

Sustainability Charter for

Whale watching





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Aim

We, the members of this Sustainability Charter, want to bolster the will of the Tenerife whale watching sector to uphold our profession and hand down a living marine environment to future generations.

We want to contribute, as professionals committed to the guardianship of whales and dolphins, to promote Tenerife as a sustainable tourist area that has a positive impact on the local population and on those who visit it.





2025 vision

We want Tenerife to be a tourist area that can cohabit with and look after cetaceans, and also a sustainability model for other places in the world that like us share their coastlines with whales and dolphins. To do this we must conserve our cetacean populations, adhering to the load capacity of the different activities carried out in the sea, and providing a meaningful whale watching activity that is cetacean friendly and has high added value.

Businesses, local authorities and the local population work together, committed and aligned to ensure that our environment is respected and guarantee the right of future generations to enjoy it.

The Sustainability Charter is a seal that demonstrates our commitment to the Natural Environment to our visitors, our local authorities and the local population.



Guideline principles

- 01** We are seeking to impart meaningful, transforming experiences
- 02** Our tourist product must live up to the exceptional value of this unique environment
- 03** We look after the environment, the sea and the local community.
- 04** We comply with all the laws and regulations in force.
- 05** We are transparent, committed and seek the continuous improvement of the sector.



Commitments

of member companies

Commitment 1

Impart meaningful,
transforming experiences.



Verifiers	Assessment method
<p>1.1 The average assessment of the meaningful and transforming experience for customers (0-10) obtained on a sufficient sample and in an independent manner exceeds the established threshold.</p>	<p>Independent surveys</p>
<p>1.2 The average probability of recommendation to a friend (0-10) by customers obtained on a sufficient sample and in an independent manner exceeds the set threshold.</p>	<p>Independent surveys</p>



Commitment 2

Offer a tourist product that lives up to this unique environment



Verifiers	Assessment method
<p>2.1 The company has a marine environment guide certified by the Tenerife Tourist Board to guide groups of over 25 passengers. For vessels that do not reach this number of passengers, the skipper can exercise the role of guide and in any case the person who provides this service is certified by the Tenerife Tourist Board.</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>
<p>2.2 The company certifies, in the good practice manual, the training of all its front line staff, sales persons and other staff of the vessels it owns. The company takes active measures to guarantee that the staff of third parties that also sell its products receive the appropriate training.</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>
<p>2.3 The company cleans the vessel sufficiently before each service.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>
<p>2.4 The crew that provides the service maintains a sufficient level of cleanliness, is uniformed and visibly identified.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>
<p>2.5 The company provides complete information on its tourist products (duration, price, times, services provided, recommendations, practical advice), on the natural resources the whale watching activity concerns (species and characteristics of the cetaceans, marine birds, coastline, etc.) and on the Sustainability Charter in its offices and in all points of sale (including the website).</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>

Commitment 2

Offer a tourist product that lives up to this unique environment



Verifiers	Assessment method
<p>2.6 The company keeps at least one social media channel active with at least one publication per week.</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>
<p>2.7 The company provides complete information in each service comprising:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) welcome and introduction to the crew; 2) organisation of the activity (duration, route, recommendations and practical advice); 3) behaviour on board during the activity and during the whale watching with basic safety guidelines and emergency drill; 4) natural resources that can be observed in the ZEC (Canary Islands Special Zone) and their portrayal; 5) environmental awareness to contribute to nature conservation and; 6) information on the Sustainability Charter. 	<p>Mystery customer</p>
<p>2.8 The company has at least one crew member from each vessel attend activities relating to the Charter organised by the Tenerife Tourist Board.</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>
<p>2.9 The company has a cancellation policy in case of unfavourable sea conditions, which is available in the commercial information provided to its customers (website, leaflets, posters, sales actions). This policy includes prior notice to customers of bad sea conditions based on alerts issued by an official source, and the reimbursement conditions established in the event of cancellation.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>





