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PORTALE DI PROMOZIONE TURISTICA

SIENA
THE CASE STUDY 3/4

we na tour
Tourism

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INTRO

WENATOUR PROJECT

WeNaTour is an Innovation Alliance project (ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PI-ALL-INNO) funded with support from the European Commission - Erasmus+ program under Grant Agreement No 101111561. The project aims at training new professionals for sustainable tourism and exploring emerging markets while keeping the well-being of local communities and preserving the environment at the core of its strategies, towards a more responsible and sustainable future.

As part of its efforts, WeNaTour highlights four case studies of certified sustainable tourism destinations. These destinations, selected for their commitment to sustainable tourism, include Valsugana Lagorai in Italy, Colinele Transilvaniei in Romania, Siena in Italy, and Nassfeld Lesachtal Weissensee in Austria. Each case study is presented in a factsheet format, offering insights into its approach to sustainable tourism destination management and practices.

The case studies were developed by Etifor with the collaboration of Carinthia University of Applied Sciences - CUAS and the Transylvania University of Brasov – UNITBV.

For more information on WeNaTour, its training opportunities and outputs you can visit www.wenatour.eu and follow us on LinkedIn.

Partners

THE CASE STUDY

DESTINATION PROFILE

	Siena	**Name**
	Province of Siena, Tuscany Region, Italy	**Location**
	visitsienaofficial.it	**Website**
	53.062 inhabitants	**Population**
	118,15 km²	**Extention**

Case Study Area

DESCRIPTION

Siena is an art city and a rare example of a historic mediaeval city, spared from modern industrial development thanks to its remaining out of the major national development.

The Historic Centre is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the central Piazza del Campo, known for "Il Palio", is one of Europe's greatest mediaeval squares. The total number of arrivals in 2022 was 464.715, with an average stay of 2,17 days. The main arrivals in the destination are recorded from July to October. Given its well-preserved nature and historical importance, Siena draws a substantial number of tourists interested in art, history, and traditional Italian culture. Siena's appeal is not just limited to its historical and architectural assets; it also serves as a gateway to exploring the broader region of Tuscany, known for its landscapes, wines, and culinary offerings.

MANAGING ORGANISATION AND ITS FOCUS OF OPERATION

The municipality of Siena is responsible for managing visitors within the destination and for communicating and promoting it. The Culture and Tourism Directorate works as the Destination Management Organization (DMO), and has equipped itself with a group responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism called 'Team for the Destination Sustainability Certification', which involves representatives of the local tourism system from the private sector, the public sector, and civil society who have the decision-making capacity and skills to succeed in achieving sustainable tourism objectives.

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SUSTAINABILITY

HOW THE DESTINATION ENVISIONS AND PRACTICES SUSTAINABILITY

CERTIFICAZIONI PER IL TURISMO SOSTENIBILE E PARTICOLARITÀ

✓ Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for Destinations
First year of Certification: 2023

✓ First art city GSTC-certified destination in Italy and at a global level

HOW SUSTAINABILITY IS EMBEDDED IN THE DESTINATION'S VISION AND MISSION

Siena's **vision** as a tourist destination deeply incorporates the principles of sustainable development, leveraging its rich historical heritage and cultural assets while ensuring environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

Siena's **mission** involves consistent actionable strategies that include fostering responsible tourism, encouraging local and international collaborations for sustainability education and practice, and engaging residents and tourists in preserving the unique character of Siena for future generations. Through concerted efforts, Siena aims to be a model of historical preservation harmonised with modern sustainability objectives. Siena's role as a leader in sustainable tourism is central to this mission, recognised by its certification by the GSTC.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PRACTICE

Siena's sustainable tourism model considers integrating sustainable development goals into the broad context by involving educational initiatives and other sectors, for a tourism that supports the local economy and minimises environmental impact, helping to regenerate the local ecosystem and community.

Certification: Being the first Italian and world art city to be certified as a sustainable destination by the GSTC underscores its commitment to these principles, and it serves as a catalyst for a comprehensive approach to sustainable tourism. By partnering with eight neighboring municipalities, Siena seeks to extend its commitment to sustainable practices throughout the entire "Terre di Siena" Tourism Area. As the lead municipality and provincial capital, Siena is driving a territorial effort to ensure that sustainable tourism becomes a cornerstone of the area's future development.

