



Zürich,  
Switzerland.



# **Sustainable Zürich: Events with a lasting impact**



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# Introduction

Planning for sustainable events is no longer just a box ticking exercise. Planners, participants and clients are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their understanding of what constitutes a sustainable event, but they need support from their partners when it comes to delivery.

Research by Zürich Tourism and C&T found that the issue of sustainability influenced the decision-making process when

choosing a destination or venue for 95.6% of respondents – and 35.3% said it was “crucial” to the decision.

Overall, 12% of respondents said sustainability was top of the agenda of planners' customers or clients, or a priority.

Thomas Wuthrich, director Zürich Tourism, says that today's organisations are aware of the necessity of planning for more sustainable events, especially where travel

results in high emissions, which can run contrary to corporate sustainability goals.

“Companies are setting sustainability goals more and more often, also in the organisation of events,” he adds. “Nevertheless, the pandemic has clearly shown that personal exchange at business events is essential, and in order to combine this with the important topic of sustainability, companies are focusing on conscious travel.”



This can be defined as being mindful of the impact and opportunities within travel as hosts and visitors and taking action to advance the best possible outcomes for all.

“Sustainability must be an integral part of the planning process, because it is no longer enough to compensate for emissions afterwards,” he says. “Besides, emissions are only one component of sustainability. Nowadays, an event should cover all components economically, socially and ecologically in order to have a sustainable effect on the participants, the society and the planet. Indeed, Zero is no longer enough, legacy or even regeneration is the new goal.”

Zürich Tourism and C&IT research found that when it comes to specifics for what makes a sustainable event, planners’ checklists are varied and far-reaching. They named the most important factors relating to the sustainability of an event as:



**1. Waste reduction and recycling**



**2. Distance travel/ accessibility**



**3. Serving local, seasonal or Fair Trade foods**



**4. Diversity, equality, inclusion (DEI)**



**5. Leaving a positive long-term effect**



**6. Green transport**



**7. Partner carbon offsetting**



**8. An enhancing exchange with the destination**



**9. Sustainable excursions**



Given the growing number of priorities when organising events, it is hardly surprising that half of organisers (51.5%) said the complexity of navigating sustainability, and a lack of education on specific issues, was a barrier to implementing sustainable practices in events.

A further 66.2% cited a lack of information and transparency from destinations and partners that they work with as a hurdle.

Zürich has a history of working with event planners to deliver what they need, and the convention bureau has helped create sustainable events since 2010, says Wuthrich.

“The Zürich Convention Bureau serves as a link between representatives of local

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business, politics and science and the international event organiser,” he says. “If the team knows the reason and the goal of the meeting, they can assist in achieving the company’s sustainable goals in cooperation with local partners. They can recommend sustainable tourism providers and involve local stakeholders to enable a long-lasting legacy of the event.”

*Sign up to the Zürich Tourism Newsletter for a free consultation, practical tips and event invitations.*



# Sustainable Zürich – what's on offer

Famous as a banking city, Zürich is also an important European centre for life sciences, ICT and clean tech, making it an economic and scientific hub that is perfect for conventions. In addition, its combination of an urban lifestyle in a beautiful nature setting leaves meeting guests with lasting memories.

Zürich's credentials are as a city that takes sustainability seriously. It places 17th in the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS), a benchmark that ranks global destinations based on their sustainability performance in the tourism and business events industry.

GDS names Zürich as one of the most sustainable convention destinations in the world thanks to its climate-neutral excursion activities, hotels and venues with sustainability certification, short distances to travel in the city, and a highly efficient

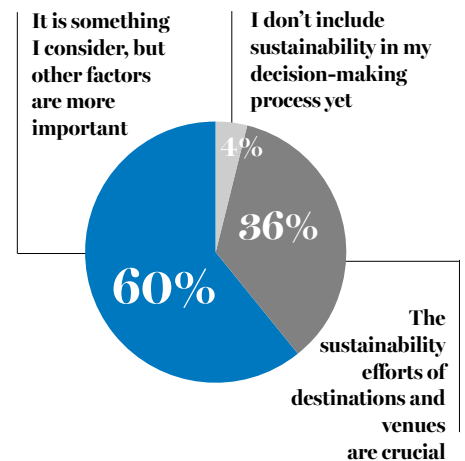
public transportation network.

Zürich also ranks second in the worldwide Smart City Index which evaluates what city dwellers think of their hometowns on a range of issues from housing and governance to recycling.

As a business events destination, Zürich not only ticks many of the requirements for the sustainably minded planner, it exceeds them.