Commitment 3

Look after the environment, the sea and the local community



Verifiers	Assessment method
<p>3.1 In each service, the company executes approach manoeuvres that are respectful to animals, in accordance with the law.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>
<p>3.2 The company takes specific measures related to avoiding noise impact on the environment, specifically cetaceans and birds, protected animals and any activities being carried out in the surrounding area. The measures taken include not using megaphones in the presence of cetaceans and marine birds and not encroaching within 250 metres of vulnerable areas of the coast in nesting periods. Especially for the osprey between January and August.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>
<p>3.3 The company carries out selective waste management on board its vessels.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>
<p>3.4 The company carries out selective waste management in its offices.</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>
<p>3.5 The company does not use disposable plastics or any other type of non biodegradable materials during excursions.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>

Commitment 3

Look after the environment, the sea and the local community



Verifiers	Assessment method
<p>3.6 The company uses local products in the food and drink it serves on board.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>
<p>3.7 The company uses cleaning products with EU Ecolabel certification or equivalent on board its vessels and in its offices, except where specific legislation does not permit this. European Eco label certification or equivalent for its vessels and offices save for cases in which the specific regulations do not permit this.</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>
<p>3.8 The company annually carries out environmental dissemination actions to raise awareness among the local population.</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>
<p>3.9 The company actively participates in research and/or conservation projects, providing resources or data to recognised research and/or conservation teams.</p>	<p>Annual audit</p>
<p>3.10 The company carries out waste collection in the marine environment during the trips.</p>	<p>Annual audit / Mystery customer</p>



Commitment 4

Comply with all the laws and regulations in force



Verifier	Assessment method
<p>4.1 The companies comply with all environmental, navigation, labour, economic and fiscal laws and regulations applicable to vessels:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Blue flag of the Canary Islands Government. 2) Administrative authorisation for the recreational whale watching activity from the Ministry of the Environment. 3) Captain registered at the Harbour Master's Office and insured in the Special Sea Register. 4) The crew has the required official training. 5) Employees have employment contracts in accordance with the laws in force. 6) Vessels are insured with civil liability and the mandatory passenger insurance. 7) Legal points of sale. 8) Be up to date with Tax and Social Security contributions. 	<p>Annual audit</p>



Commitment 5

Be transparent, committed, seeking continuous improvement

Verifiers	Assessment method
5.1 The member company complies with all the commitments of the Sustainability Charter in all its vessels	Annual audit
5.2 The company presents in due time and form the annual standardised account rendering questionnaire on its compliance with the commitments of this Sustainability Charter.	Annual audit
5.3 The average internal assessment by the company's staff concerning compliance with the Charter's commitments, obtained independently and on a sufficient sample, reaches the established thresholds.	Annual audit





Member company

assessment system

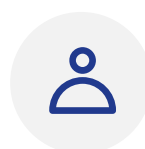
Assessment system

Components



01 QUESTIONNAIRE

Annually, every member company has to complete a standardised questionnaire giving an account of the commitments and providing information for the annual audit.



02 MYSTERY CUSTOMER

Every year The Tenerife Tourist Board will make a mystery customer visit to each member company in order to directly check in situ compliance with the Charter's commitments.



03 IMPROVEMENT PROTOCOL

An open protocol established so that any person, whether or not they are a member of the Charter, can submit incidents or proposals to improve this Sustainability Charter.



04 INDEPENDENT SURVEYS

The Tenerife Tourist Board, in cooperation with member companies, will conduct independent surveys both on the customers of each company and their staff.



05 AUDIT

With the information gathered from the questionnaire, the mystery customer, the surveys and the improvement protocol, the assessment of each member will end with an audit conducted by the Tenerife Tourist Board.



06 PEER AUDIT

In the next few years it is intended to reinforce teamwork between the Charter's members by including the active participation of companies in external audits.

