

Sustainable Tourism through Hostelling



#sayhitotheworld



Hostelling International's Quality & Sustainability Management System: HI-Q&S

Building resilience in our global network of hostels



Sustainable Hostelling





HI-Q&S is a long-term Quality and Sustainability Management System that is suitable to the size and scope of hostelling and addresses social, environmental, economic, quality, human rights, health, safety, risk and crisis management issues. It has a unique framework that allows HI Hostels and HI Associations to drive continuous improvement and advance their quality and sustainability practices.

Implementing HI-Q&S increases the transparency and accountability of your association and hostels. Why is this so important? Because it helps deliver the HI Mission, assures operational efficiency, risk management and customer satisfaction while helping our customers make informed decisions and be part of a global community of responsible travellers.

HI-Q&S help us build resilience in our global network of hostels. The standards engage hostellers in a viable, equitable and bearable way of travelling that supports HI's values of authenticity, inclusivity, learning and understanding and sustainability.

HI-Q&S is recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). This means that the sustainable tourism standards have been reviewed by GSTC technical experts and the GSTC Accreditation Panel in order to be classified as equivalent to their criteria.

GSTC criteria below are marked with an asterisk *.

The system is customised according to small, standard and key hostels. The following Audit List is made up of 3 sections, which is the roadmap the hostels follow:

1. HI-Quality (HI-Q)
2. HI-Quality & Sustainability (HI-Q&S)
3. Actions for continuous improvement.

Depending on the criteria fulfilled, once hostels are certified they receive the HI-Q or HI-Q&S certificate and badges.

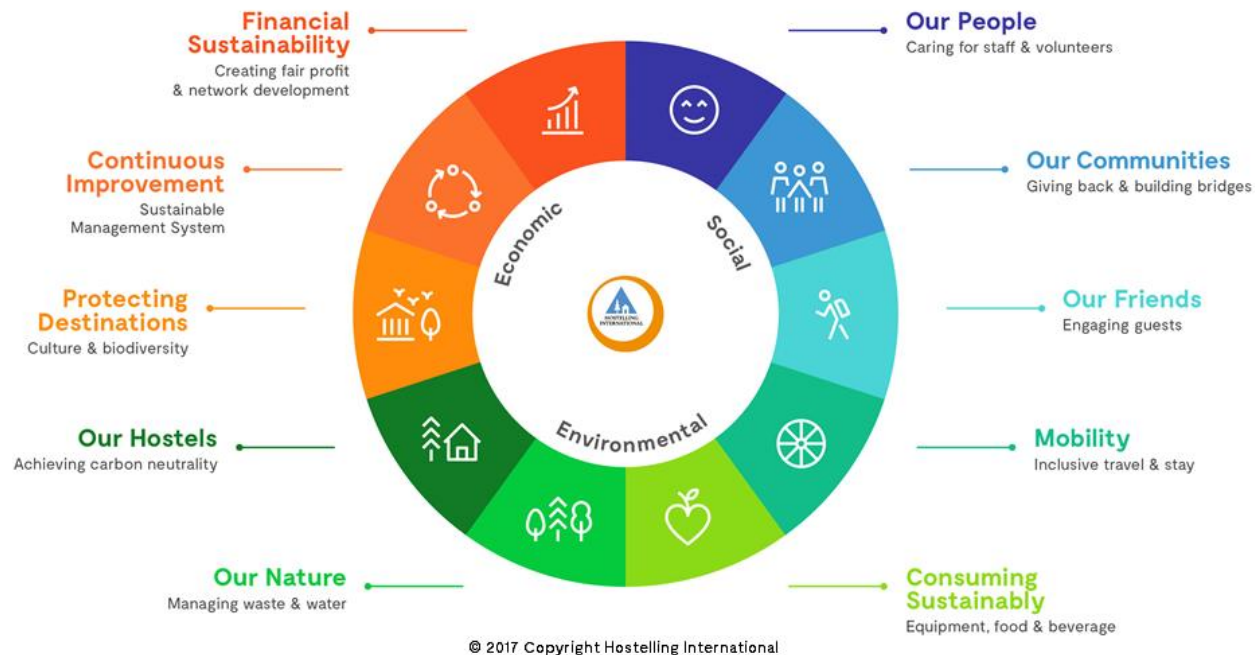
Disclaimer: This audit list serves as reference only, it is a short version of the self-assessment audit list of the aspiring HI-Q and HI-Q&S hostels. It does not include the additional comments, evidences, guidelines and supporting documents that hostels are provided with to fulfil the criteria.