**“The Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS) names Zürich as one of the most sustainable convention destinations in the world”**

How much does the issue of sustainability influence your decision-making process when choosing a destination or venue?



# Low-impact transport

Switzerland has one of the most extensive railway networks in the world, making travelling to Zürich by rail easy, convenient and green. You can even travel by night train from London to Zürich, arriving refreshed in the city centre in just seven-and-a-half hours.

The environmentally friendly train journey has approximately seven times fewer CO2 emissions than a flight.

If flying is required, Zürich Airport has reduced its CO2 emissions in half over the last 25 years and aims to eliminate them by 2050. Its central location in Europe makes flight routes shorter for many convention attendees.

Zürich has direct flights from over 60 countries and swift links to the city. From baggage reclaim in Zürich Airport to the city centre takes just 15 minutes by train.

Once in the city, Zürich's compact size makes movement around easy by public transport, bicycle or by foot.

The efficient, clean and safe transportation network features trams, buses, trains and cruise boats to take passengers to every corner of the city and the countryside.

Events can benefit from special tickets for public transport, as well as organise group rides on vintage trams, or even rent the world's first electrically powered tour bus.



**“Zürich has an efficient, clean and safe transportation network that features trams, buses, trains and cruise boats”**



**Zürich,  
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# Sustainable venues



When it comes to the venues, Zürich offers an impressive array of options from the historical to the most cutting-edge modern buildings, and an increasing number have sustainability designed in – 73% of all hotel rooms in Zürich are certified for sustainability.

The convention bureau's experienced team can guide planners through what's on offer, helping to match an event's requirements perfectly to a venue. An online venue finder also helps narrow down the search for sustainable.

**Here are just three possibilities:**

- 1. Zürich Convention Center** mixes traditional style with state-of-the-art facilities in a stunning central location on Lake Zürich. Suitable for gatherings of up to 4,500, its largest room caters for 2,000.

Switzerland's newest congress centre opened last year as a climate-friendly venue featuring innovative approaches to delivering sustainable events.

Catering uses regional and seasonal products with a selection of vegetarian and vegan dishes. Thermoregulation of the building exploits the water from Lake Zürich for 70% of its needs.

The Center is also committed to a forest conservation project in Peru, which compensates for unavoidable CO2 emissions, at no extra costs for organisers.



- 2. Sorell Hotels Zürichberg** (top) is a restored art nouveau building overlooking the city, offering stunning views of Zürich, the lake and the Alps. It has 66 luxurious hotel rooms and six meeting rooms.
- 3. The5** (above) is a 360-degree dining experience which is a showcase example of a large scale event and pop-up restaurant, which managed to reduce its climate footprint to a minimum. Its vegan dishes are a pioneering measure in high level cuisine. Situated in a stunning modern dome, the unique restaurant features the dishes of five top Michelin chefs whose images guide diners through the meal via video projection.

All Sorell Hotels, which are managed by Zürcher Frauenverein (Zürich Women's Association), are Swisustainable Level II certified meaning they are committed to the well-being of society and a sustainable approach to the environment. Specifics include striving to reduce single plastics and offering vegan and vegetarian dietary options, as well as using green electricity and sending food waste for conversion to biogas. Furthermore, they train apprentices in gastronomy and support health promotion and education projects.

Regional suppliers provide fresh, top-quality ingredients, free of any additives, while all energy is provided by wind power.

The custom-made furniture was designed and produced locally at a socially and ecologically sustainable facility.

# Supporting programmes

Experiencing a destination means getting beyond the venue to sample some of what life is really like in the city, and Zürich offers a wealth of opportunities that can be tailored to the needs and tastes of any group. Whatever the requirements, there are supporting programmes that will leave a lasting impression on guests – and also help to support local communities at the same time. **Three great sustainable options are:**

1. **The Umami Experience** is an insight into how we might get our food in future. This vertical, urban farm uses the latest agricultural techniques to grow herbs and vegetables organically in the heart of Zürich.

A tour explains how the ecosystem helps produce the most natural and tastiest food, and visitors can try it for themselves as part of a guided tour.

2. **Taste the Waste** teaches amateur chefs how to transform leftovers and waste food into tasty dishes. It's an amazing team building event that provides participants with a fun experience as well as taking away valuable skills to live a more sustainable life.

3. **Wild Bee excursions** shows the importance of some of our smallest creatures and the difference they make, even in the middle of the city.

Accompanied by Zürich's own 'wild bee whisperer', participants go on a fascinating excursion through the city to discover the impressive diversity of wild bees and their habitats, learning exciting facts about their role in promoting biodiversity and why the city provides the perfect ecosystem for the insects.