Assessment system

Principles

El funcionamiento del sistema de evaluación se realizará en base a los siguientes principios que aplicarán tanto a Turismo de Tenerife como agente evaluador, como a las empresas evaluadas:

- 01 Ethical conduct:** trust, integrity, confidentiality and discretion are essential for performing any assessment.
- 02 Impartiality and objectivity:** the audit's findings, conclusions and reports will truthfully and accurately detail the actions performed during the assessment. An objective account will be given of the obstacles encountered and any unresolved differences of opinion between the assessor and the assessed party.
- 03 Professionalism and diligence:** the person assessing will have the necessary skills and will proceed with due diligence, as befits the importance of the task and the trust placed in them by the assessed party.
- 04 Independence:** the person who assesses is independent of the activity assessed and is free of bias and conflicts of interest, maintaining an objective attitude to ensure that the findings and conclusions of the audit are based exclusively on the evidence encountered during the assessment.
- 05 Approach based on the evidence:** the evidence of the assessment is verifiable. It is based on the information available and obtained during the assessment process.



Assessment system

01 Questionnaire

This is a questionnaire that each company has to submit annually to the Tenerife Tourist Board and which includes:

- Basic administrative information: the company's contact details, vessels and staff.
- Evidence that the company declares it possesses to justify compliance with each of the charter's commitments.

The idea is that the information from the Questionnaire is recorded so that it can be recovered annually to be easily incorporated in the new questionnaire, avoiding having to spend too much time filling in repeated information.



Assessment system

02 Mystery customer



The Tenerife Tourist Board will contract this type of inspection annually. The company that performs it will visit each member company as a customer, without the company knowing who the visitor is and when the visit will be.

On said visit, compliance will be assessed with the verifiers that can be directly assessed during it:

- Vessel cleaning (2.3) and cleanliness, uniform and identification of the staff on board (2.4).
- Information on the product and the natural resources at the point of sale (2.5).
- Quality and veracity of the information provided during the service (2.7) and Cancellation policy (2.9).
- cetacean friendly approach manoeuvres (3.1) and noise impact (3.2).
- Management of waste on board and in the offices (3.3 and 3.4), use of non biodegradable materials (3.5), use of local products (3.6) and collection of waste during the trips (3.10).

Assessment system

03 Improvement protocol



The Tenerife Tourist Board will establish and publicise an open, direct channel of communication enabling any person:

- To communicate incidents of any kind relating to compliance with the Charter's commitments by the member companies.
- To propose improvements to the Charter that enable its members to make progress in meeting its Aim and achieving its 2025 Vision.

This is the channel the companies who are members of the Charter must use to communicate or incident or solve any dispute the may arise.

Assessment system

03 Improvement protocol



This protocol provides that:

- A follow up code will be assigned to each case, which must obtain some kind of response from the Tenerife Tourist Board within a reasonable time according to the nature of the matter in question.
- The person who opens the case will be asked, if they do not do so initially, to provide verifiable evidence to enable the situation to be approached objectively.
- The protocol aims to promote commitment and cooperation between the Charter's members, and therefore the parties involved are expected to be both constructive and decisive.
- In the event of a dispute, the parties involved must, firstly, seek a solution themselves through dialogue in the manner specified in the above point. If this method fails to make progress, they can, by mutual agreement, request the mediation of another Charter member, or, failing this, the Tenerife Tourist Board.
- The solutions adopted must add value to the Charter's Aim, Vision and Guiding Principles.

Assessment system

04 Independent surveys

In cooperation with the member companies, the Tenerife Tourist Board will periodically conduct surveys on the companies' customers and staff to obtain direct information about the perceptions both groups have of the compliance with the Charter's commitments.

Specifically, customers will be asked about

- The meaningful and transforming nature the experience had for them. This will be done through indirect questions that suitably assess this aspect.
- Whether they would recommend the experience to a friend.

Assessment system

04 Independent surveys

The companies must cooperate in the drafting of these surveys to ensure that at least a significant percentage of their customers reply to it.

The companies' staff will be asked about:

- Their general assessment of the compliance with the commitments.
- Their individualised perception of the compliance with each of the commitments.


The companies must cooperate in the drafting of these surveys to ensure that at least a significant percentage of their staff reply to it.

Both types of survey will be totally anonymous and as quick to do as possible to make sure they are answered and their data captured.



Assessment system

05 Audit



The Tenerife Tourist Board will, annually, conduct an audit on each member company to check its compliance with all the commitments and verifiers in accordance with the following process:

01 PREPARATIONS

Historical review and Audit Plan.

