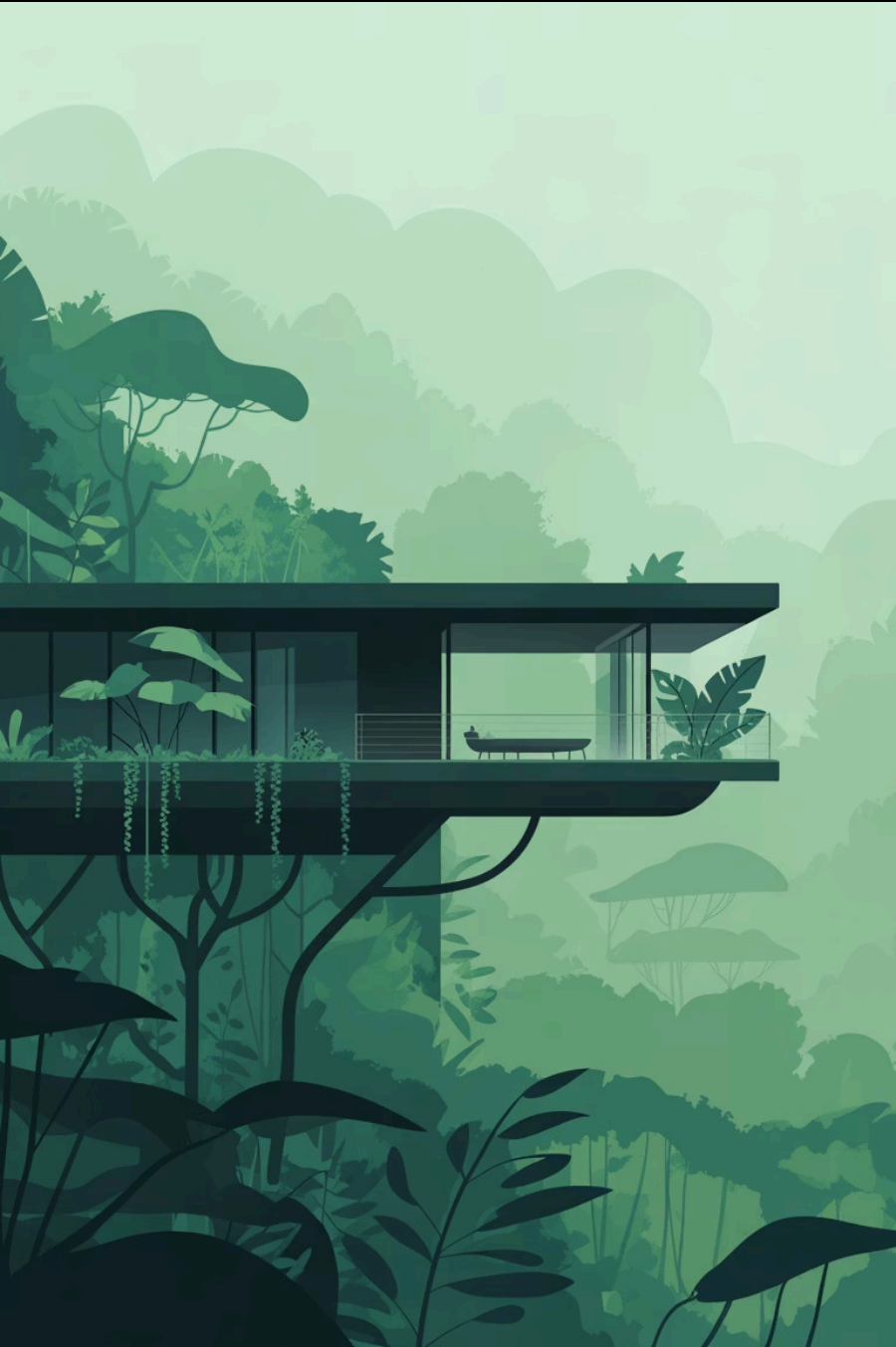




Sustainable Building & Operations

Asia Pacific Outdoor Lodging Association

Welcome to this comprehensive exploration of sustainable practices for outdoor lodging in the Asia Pacific region. This masterclass will guide you through building and operating sustainable lodging that honours both the environment and local communities while meeting Global Sustainable Tourism Council standards.

Our Journey Through Sustainability



Each section offers practical guidance tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of the Asia Pacific outdoor lodging sector. Our goal is to provide you with actionable insights that benefit your business, the environment, and the communities you operate within.