The HI-Q&S system is built on the 10 Areas of Sustainable Hostelling and each question is linked to one of the areas:

Sustainable Tourism through Hostelling



Continuous Improvement Sustainable Management System



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
1	A Declaration of Quality and Sustainability is signed and on display. The declaration is based on the HI Sustainability Charter.	√	√	√
2	A list of all legal requirements is available, including environmental, health, safety and labour issues.	√	√	√
3	Evidence is available that HI Standards are met and annually reviewed.	√	√	√
4	Yearly internal quality and sustainability audits are carried out and necessary improvements are identified.	√	√	√
5	A yearly SMART Action Plan is in use.	√	√	√
6	All identified weaknesses are dealt with in the SMART Action Plan.	√	√	√
7	Recurring problems are identified and dealt with.	√	√	√
8	A clear document storage system in is use for controlled documents.	√	√	√
9	The hostel is bookable on www.hihostels.com with sufficient inventory.	√	√	√
10	A checklist is in use for Front Office.	√	√	√
11	Guidelines are available for Front Office, including how to handle reservations.		√	√
12	*Customer satisfaction, including aspects of sustainability, is measured and analysed for improvement.	√	√	√
13	*Complaints are answered quickly, recorded and discussed with staff.	√	√	√

14	Processes are in place to ensure the HI Membership policy is implemented.	√	√	√
15	Important hostel information given upon reservation and/or check-in is clear and accurate.	√	√	√
16	A reservation system is in use that records all required details.		√	√
17	Publication of prices and services is accurate and reliable.		√	√
18	Reception uses a tool to record important information for shift updates.		√	√
19	Reception coordinates and updates Housekeeping, Maintenance and Kitchen assignments.	√	√	√
20	If relevant, e guidelines for hostel activities, including safety measures are available.	√	√	√
21	Several marketing channels are in use, preferably in multiple languages.			√
22	The website is available in at least the local language and English.			√
23	There is a marketing plan with deadlines and defined roles.			√
24	Products and services align with HI Mission, HI Values, HI & National standards.			√
25	There is a yearly marketing budget.			√
26	A checklist is in use for Food & Beverage.	√	√	√
27	Guidelines are available for Food & Beverage, including HACCP or equivalent requirements.		√	√
28	All cooks wear protective gear.		√	√
29	The kitchen creates menu plans with special dietary items.		√	√
30	Oil for frying in fryers is regularly replaced.		√	√
31	Routine acceptance checks are carried out for quality and quantity of supplied food.		√	√

32	A logbook is in use to deal with kitchen equipment failures.		√	√
33	Refrigerator and freezer temperatures are routinely monitored and recorded, with acceptable tolerance levels.		√	√
34	Certified food inspection services are in use and previous reports and findings are followed up.		√	√
35	The performance of food preparation contractors is checked yearly.		√	√
36	Refrigerator items are labelled with contents, open date and are not past their expiry date/within 4 days of opening.		√	√
37	Food items are stored in appropriate conditions.		√	√
38	A cleaning plan is in use for the kitchen/bar.		√	√
39	Floors/tiles are intact and cooking and storage areas are sufficiently maintained.		√	√
40	There is a way for guests to label their food items and clear away non-labelled food.		√	√
41	A checklist is in use for Housekeeping.	√	√	√
42	Guidelines are available for Housekeeping.		√	√
43	The Hostel's cleaning processes deliver a high standard of cleanliness.	√	√	√
44	The Hostel Manager/person responsible frequently checks the level of cleaning.		√	√
45	A checklist is in use for preventive Maintenance & Safety.	√	√	√
46	Shortcomings or maintenance problems are reported and solved in a set timeframe.	√	√	√
47	Guidelines are available for Maintenance & Safety.		√	√
48	The Hostels maintenance processes are delivering a high standard of maintenance.	√	√	√
49	There is an updated list of emergency contacts for maintenance suppliers.		√	√

50	*The planning, siting, design, construction and renovation for new hostels is based on locally appropriate and sustainable practices and materials and takes into account the capacity and integrity of the natural and cultural surroundings, as well as the HI Sustainability Charter.			√
51	There are specifications/design templates for new buildings/equipment.			√
52	There is a budget for maintaining the building, major equipment and inventory.			√
53	An IT logbook is in use for failures, events and repairs.			√
54	Guidelines are available for how to purchase, install, handle and train on IT resources.			√
55	Risk prevention and fast incident solving are ensured.			√

Financial Sustainability.

Creating fair profit & network development



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
56	Written guidelines are available for financial issues.			√
57	There is a yearly budget and a monthly financial reporting system.			√

Our People.