The Tenerife Tourist Board assesses the annual questionnaire, the results of the previous audit, the mystery customer, the independent surveys of customers and staff and any incidents in the improvement protocol in order to prepare the Audit Plan which will establish the main focuses of the review and these are sent to the member company for it to establish the calendar.

02 AUDIT

Centred on the key points identified during the preparation phase.

The Tenerife Tourist Board, through in situ inspections or requests for documentation, checks the Charter's commitments with each member company, with particular emphasis on the key points identified in the preparation phase.

03 CONCLUSIONS

Report with the results of the Audit.

The Tenerife Tourist Board draws up a conclusions report that either declares 100% compliance with the commitments or sets out minor or major non conformities. Major non conformities will have an urgent resolution period, minor ones may have a longer period.

04 FOLLOW UP

Amendment plan and checking of the solutions adopted.

Within two weeks of receiving the conclusions report, the member company defines its amendment plan to correct the established non conformities, including the execution time for each of them. The Tenerife Tourist Board reviews the proposal and approves it or requests suitable modifications to it and follows up its fulfilment.

05 MEMBERSHIP OR EXPULSION

Depending on fulfilment of the corrections.

Depending on the satisfactory execution or otherwise of the established amendments, the company will either remain a member of the Charter or be expelled from it.



Assessment system

06 Peer audit



In order to improve the cooperation between member companies and strengthen teamwork, in the next few years methods will be tested to enable integration of the peer audit in the assessment process.

To do this, those commitments and verifiers in which the conflict of interest is minimal will be selected and strategic ways of promoting the sector's sustainability and the coherent image of the Charter will be considered.



Roles, route map and progress

Roles of the parties involved, route map for achieving the 2025 Vision and progress indicators



Roles

In this new phase of the Sustainability Charter for Whale Watching it is planned to extend the scope of the charter to new roles and to explain those that already exist:



Tenerife Tourist Board

Oversee the correct operation of the Sustainability Charter.

Deal with the entry, monitor the commitments and, where applicable, the exit of companies and associates who are members of the Sustainability Charter.

Arbitrate or mediate in the handling of incidents and disputes.

Promote the acknowledgement of the Sustainability Charter among tourists, the local population, public and private organisations.

Establish, in cooperation with sector companies and other actors involved, the content and commitments of the Sustainability Charter, updating it when necessary for its correct operation.

Define and manage the certification system for marine environment guides, ensuring that the certified persons have the necessary skills and approach to develop the meaningful and transforming experience, which is one of the key pillars of the Sustainability Charter.



Company members of the Charter

Comply with the established commitments, rendering account periodically, openly and transparently. Collaborate in the development of the shared objectives.

Participate constructively in the internal processes of the Sustainability Charter, particularly in the management of incidents and resolution of disputes, adding value to the compliance with the established objectives.