The Four GSTC Pillars



Sustainable Management

Comprehensive planning, staff training, guest communication, and continuous improvement systems



Socio-economic Impacts

Local employment, fair wages, community development, and ethical supply chains



Cultural Impacts

Protection of cultural sites, incorporation of local culture, and respect for traditions



Environmental Impacts

Resource conservation, pollution reduction, biodiversity protection, and climate action

Destination Criteria

- Destination-level planning
- Visitor management systems
- Broader infrastructure concerns
- Regional biodiversity protection

Hotel & Accommodation Criteria

- Property-level implementation
- Guest experience and education
- Building design and operations
- Local procurement policies

Building with the Land, Not on It

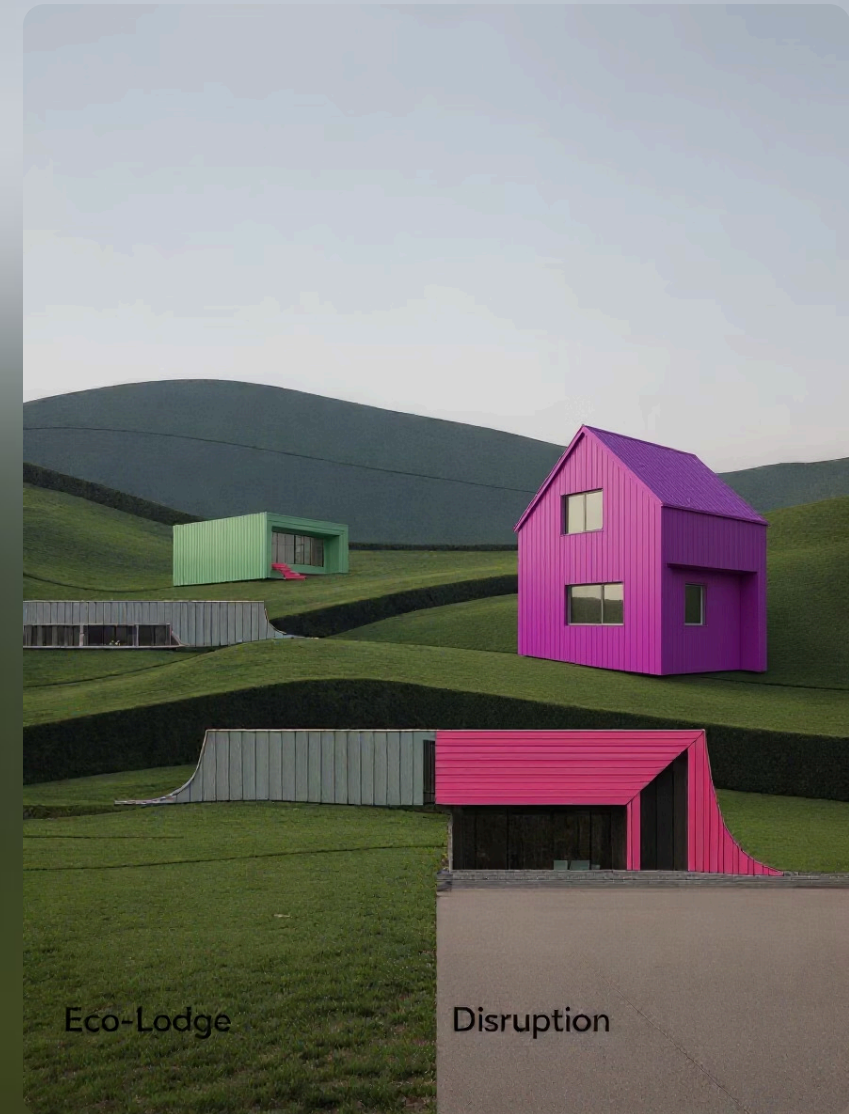
Site Selection Principles

- Conduct thorough environmental impact assessments
- Respect the land's natural carrying capacity
- Maintain wildlife corridors and natural water flows
- Preserve existing trees and vegetation patterns

Sensitive Design Approaches

- Elevated structures to minimise ground disruption
- Buildings that follow natural contours
- Designs that harness natural ventilation and lighting
- Spaces that blur boundaries between indoors and outdoors

The most sustainable buildings are those that seem to have always belonged in their surroundings, requiring minimal clearing and earthworks during construction. This approach not only preserves biodiversity but often creates more memorable guest experiences.



Sustainable Materials & Construction

The materials you choose define both your environmental impact and the aesthetic character of your property. In the Asia Pacific region, there's a rich heritage of natural building materials that can be incorporated into contemporary designs.

Local & Low-Carbon Materials

- Bamboo (rapidly renewable, carbon sequestering)
- FSC-certified or reclaimed timber
- Compressed earth blocks or rammed earth
- Natural insulators like hemp, wool, or coconut fibre

Construction Techniques

- Modular or prefabricated components to reduce waste
- Lightweight or tensile structures with minimal foundations
- Traditional joinery methods that reduce the need for chemical adhesives
- Passive design principles tailored to the specific microclimate



Case Study: Song Saa Private Island, Cambodia

constructed overwater villas using reclaimed timber from old fishing boats and sustainable wood from managed forests, with furniture made from driftwood collected from local beaches.

Operating Sustainably: The Daily Commitment



Energy Systems

The Asia Pacific region offers abundant renewable energy potential. Solar PV with battery storage works effectively across most locations, while micro-hydro can be viable in mountainous areas with reliable water sources.