Eco-friendly Accommodations: Siena offers a variety of eco-friendly accommodations that integrate sustainability into their operations (e.g. using sustainable materials in construction, energy-efficient systems, waste reduction programs, and locally sourced food for guests).

Eco-Tours: Several eco-tours in Siena encourage tourists to engage with the environment in a responsible way, promoting environmental awareness and regeneration. These tours often include guided hikes, educating visitors about the local flora and fauna and the importance of preserving these natural resources.

Natural Hot Springs: The region around Siena is known for its natural hot springs with thermal waters, set in mediaeval villages amidst lush nature. These natural spas not only offer relaxation and wellness benefits to tourists but also support the local economy and maintaining the natural integrity of their settings.

HOW SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES

GSTC certification and continuous improvement

The certification involves rigorous assessments and sets a framework for continuous improvement in managing environmental impacts, engaging the local community, and preserving cultural heritage, ensuring that tourism contributes positively to the area.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES Sustainable Cities and Communities: by making cities more sustainable through engaging the local community and ensuring that tourism contributes positively to the area.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION Responsible consumption and production: by promoting sustainable practices in tourism and setting a framework for continuous improvement.

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5

Educational and capacity building programs

Having hosted the Sustainable Tourism Course in Siena (the first GSTC official course in the Italian language) represented a significant effort in education and capacity building within the community. This initiative raised awareness about sustainable tourism practices among local stakeholders and equipped them with the knowledge and tools to implement these practices effectively. Such educational programs help nurture a culture of sustainability that permeates various levels of Siena's tourism system.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION — Quality education: by providing training opportunities in sustainable tourism that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH — Decent work and economic growth: by equipping local stakeholders with knowledge and tools to implement sustainable tourism practices.

Integration of sustainability in local events

Siena organises events that integrate and promote sustainability, such as "Urban Trekking Day 2023: Trekking in Colour." This event focuses on sustainability themes and encourages participants to engage in eco-friendly activities. By organising such events, Siena offers visitors unique and environmentally conscious ways to explore the city and reinforces the importance of sustainability in its urban fabric.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES — Sustainable cities and communities: by organising events that promote sustainability in this way helping in creating more sustainable urban environments.

13 CLIMATE ACTION — Climate action: by promoting eco-friendly initiatives aimed at combating climate change and its impacts.

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WHICH ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental preservation
One of the primary challenges is balancing tourism growth with the preservation of Siena's natural and historical resources. The city's status as a UNESCO World Heritage site and a hub of monumental historical significance requires stringent measures to protect its heritage against the wear and tear associated with increased tourist footfalls. Managing this while accommodating tourists sustainably calls for innovative solutions and strict regulatory frameworks.

Climate change and resource management
Climate change impacts local ecosystems, agriculture, and biodiversity. These changes can alter the landscape and the very attributes that make Siena an attractive destination. Moreover, resource management, particularly water and waste, needs continuous improvement and monitoring to ensure sustainability standards are met.

Social impact and community engagement
While tourism significantly contributes to the local economy, creating a sustainable economic model that benefits local communities without leading to over-dependence on tourism is a challenge. There needs to be a balance where economic benefits do not compromise the social and environmental integrity of the destination.

Economic sustainability
Ensuring that tourism development benefits all segments of the community is another challenge. This involves equitable job creation, safeguarding local cultures and traditions, and preventing the marginalisation of local residents due to tourism-driven economic changes.

Implementing and monitoring standards
Continuously improving and adapting these standards to changing conditions is challenging. It requires the commitment of all stakeholders, including government, businesses, tourists, and locals, to adhere to these sustainability principles effectively.

WHICH NEEDS AND STRATEGIES TO RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES

Integrated policy and planning
Destinations need comprehensive and integrated planning and policy frameworks that align with sustainability objectives for all stakeholders — from tourists to local businesses and residents. Effective policy must also adapt to changing environmental conditions and tourism trends to remain relevant and effective.