Caring for staff & volunteers



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
58	All employee's responsibilities are defined in a job description.	√	√	√
59	Induction is given to all new staff.	√	√	√
60	*Staff have been trained to work with your Quality and Sustainability management system.	√	√	√
61	Staff evaluations/appraisals are documented.		√	√
62	There are yearly training plans for all staff including customer care / First aid / fire prevention topics.		√	√
63	Regular meetings are held with staff to advance on the SMART Action Plan and actions are recorded.	√	√	√

Consuming Sustainably.

Equipment, food & beverage



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
64	There is a list of selected suppliers available.			√
65	A logbook is in use for supplier failures.			√
66	There is evaluation and follow up on poorly performing suppliers.			√



Small Hostels that continue and achieve the Sustainability criteria receive the HI-Quality & Sustainability (HI-Q&S) certification.

Standard and Key Hostels need to fulfil additional criteria from the Free Basket- Actions for Continuous Improvement

Continuous Improvement.
Sustainable Management System



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
1	*Sustainable actions and performance are communicated to stakeholders and customers at least yearly.	√	√	√
2	If a Sustainability Report is made by the Association/HI, the hostel has contributed data.	√	√	√
3	*All promotional materials and marketing communications are accurate, transparent and do not promise more than is being delivered.	√	√	√

Our People.

Caring for staff & volunteers



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
4	A Sustainability Coordinator has been appointed to guide the implementation and continuous improvement of the HI-Q&S system.	√	√	√
5	*Local and equal employment and advancement opportunities are offered.	√	√	√
6	*Employees are paid at least a living wage.	√	√	√
7	*The sustainability policy is presented during recruitment and training.	√	√	√
8	*Staff are involved in your vision, strategy, targets, results and circle of continuous improvement in all areas of sustainable tourism.	√	√	√

Mobility.

Inclusive travel & stay



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
9	*Assistance is offered for guests with special needs or limitations. Clear and accurate information is provided on the level of accessibility.	√	√	√
10	Guests are informed about how to reach the hostel by public transport.	√	√	√

11	*Guests are informed about public transport, bike rental, walking activities, natural surroundings and local and cultural heritage.	√	√	√
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Our Hostels.

Achieving carbon neutrality



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
12	*Energy consumption is measured on a monthly or yearly basis and actions are taken to minimise it.	√	√	√
13	Compressors in refrigerators and freezers are frequently cleaned.	√	√	√
14	At least 20% of the lights are energy saving.	√	√	√

Our Nature.

Managing waste and water



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
15	*The minimum use of harmful substances with maximum care is ensured, substituting them for harmless ones where possible.	√	√	√
16	A dispensing system is in use for cleaning chemicals.	√	√	√

17	Towels and bed linen are only changed on request.	√	√	√
18	Disposable items are not offered.	√	√	√
19	Environmentally harmful liquids are carefully handled and disposed of.	√	√	√
20	*It is ensured that residual waste disposal has no adverse effects on the local population and the environment.	√	√	√
21	*Guests are asked to contribute to energy saving and separating waste.	√	√	√
22	Recyclables are separated into a minimum of 3 categories.	√	√	√
23	*Staff are trained to save energy and separate waste.	√	√	√
24	Batteries are recycled.	√	√	√
25	At least 90% of the WCs use a maximum of 10 litres per flush.	√	√	√
26	At least 50% of the taps are water saving.	√	√	√
27	At least 50% of the showers are water saving.	√	√	√

Protecting Destinations.

Culture & biodiversity



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
28	*Wildlife is not acquired, bred or held captive.	√	√	√

29	*Historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold, traded or displayed.	√	√	√
30	*Wildlife species are not harvested, consumed, displayed, sold or traded.	√	√	√
31	Housing, care and handling of all wild and domestic animals meets the highest standard of animal welfare.	√	√	√
32	*Protected living specimens are only kept by those authorised and equipped to care for them humanely.	√	√	√
33	*Free roaming wildlife interaction activities do not negatively affect their behaviour in the wild.	√	√	√
34	*Activities do not prevent local communities from accessing local historical/archaeological/cultural/spiritual sites.	√	√	√

Our Communities.

Giving back & building bridges



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
35	*The acquisition of land, water and property rights is compliant with local communal and indigenous rights, including their free, prior and informed consent.	√	√	√
36	*There is a policy against any form of exploitation and harassment.	√	√	√
37	*Activities do not negatively affect local access to livelihoods or the provision of basic services.	√	√	√

Consuming Sustainably.