- Hybrid systems combining solar with generator backup
- Smart energy management systems
- Passive cooling through building design



Water Management

Water scarcity is increasing across the region, making conservation and recycling essential. Both guests and staff should understand their role in preserving this precious resource.

- Rainwater harvesting systems
- Greywater recycling for irrigation
- Constructed wetlands for natural filtration



Waste Reduction

Waste management infrastructure is limited in many Asia Pacific regions, particularly in remote areas. An effective waste strategy begins with reduction and reuse.

- Elimination of single-use plastics
- Comprehensive composting systems
- Upcycling materials for new purposes

Biodiversity: Your Greatest Asset

The Asia Pacific region contains some of Earth's most diverse and threatened ecosystems. As lodge owners and operators, you're not just visitors to these ecosystems—you're their stewards.

- **Wildlife-Friendly Policies**

Implement dark sky lighting policies to protect nocturnal species. Create property maps identifying sensitive habitats and set clear guidelines for guest activities in these areas.

- **Regenerative Landscaping**

Replace ornamental gardens with native plant species that support local wildlife. Create "rewilded" zones where natural processes can flourish with minimal intervention.

- **Guest Education**

Develop interpretive programmes that help guests appreciate the complexity of local ecosystems. Partner with conservation organisations for monitoring programmes that guests can participate in.



- ❑ Many lodges are now creating biodiversity action plans that document existing species and set targets for habitat enhancement. These plans become powerful tools for marketing, staff training, and measuring progress.

Community & Cultural Integration

Community Engagement

True sustainability extends beyond environmental practices to embrace social responsibility and cultural respect. The most successful lodges in the Asia Pacific region have deep connections with their local communities.

- Implement genuine profit-sharing or co-ownership models
- Create career pathways, not just entry-level positions
- Source at least 80% of goods locally, even if it requires supplier development
- Establish community advisory boards with meaningful influence

Cultural Heritage

The Asia Pacific region's rich cultural diversity offers incredible opportunities for authentic guest experiences that also preserve traditions at risk of being lost.

- Consult with community elders before developing cultural experiences
- Incorporate traditional design elements and construction techniques
- Support local artisans by commissioning work and providing retail space
- Ensure cultural interpretation is led by community members

"The most successful lodges don't just operate *in* a community—they become an integral *part of* the community." — GSTC Criteria Developer

Certification Pathways: Measuring Success

Why Certify?

- External validation of your sustainability efforts
- Marketing advantage with increasingly eco-conscious travellers
- Structured framework for continuous improvement
- Access to networks of like-minded operators

GSTC-Recognised Programmes

- EarthCheck (strong presence in Asia Pacific)
- Green Growth 2050 (developed for Asian markets)
- Travelife for Accommodations
- Green Key (increasingly popular in Southeast Asia)

Measurement Tools

- Carbon calculators specifically calibrated for hospitality
- Water and energy monitoring systems
- Waste audit protocols and tracking sheets
- Guest and community feedback mechanisms

The certification journey typically takes 12-18 months from initial assessment to final certification. The process itself is valuable, regardless of the outcome, as it establishes baseline measurements and identifies priority areas for improvement.

Pro Tip: Start with a pre-assessment to identify gaps before committing to a specific certification programme.

The Long Run: A Global Standard for Sustainable Tourism

The Long Run is a membership organisation of nature-based tourism businesses committed to sustainable development. They champion a holistic approach to conservation, guided by their "Four C's" framework.



Conservation

Protecting and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem health in and around the tourism operation.



Community

Fostering social and economic well-being for local communities, respecting rights and traditions.



Culture

Preserving cultural heritage, promoting local artistry, and encouraging respectful cultural exchange.



Commerce

Ensuring financial viability and fair distribution of benefits to support long-term sustainability.

Case Study: Cardamom Tented Camp, Cambodia is a notable example of The Long Run's principles in action. The camp operates as a true eco-lodge, funding the protection of 18,000 hectares of forest in Botum Sakor National Park. Through direct support to Wildlife Alliance rangers, it combats illegal logging and poaching. The camp also provides local employment, utilises solar energy, and implements strict waste and water management, demonstrating how tourism can be a powerful force for conservation and community development.

Every Lodge Can Be a Guardian of Nature and Culture

Build Lightly

Design with nature, using sustainable materials and construction methods that minimise environmental disruption

Measure & Improve

Set baselines, track progress, and continuously enhance your sustainability performance year on year



Operate Responsibly

Implement systems for efficient resource use, waste reduction, and biodiversity protection in daily operations

Engage Communities

Create meaningful partnerships that distribute benefits fairly and provide authentic cultural connections

The transition to truly sustainable outdoor lodging isn't achieved overnight. It's an ongoing journey of incremental improvements guided by a clear vision and strong values.

✔ **Contact Us:** For support on your sustainability journey, reach out to me the Asia Pacific Outdoor Lodging Association at jroberts@minor.com or visit <https://apola.io/>