Associates

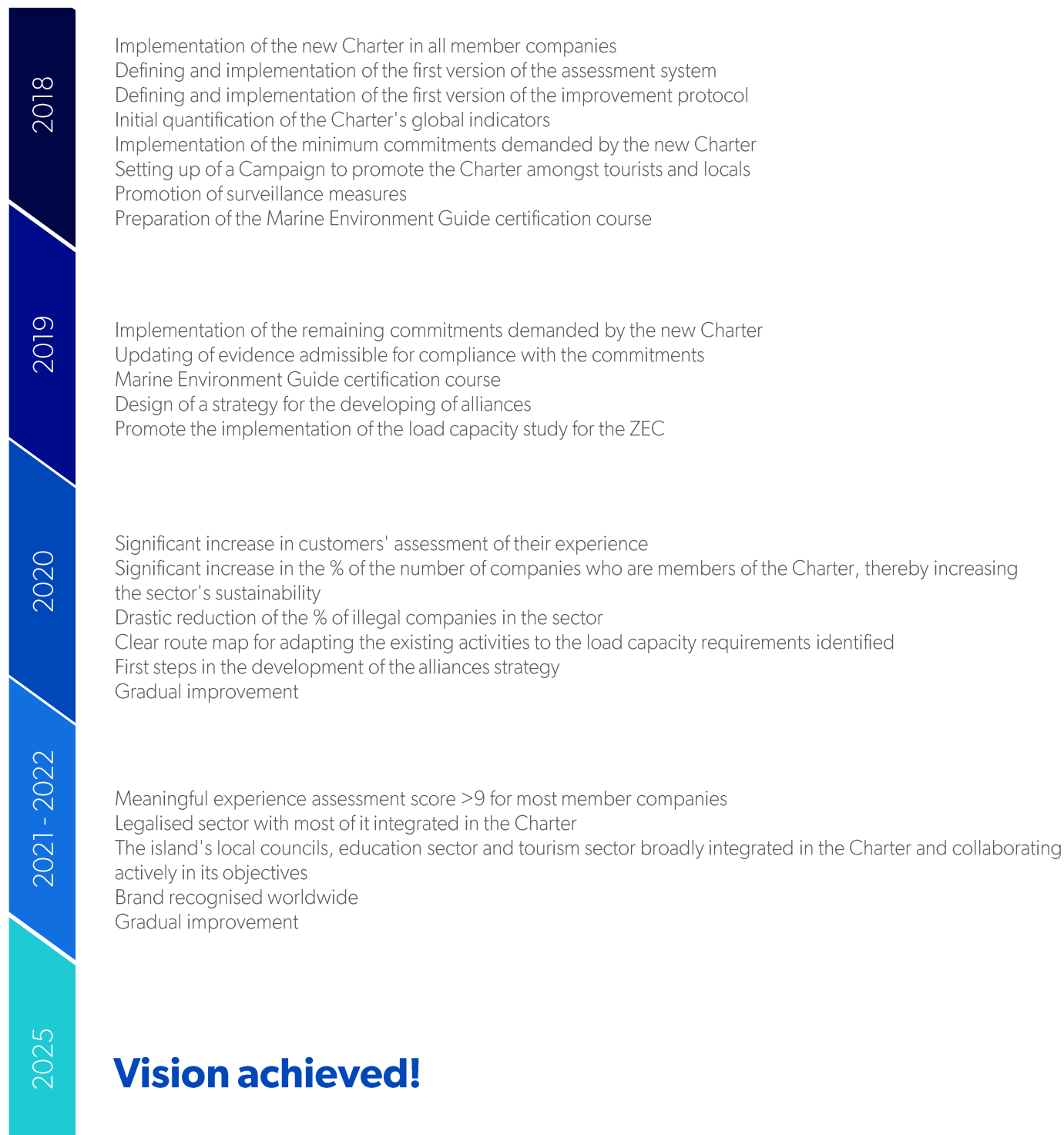
Make a public declaration of membership of the Charter. I

identify ways they can add value to the objectives and principles of the Charter and coordinate specific actions with the Tenerife Tourist Board to implement them.

Actively divulge the Sustainability Charter, its values and the points of contact where any person can identify and contact the companies who participate in it.



Route map



Indicadores de progreso

Indicator	Reference verifier
I.1 Average customer assessment of the meaningful experience	1.1
I.2 Average customers who would recommend it to a friend	1.2
I.3 Percentage of Tenerife whale watching sector companies subscribed to the Sustainability Charter.	-
I.4 Percentage of illegal Tenerife whale watching sector companies.	-
I.5 Number of certified marine environment guides.	2.1
I.6 Average percentage of compliance with the charter's verifiers by member companies.	Todos
I.7 Number of registered incidents related to non compliance of member companies with the respectful approach to animals criterion.	3.1
I.8 Number of registered incidents related to non compliance of member companies with the noise impact on cetaceans and birds criterion.	3.2
I.9 Number of persons who have participated in dissemination actions in which at least one Charter member company has been involved.	3.7
I.10 Number of research or conservation projects in which at least one Charter member company has participated.	3.8
I.11 Kilogrammes of waste collected in the marine environment by Charter member companies.	3.9
I.12 Average internal assessment of staff of member companies concerning compliance with the Charter's commitments and verifiers.	5.3

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