Equipment, food & beverage



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
38	Steps are taken to reduce the hostel's 'foodprint'.	√	√	√
39	Steps are taken to minimise single-use plastics in the hostel or association.	√	√	√

HI-Q&S Free Basket Criteria –
Actions for continuous improvement to choose from.
Standard Hostels: min 30;
Key Hostels: min 50;
Optional for Small Hostels.

Financial Sustainability.

Creating fair profit & network development



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
1	Sustainability actions are considered when organising staff events.	√	√	√
2	There is a yearly budget for sustainability initiatives.	√	√	√
3	There is an annual or multi-year plan and budget for how to maintain the hostel building, major equipment and inventory.	√	√	√

Our People.

Caring for staff & volunteers



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
4	*All staff receive at least yearly training/updates regarding environmental, social, economic, cultural, health and safety issues.	√	√	√
5	Employees are offered extra social benefits including pension, flexible working time and place, maternity leave, social counselling, social committee etc.	√	√	√
6	Accidents and incidents are recorded in order to prevent future occurrences.	√	√	√
7	*Staff are offered the chance to take part in experiences such as HI Connect or similar.	√	√	√
8	*Employee satisfaction is monitored.	√	√	√

Our Friends.

Engaging guests



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
9	*Activities for solo travellers include sustainability educational elements.	√	√	√
10	*Activities for groups include sustainability educational elements.	√	√	√
11	*A swapping area is provided for guests.	√	√	√

Our Communities.

Giving back & building bridges



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
12	*At least two local small entrepreneurs are offered the means to develop and sell products and services based on the area's nature, history and culture.	√	√	√
13	At least three local suppliers are used.	√	√	√
14	At least three suppliers are certified by a third party 'environmental / sustainability' label.	√	√	√
15	*The hostel is involved with sustainable tourism planning and management in the destination.	√	√	√
16	Long-term relationships with at least two community groups are created and supported.	√	√	√

17	The hostel works with other organisations of similar interest in sustainability.	√	√	√
18	*The hostel advises/educates local companies or community groups about sustainability.	√	√	√
19	*The hostel supports initiatives for social infrastructure and social community development.	√	√	√
20	If activities take place in indigenous local communities, the hostel collaborates with them and receives consent.	√	√	√

Mobility.

Inclusive travel & stay



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
21	*There is at least one guest room adapted for people with disabilities.	√	√	√
22	*The hostel has an Accessibility certification.	√	√	√
23	*Guests are offered the opportunity to compensate their CO2 emissions.	√	√	√
24	*Sustainable modes of transport are offered to rent, with clear information for staff and guests.	√	√	√
25	*Car sharing information is available and encouraged.	√	√	√
26	The hostel consciously does not own a car.	√	√	√
27	*The hostel uses hybrid/electric cars.	√	√	√
28	There is a transportation policy in place for the staff/organisation.	√	√	√
29	*Three or more staff have push bikes or public transport year-round tickets.	√	√	√

Our Hostels.

Achieving carbon neutrality



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
30	*The planning, siting, design, construction and renovation for new hostels is based on locally appropriate and sustainable practices and materials and takes into account the capacity and integrity of the natural and cultural surroundings, as well as the HI Sustainability Charter.	√	√	√
31	CO2 emissions are measured from all sources and actions are taken to minimise or offset them.	√	√	√
32	An energy analysis/audit has been carried out in the last 5 years.	√	√	√
33	The proportion of the hostel's lights that are energy saving: 50-80%; 80-100%	√	√	√
34	The proportion of the hostel's electricity that comes from renewable sources: 20-50%; 50-80%; >80%	√	√	√
35	The proportion of electrical equipment that is of high energy saving level (at least A+): 20-50%; 50-80%; >80%	√	√	√
36	Heating/cooling is individually controllable in the rooms.	√	√	√
37	The proportion of air conditioning appliances that have the highest energy saving level (label A++) and are free from CFS?: 20-50%; >50%	√	√	√
38	No air conditioning appliances are available.	√	√	√
39	The proportion of the lights that have timers/sensors that automatically switch them off in hallways, washrooms, toilets and outdoor areas: 20-50%; 50-80%; >80%	√	√	√
40	The proportion of the heating that comes from renewable sources: 20-50%; 50-80%; >80%	√	√	√

41	All windows are insulated according to the newest national or building regulations.	√	√	√
42	All pipes for heating, hot water and air conditioning are insulated.	√	√	√
43	More than 50% of the ventilation system is connected to heat recovery.	√	√	√
44	More than 90% of the ventilation system is timer-controlled.	√	√	√
45	More than 90% of office machines are operated with the standby function.	√	√	√
46	The building has lifts that produce energy.	√	√	√
47	None of the guest rooms have televisions.	√	√	√
48	At least 90% of the printed materials used are 1) made from recycled materials or non-bleached 2) Eco labelled.	√	√	√
49	At least 90% of tissue products are 1) made from recycled materials 2) Eco labelled.	√	√	√

Our Nature.