**“Zürich offers supporting programmes that will leave a lasting impression on guests and also help to support local communities”**





# Innovative partners

It takes a team to deliver the best events possible, and when sustainability is required there is a whole new set of skills required and an understanding of how sustainability goes right through the events supply chain.

The Zürich/C&IT research found that respondents are challenged by label transparency and finding the right offers for their events.

The team at the Zürich Convention Bureau can help you find the right service provider for your sustainable event, providing a one-stop-shop of trustworthy suppliers and also helping measure the impact an event had.

They also know service providers intimately and can help planners go 'beyond the certification' to really understand and explain the commitment of individual service providers.

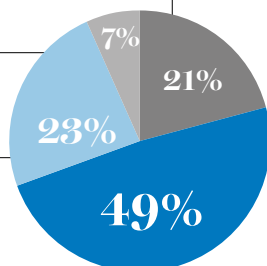
For organisations looking for reassurance that they are working with partners who are as committed to sustainability as they are, Switzerland's own sustainability programme, Swisustainable, signposts the best of the best on offer.

The three-level programme indicates where an events organisation is on its own sustainability journey, from those who are committed to sustainable business

How important is it that your supply chain partners have a sustainability certification?

Somewhat important, if the costs are the same I prefer a certified supplier

Not very important - it's not something I usually consider



The sustainability efforts of destinations and venues are crucial

Very important - I exclusively work with certified partners



management and to continuously developing their business towards sustainability, right through to the leading-edge proponents with

the highest audited standards.

Providers cover the full range of services required to make events happen, including venues, mobility, gastronomy, and activities.

Event management company Betreat is a member of the Swisustainable community and says it offers proof of engagement by professionals in the tourism, hotel and restaurant industry, for organisers looking to develop sustainable events in Zürich and in Switzerland.

Betreat can match the level of engagement provided by Swisustainable partners with the requirements of clients to help them to create positive impacts events.

Deep and transparent discussions with suppliers and other partners, help to understand their philosophies, values, as well as their processes, innovations and engagements in sustainability. This helps build transparency and means that sustainable relations are more than simply a badging exercise.

## CASE STUDY:

# Going the extra mile

An opportunity to holistically experience Zürich's sustainability credentials, the first Green Mile Forum in June 2022, brought together 55 professional meeting planners from Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

With the great dedication of Zürich Tourism's convention office, the event has proven that ecological and social responsibility is feasible without losing the essence of what makes a gathering engaging.

A half of participants took the green option of arriving by train, saving 32% of carbon emissions. Those who flew arrived at one of the greenest airports in the world, with a sustainability story that includes electric vehicles, rainwater flushing toilets, solar cells,

and geothermal heating.

At the event, in the newly opened congress centre Kongresshaus Zürich, the participants were introduced to a congress center that can offer sustainable large events on every level: socially, economically and ecologically, as well as receiving lots of inspiration from regional suppliers.

Food was heavily focused on local produce and seasonality, such as the local menu in the Spitz restaurant and the vegan tartare in the Lux, plus

the publicly accessible restaurant at the Kongresshaus Zürich. The vegetarian menu reduced emissions by 12%, and also reduced costs by 33%, an important consideration in trying economic conditions.

Guests were invited to experience 'Zürich by Locals', which featured an exhilarating mix of activities including swimming in the cool water of the city river, a salsa course on Bürkliplatz or a social city tour with former homeless people. A team challenge from tabevents integrated sustainable tasks.

Half of Green Mile Forum participants took the green option of arriving by train, saving **32%** of carbon emissions





# Conclusion

**Z**ürich has always been a popular destination for business events due to its connectivity, economic importance, variety, and its position as the gateway to the Alps.

As more and more organisations place sustainability at the heart of their operations, it can claim another string to its bow as one of the most sustainable convention destinations in the world.

With an exciting ecosystem of partners who are experienced in the demands of building sustainable events, Zürich offers a wealth of opportunities for planners.

From venues and transportation, to food and drink, and imaginative social programmes, it ticks every box and makes an enduring impression on participants, attendees and guests.

**“Zürich has always been a popular destination for business events... and is also of the most sustainable convention destinations in the world”**



**Zürich,  
Switzerland.**



## More information

Zürich Convention Bureau is your one-stop-shop for all information on holding events in the city and region. Its experienced team can help find the ideal venue and service partners, including assistance on making your event as sustainable as possible.

Sign up for its newsletter, which includes practical tips and advice on best practice on how to achieve more sustainable events.

**For a free consultation, practical tips and event invitations  
sign up to the Zürich Tourism's newsletter:**

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