and an important foundation for development, both now and into the future. Alternative: Cultural heritage consists of material (such as monuments) and spiritual (such as legends and stories) resources that provide a narrative for historical development.

**Destination** - A destination within the context of this GER® standard is a tourism related enterprise which owns, manages or influences land/seascapes of significant ecological importance and all entities that enable this enterprise to deliver the 4Cs and in time comply with the standard requirements under the 4Cs (such entities may include trust, conservancy, foundation, farm, livestock operation and so on).

**Ecosystem services/conservation values:** Ecosystem services are defined as benefits people obtain from ecosystems (this was defined in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report of 2005, [www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.html](http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.html)). There are four categories of ecosystem services; they include: a) **Provisioning services** (products such as food, water, raw materials and medicinal resources, minerals etc); b) **Regulating services** which are benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes (e.g air and water quality, pollination, air quality, carbon sequestration, pest and disease control, waste decomposition); c) **Supporting services** which are the basis for the services of the other three categories (e.g habitat, maintenance of genetic diversity) and finally d) **cultural services** which are the more intangible benefits such as spiritual benefits, recreational,

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aesthetics etc. Find more about ecosystem products and services as well as about their economic value in [www.teebweb.org](http://www.teebweb.org)

**E4C Plan.** A comprehensive plan that the candidate GER® have to prepare in order to become GER® recognised. Essentially it is a plan with outcomes, results, targets and activities that are needed in order to deliver a desired impact for healthier ecosphere along the four axes of the 4Cs.

**Financially profitable status.** For the purpose of this standard, the financial profitability is evaluated over a period of recent 2-4 years. Being financially profitable means that financial results have been generally positive over the previous years. Negative results on specific years do not necessarily indicate that overall the operation is not profitable. In addition to the latest accounts, the equity of the operation will be looked at, since this is better indicator of longer term financial performance. In case significant long term investments have been made that have not been depreciated over a multi-year period of time and are hence affecting the yearly financial results, there must be clear information and explanations in relation to these, including the expected financial return from these investments.

**Free Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC).** The UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDDRIP) (Sub-Commission resolution 1994/45) recognizes explicitly the principle of FPIC. FPIC is a principle that is becoming best practice, which stipulates that consent needs to be obtained from indigenous peoples in cases of relocation or to establish development projects on their land (see first people site – [www.firstpeoples.org](http://www.firstpeoples.org)). This principle ensures that intrinsic rights of the Indigenous people to their land, territories and resources are recognised; that their legitimate authority is respected and it establishes processes that allow and support meaningful choices by indigenous peoples about their development path (Tamang, 2004; [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/workshop\\_FPIC\\_tamang.doc](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/workshop_FPIC_tamang.doc)).

In very brief :

- 1) people need to be free to enter negotiations, not forced (Free),
- 2) people need to have time to review options and information (Prior),
- 3) they need to be given sufficient information to make a decision (Informed) and
- 4) they must have the option to say “yes” or “no” (Consent).

See the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf); and [www.firstpeoples.org/wp/fpic-101-an-introduction-to-free-prior-and-informed-consent](http://www.firstpeoples.org/wp/fpic-101-an-introduction-to-free-prior-and-informed-consent) for more detailed information.

**Gender equity.** For the purpose of this standard gender equity is interpreted as situation where there are equal opportunities provided, as far as this is up to the operation, for men and women to apply for, maintain and get further promoted as employees. This does not necessarily mean that the number of male and female staff shall be equal, since there may be factors influencing this that are outside of the control of the operation. However the operation should strive towards comparable proportions. In community or regions where women generally do have more disadvantaged position, the operation is expected to take special and dedicated efforts to strengthen the share and role of women, rather than just adopt to the regional norms.

**Hazardous chemicals** are defined as any chemical that is a health hazard or a physical hazard. It includes generic chemicals but also paints, cleaning compounds, inks, dyes, and many other common substances. (Definition based on the information available on <http://www.research.northwestern.edu/ors/safety/hazard-communication/definition.html>). Further guidelines and information on hazardous chemicals can be found on

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<http://www.who.int/ipcs/en/> (the International Programme on Chemical Safety of the World Health Organisation)

**Living Wage** is the level of income that enables workers, for their labour during a standard workweek, to support half the basic needs of an average-sized family, based on local prices near the workplace. (Definition adopted from Social Accountability International (SAI) SA8000® Guidance – 2008 Standard June 2013, available at <http://www.sa-intl.org/>). Further information can also be found about what a fair living wage is on <http://www.fairtraderesource.org/>

**Stakeholders** – A group, organization, individual or community of members who is affected or can be affected by the activities (or inactivity) of the destination. In the context of this GER® standard, stakeholders should always be considered to include the local community also including indigenous groups, where they are present.

#### Acronyms

4C	Conservation, Community, Culture and Commerce
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GER®	Global Ecosphere Retreats
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
TLR	The Long Run