Stakeholder engagement and collaboration
Continuous engagement and collaboration leads to shared ownership of sustainable tourism initiatives, there is the need of ensuring that strategies are inclusive, benefit all parties, and preserves local cultures and traditions.

Education and awareness
Continuous education and awareness-raising activities are vital to promote the understanding of sustainability issues among all stakeholders. This goes beyond informing tourists about how to behave respectfully — it includes training for local businesses on implementing sustainable practices and educating local government officials on effective sustainable management and planning strategies.

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Sustainable infrastructure and technology

Investing in sustainable infrastructure and technology can help mitigate the adverse effects of tourism. This includes everything from renewable energy sources and efficient waste management systems to sustainable transportation options that reduce emissions and congestion within the destination.

Monitoring and evaluation systems

Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems tracking environmental, economic, and social indicators, to allow destinations to assess the effectiveness of sustainability strategies, understand the impacts of tourism, and make informed decisions based on empirical data.

Financial resources

Adequate funding is essential to implement and sustain the initiatives required for maintaining and enhancing sustainability, particularly for significant infrastructure projects or extensive community engagement programs.

Crisis management and resilience planning

Building resilience through diversified economic strategies that do not solely rely on tourism can help mitigate the impacts of such crises on the local economy and community.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

In the territory, the **University of Siena** plays a vital role in advancing the sustainability goals through partnerships and educational programs. In particular the destination promotes a programme focused on Sustainable Tourism Destination Management, workshops on Digital technology and Tourism Marketing and, in partnership with an international organization, a Study Abroad programme aimed at students and professionals.

Following the certification process, a collaboration with the Master course "Sustainability and Tourism Management" of the **University of Trento** (Trentino-Alto Adige Region) has been activated, which includes a series of activities and initiatives related to education and scientific research, aimed at identifying proposals related to sustainability management, such as study trips and company visits, discussions with local stakeholders and project proposals.

NEW TRENDS FOR THE DESTINATION

#DigitalAndMobileIntegration
#ArtificialIntelligence
#VirtualReality(VR)
#AugmentedReality(AR)
#CollaborativeEconomyAndSharingModels
#RegenerativeTourismPractices

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INNOVATION AND CERTIFICATION

THE ROLE OF CERTIFICATION IN INNOVATING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

WHY CERTIFICATION

Siena decided to apply for the GSTC certification to:
- Get international recognition and trust;
- Ensure that tourism development in Siena adheres to sustainable practices aligned with broader global and local sustainability goals;
- Enhance marketing and competitive advantage on tourists who are increasingly conscious of the environmental
and social impact of their travel choices;
- Push towards continuous improvement.

Finally, Siena recognises that the certification fosters collaboration among various stakeholders enhancing the collective capacity to implement sustainable tourism practices, and offers educational opportunities for local tourism operators and other stakeholders, further embedding a culture of sustainability within the community.

HOW CERTIFICATION IS SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT: KEY ASPECTS (KA)

KA1: Governance structure

Approach: the GSTC certification process plays a crucial role in shifting the tourism system toward more sustainable and responsible practices. It stimulates policy reform, enhances stakeholder collaboration, builds administrative capacities, and fosters a culture of transparency and accountability in managing tourism's development and its broader impacts.

They were able to understand that is more efficient and valuable to manage the entire territory, integrating products and creating a territorial tourism offer.

KA2: Management and funding

Restructuring: Adopting the GSTC criteria necessitates the establishment or enhancement of management systems that are structured around sustainability principles. This structural change often involves creating specific roles or departments within tourism management organisations focused on sustainability. These units are tasked with implementing, monitoring, and continuously improving sustainability practices across all aspects of tourism operations, ensuring compliance with the GSTC standards. Furthermore, having a performance monitoring and reporting system provide valuable insights for management, but also helped reporting progresses to stakeholders and funders.

Investments: eligibility to fundings and investments are improved. Further, with a clear emphasis on sustainability, governance bodies are more likely to prioritise and incentivize investments in infrastructure and services that support eco-friendly, culturally respectful, and economically beneficial tourism.

Credibility and trust: maintaining GSTC certification helped build credibility and trust among tourists and other stakeholders. The certification benchmarked Siena's commitment to sustainability, enhancing its reputation as a responsible destination and encouraging ongoing support and investment in tourism.