Managing waste and water



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
50	*Water risk is assessed, and water consumption is measured, indicating sources and adopting measures to minimise consumption.	√	√	√
51	*Water sources are sustainable, making sure they do not negatively affect environmental flow.	√	√	√

52	The proportion of the showers that are water-saving: 50-80%; >80%	√	√	√
53	The proportion of the taps that are water-saving: 50-80%; >80%	√	√	√
54	At least 90% of toilets use a maximum of 6 litres per flush.	√	√	√
55	Rain and/or air conditioning water is collected and reused for cleaning or watering the garden.	√	√	√
56	The garden has been designed in accordance with the water needs of the area.	√	√	√
57	Drip irrigation is in use to water the garden.	√	√	√
58	At least 90% of the soap and shampoo offered is eco labelled.	√	√	√
59	*Chemical consumption is measured and aimed to be reduced.	√	√	√
60	The proportion of the general cleaning products that are eco labelled: 50-80%; >80%	√	√	√
61	More than 80% of laundry products are eco labelled.	√	√	√
62	More than 90% of the dishwashing detergent is eco labelled.	√	√	√
63	All heat pumps, refrigerators, freezers and air conditioning equipment are HCFC and CFC-free.	√	√	√
64	Bed linen and towels are washed in the hostel.	√	√	√
65	The hostel collaborates with an external eco-labelled laundry company.	√	√	√
66	*Mechanisms are in place to reduce, reuse or recycle waste.	√	√	√
67	*Non-recyclable waste is measured.	√	√	√
68	More than 3 different materials are recycled.	√	√	√

69	The hostel cooperates with municipal authorities/waste disposal companies to reduce and recycle waste.	√	√	√
70	At least 3 suppliers provide goods in returnable packaging.	√	√	√
71	At least 2 goods are purchased in bulk and their packaging is reused.	√	√	√
72	*Food waste is composted, either at the hostel or by a local facility.	√	√	√
73	*Food waste is used for biogas production.	√	√	√
74	Only rechargeable batteries are used.	√	√	√
75	Toners are recycled or refilled and reused.	√	√	√

Consuming Sustainably. Equipment, food & beverage



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
76	*The fair-trade principles of the WFTO are followed for at least two local services and/or goods.	√	√	√
77	The hostel restaurant offers at least 1 vegetarian and 1 vegan meal.	√	√	√
78	The restaurant avoids serving food containing GMOs, or clearly states their use.	√	√	√
79	The restaurant communicates the origin of the meat used.	√	√	√

80	The restaurant avoids using food ingredients with a high environmental impact, such as palm oil.	√	√	√
81	The restaurant does not serve food from unsustainable sources.	√	√	√
82	The number of organic food products / beverages offered for breakfast / in the restaurant: 5-9; >9	√	√	√
83	The number of local food products / beverages offered: 2-4; 5-7; >8	√	√	√
84	Vegetables or spices are grown at the hostel and offered to guests or used in the kitchen.	√	√	√
85	There is a food sharing system in the guest kitchen.	√	√	√
86	There is no use of individually wrapped single portions of meal components.	√	√	√
87	There is no use of single-use cutlery, plates and cups.	√	√	√
88	The hostel does not sell bottled water and provides water fountains etc.	√	√	√
89	*There is a purchasing policy that prioritises sustainable, local, fair-trade or organic suppliers and products.	√	√	√

Protecting Destinations. Culture & biodiversity



NO	CRITERIA	Small	Standard	Key
90	*There is no promotion of activities involving captive wildlife.	√	√	√
91	*Measures are taken to avoid invasive species and use native ones for landscaping and restoration.	√	√	√

92	*Disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimised and rehabilitated.	√	√	√
93	*The hostel supports and contributes to biodiversity conservation in the area.	√	√	√
94	*The hostel supports work on improving paths and area signposting for ecologically sensitive areas.	√	√	√
95	*Guests and staff are educated on appropriate behaviour while visiting indigenous communities, environmentally and culturally sensitive sites.	√	√	√
96	*The hostel educates guests and staff on the natural sites, local culture and cultural heritage.	√	√	√
97	Elements of local art/architecture/ cultural heritage are used in operations/design/decoration/food.	√	√	√
98	All activities follow guidelines for natural, culturally and historically sensitive site visits.	√	√	√