KA3: Stakeholder engagement

Local community: links with local businesses and activities are promoted, and the local economy is supported. Further, a particular attention is posed on minimising negative impacts of tourism for the local community and its cultural heritage.

Tourism operators: increased visibility and competitiveness at general level; operators benefit from training and capacity building activities linked to the certification.

Education: more professionals and students are trained on sustainability; obtaining the certification encourages academic institutions to undertake researches focused on sustainability practices and also encourages multidisciplinary collaborations.

Environment and natural resources management and conservation: guidelines for tourism operators on ways to conserve and manage responsibly the resources and promoting eco-friendly practices (e.g. restoration of degraded areas, recycling and water-saving initiatives).

SUCCESS FACTORS

The main factors that contributed to successfully obtaining and maintaining GSTC certification are:
- **Comprehensive commitment across all sectors** (including government, local businesses, and the community). This comprehensive commitment was crucial in ensuring that sustainable practices were implemented uniformly and maintained over time;
- Investing in continuous **education and training** significantly provided essential knowledge and skill-building opportunities that enable stakeholders to implement and uphold sustainable practices effectively;
- **Stakeholder engagement and community involvement** was crucial for addressing concerns, gathering input, and ensuring that the sustainability efforts were aligned with the community's needs and expectations;
- **Integration of GSTC criteria into policy and planning** ensured that sustainability was not just a temporary focus but a fundamental aspect of long-term strategic planning helping to create a sustainable framework that supports continuous compliance and improvement;
- Ability to **adapt and respond** to new sustainability challenges as they emerged, having flexible strategies that could evolve with changing conditions proved essential.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the certification process, several crucial lessons have been learned:
- **Continuous improvement and adaptation:** achieving certification is not the end goal but a step towards ongoing improvement in sustainability practices;
- **Collaboration is key:** achieving GSTC certification involved collaborations across various stakeholders, including local government, the private sector, NGOs, and the community. This collaborative approach has been crucial in integrating diverse perspectives and expertise, which is essential for successfully implementing sustainable tourism practices;
- **Balancing act between tourism and sustainability:** one of the primary challenges faced during the certification was balancing tourism's economic benefits with sustainability objectives. This has been a valuable lesson in managing trade-offs and ensuring that tourism development does not compromise ecological or cultural integrity.
- **Developing a robust monitoring and evaluation systems:** it helps identify areas needing improvement, ensured compliance with standards, and demonstrated the tangible benefits of sustainability initiatives;

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• **Enhanced commitment to sustainability:** engaging in the rigorous certification process has strengthened Siena's commitment, setting a precedent for other destinations and encouraging them to pursue similar certification efforts;

• **Feedback and improvement:** the certification process provided valuable feedback on areas requiring improvement. This feedback loop is essential for identifying shortcomings and focusing on areas significantly impacting sustainability performance.

FUTURE COMMITMENTS

Are aimed at not just maintaining but enhancing Siena's position as a leader in sustainable tourism, ensuring that the city continues to be a model of sustainability, and offering a high-quality, ethical, and enriching experience for all visitors and residents alike:

• **Ongoing education and training:** to ensure that all stakeholders, including tourism operators, local businesses, and community members, are well-equipped with the latest knowledge and tools to implement sustainable practices. This includes hosting more sessions of the GSTC Sustainable Tourism Course.

• **Monitoring and evaluation:** Siena will enhance its monitoring and evaluation systems to track the effectiveness of sustainability practices ensuring that the city meets GSTC criteria consistently while adapting to new sustainability challenges as they arise.

• **Strengthening community engagement:** increased efforts will be made to engage local communities in the planning and implementation of sustainable tourism practices.

• **Further integration of sustainability in policy and planning:** this will include developing new policies and adjusting existing ones to ensure that they all contribute to sustainable tourism goals, providing a cohesive framework for action.

• **Promoting sustainable technologies and practices among tourism businesses:** this might include the use of renewable energy, waste reduction initiatives, water conservation measures, and the promotion of local and ethical sourcing.

• **Enhancement of cultural heritage conservation:** this includes maintaining historical sites, supporting local artisans, and promoting cultural events that highlight the city's unique heritage and traditions.

• **Building Global Partnerships with other cities, global sustainability organisations, and international tourism bodies:** these partnerships will facilitate knowledge exchange, foster innovation in sustainable tourism, and help Siena stay at the forefront of global best practices.

• **Expansion of sustainability certification:** expand the scope of sustainability certifications beyond tourism to include other sectors such as transportation and accommodation, ensuring a comprehensive sustainability approach within all sectors related to tourism.

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WENATOUR EMERGING MARKETS

THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE DESTINATION ON THE 3 EMERGING MARKETS IN TOURISM THAT ARE THE FOCUS OF THE PROJECT WENATOUR

Accessibility

It is considered as a strategic asset for tourism in Siena, indeed they commited to ensure full accessibility despite abilities, age or other potential barriers. Main initiatives in place now are:

• Comprehensive Accessibility Plan for historic sites
Siena has developed and implemented a comprehensive accessibility plan aimed at making its historic sites and cultural landmarks accessible to everyone, including those with physical, sensory, and other disabilities. This includes the installation of ramps, tactile paving for the visually impaired, and the provision of audio guides in multiple languages for the hearing impaired. Efforts have also been made to ensure that all new renovations and developments in the city respect these guidelines to maintain continuity in accessibility standards.

• Accessible Siena Guide for disabled persons
This guide provides useful information about the accessibility of various facilities and aims to assist visitors in planning their visit and navigating the city with ease, ensuring that they can enjoy all that Siena has to offer without accessibility barriers.

Future accessible initiatives regards:
• Continuous improvement of the accessibility of facilities and main attractions while implementing a strong feedback mechanisms for assessment and improvement;
• Training and awareness programmes for local businesses and stakeholders in the tourism system;
• Increase the collaboration and partnerships with organisations specialised in accessible tourism;
• Increase the marketing and promotion efforts around accessibility in Siena to attract a broader demographic pool of tourists.

Going through the certification process "contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in sustainable tourism and the necessary commitments and actions required to advance it effectively. These insights are vital for Siena and can serve as guidelines for other destinations pursuing sustainability through certification".

Paolo Bonari,
EQ Manager Supra-Municipal Projects Service

WENATOUR EMERGING MARKETS

THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE DESTINATION ON THE 3 EMERGING MARKETS IN TOURISM THAT ARE THE FOCUS OF THE PROJECT WENATOUR

SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA

OPERATOR PROFILE

Museo Santa Maria della Scala		Nome
Siena, Italy		Location
www.santamariadellascala.com		Website

An ancient medieval xenodochium intended for welfare functions, operated as a city hospital until the 1980s. After extensive recovery and restoration work, it is now a museum complex with monumental rooms and exhibition spaces that carries out activities to enhance the cultural heritage, organise exhibitions and activities, and hold conferences.
It houses the National Archaeological Museum, the Children's Art Museum, the Piccolomini Spannocchi collection, the 15th-century Fonte Gaia by Jacopo della Quercia, restored here, and the Giuliano Briganti Photo Library and Library.

Sustainable practices

The Museum, consistent with the safeguard of all types of users, tries to limit paper materials and increase the use of technological supports in the museum.
The main challenges the Museum sees in the future include improving museum accessibility and increasing green and sustainable offerings (e.g., reducing plastic use). And for doing this they need an increased awareness, specific training, readiness of administrations for targeted interventions, and a system of continuous monitoring and assessment of the inputs coming in from users, process them, and turn them into added value for sustainability.

Accessibility

The services are the result of collaborations with local entities (e.g., local UICI section) and training, sometimes joint with educational activities carried out with schools; the success factor is mainly linked to the loyalty of the relationship with the territory and the availability of a permanent accessible museum offer. Main initiatives implemented are:
- tour routes for blind and visually impaired people;
- guidance in Italian LISS for deaf people and in sound for blind and visually impaired people;
- targeted activities for audiences with cognitive difficulties;
- presence of accessible seating along the museum route.

"Siena achieving the GSTC certification certainly resulted in greater awareness and increased willingness to work towards improving museum tourism from a sustainable perspective."

Debora Barbagli,
Cultural Instructor

Photo by santamariadellascala.com