



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Golf Club Sion

Prepared by independent verifier, Hector Forcen

Certified by GEO Foundation: March 2022
Valid until: March 2025

GEO Certified[®]



**GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

Golf Club Sion is a professionally managed facility, valuable for the community, the golfers, and visitors. The team at Golf Club Sion is improving environmental management practices during the last years with diverse projects including habitat creation, wildflower meadows and naturalized roughs.

They are aware of the need to do things better every day and proof of this is the new clubhouse construction recently open, where the latest qualities and technologies have been installed. A great example in energy efficiency and sustainability, highlighting its solar panels producing the necessary energy to heat the water for buildings and restaurant consumption.

Hector Forcen

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Golf Club Sion** has successfully achieved GEO Certified® status for its outstanding work to foster nature, conserve resources and support the community.

GEO Certified® is the most respected certification for golf, based on a credibly and transparently developed modern sustainability Standard of best practice.

Golf Club Sion has:

1. Met the required certification criteria for sustainable golf operations
2. Successfully completed the official third-party verification process
3. Successfully passed the final evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd. (autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation)

GEO agreed with the conclusions of the official verification report, that, having achieved all mandatory criteria; and with specific Continual Improvement Points set for the future, **Golf Club Sion** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Golf Club Sion** can therefore claim a position as a leader in advancing sustainability in golf – making important contributions in protecting nature, conserving resources and strengthening communities.

The GEO Certified® Report that follows comments on the actions undertaken against the criteria, as observed by the independent verifier during the assurance process.

Certification is nearly always the result of a dedicated team effort resulting in many practical and valuable social and environmental results around the golf course, maintenance facility and clubhouse. These dedication and leadership qualities are an important part of ensuring the resilience of the golf facility and the golf industry into the future and also as part of society's wider effort to pull together for people and planet.

We congratulate all involved.

Jonathan Smith
Founder and Executive Director, GEO Foundation
GEO Certification Ltd. Board Member

Kelli Jerome
Executive Director, GEO Foundation

Richard Allison
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



Verification and Certification

Verification

The official third-party audit was carried out by an independent verifier, accredited by GEO to undertake verifications of golf facilities applying for certification.

Verification involves reviewing practices and data, using the International Voluntary Standard for Sustainable Golf Operations as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance. A detailed verification report is submitted for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

Certification

GEO Certification Ltd, an autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation [both not-for-profit entities], undertook a full review of all content submitted through the OnCourse® online platform and the report submitted by the verifier, ensuring:

- Comprehensiveness – that activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Standard
- Consistency – that the verification approach was balanced, well weighted and with consistent depth of evaluation across each theme
- Accuracy - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the golf facility to ensure statements and claims were accurate

GEO Foundation is an international not-for-profit founded to advocate, support and reward sustainability in and through golf. Over more than ten years, the group has worked collaboratively with dozens of golf industry associations and government and non-government organisations around the world, to help golf become a sustainability leader, striving for a net positive social and environmental impact. In addition to managing and assuring GEO Certified®, GEO Foundation also provides a suite of credible, practical programmes for golf facility management, new golf developments and golf tournaments called OnCourse®, often delivered in partnership with national golf bodies. Find out more at www.sustainable.golf

Credibility

GEO Certified® is part of the ISEAL Alliance, a group of the world's foremost credible certification systems including Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council and many others. GEO Foundation earned and retains full membership of the ISEAL Alliance global association following a rigorous evaluation against the ISEAL Codes of Credibility in Sustainability Standards and Certification. The ISEAL Codes cover standard-setting, assurance, and monitoring and evaluation. Find out more at www.isealalliance.org



Verifier's Report

The Sustainability Agenda for golf covers the following themes and action areas:

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Energy • Materials
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships & Outreach • Golfing & Employment • Advocacy & Communications

Included below are the observations made by the Independent Verifier against each item in the Standard.

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Nestled in the Rhône valley, surrounded by terraced vineyards, dominated by the castles of Valère and Tourbillon, the Golf Club of Sion enjoys a magnificent location which sums up all the beauty of the Valais and benefits from a view exceptional panorama.

			<p>The golf course was built on orchard plots, proof of that is the numerous pear trees of traditional varieties found in the rough.</p> <p>The head greenkeeper is preparing a new map with habitats he has found on the course.</p>
	<p>N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species</p>	<p>Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site</p>	<p>The club cooperates closely with local authorities and associations.</p> <p>It is important to highlight the close collaboration maintained with the local authorities due to the fact that the drinking water in the city of Sion comes from wells inside the golf course. Periodic controls and analyses are established in official laboratories in the area. This aspect marks the maintenance and management of the entire club in which sustainable management and care for the environment are established values from the beginning.</p> <p>There are no known legal designations on the property and is not aware of any rare or endangered species found on the site.</p>
	<p>N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage</p>	<p>Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site</p>	<p>No archaeological, historical, or cultural designation are present (or known) on the course.</p>
<p>N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course</p>	<p>N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass</p>	<p>Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play</p>	<p>There are several naturalized areas along the course.</p> <p>Walking the course with the head greenkeeper, we have been able to appreciate the number of areas on the rough that have been naturalized, being a refuge space for numerous animal species.</p>
<p>N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife</p>	<p>N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf</p>	<p>Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping</p>	<p>The club is working for several years with local environmental groups and authorities.</p> <p>As a symbol of good cooperation and to confirm future goals in the field of sustainability the club is replanting the old pear trees that have been affected by disease, by native species of high ecological value for the valley.</p> <p>The zone along the canal is maintained by the local authorities. It is a high value area where animal species such as beavers are living.</p> <p>Ducks have settled in the lake at hole 10 where, despite the opinion of certain members, the greenkeeping team maintains uncut areas for them to use as homes.</p> <p>CIP - The club could work to undertake a survey of different flora and fauna species and monitor these annually.</p>
<p>N1.4 Conserve key species</p>	<p>N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species</p>		<p>Meadows and rough areas are not fertilized to maintain the natural flora.</p> <p>Overgrown and low edges/banks in ponds are kept protecting species that lives in small waters. Nesting boxes are placed in some trees.</p>

			In the natural area of the 17th hole, the presence of 3 foxes has been detected, (which seem to have been born in that area and continue to live there).
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for climate	The head greenkeeper has extensive experience and perfectly knows the specific conditions of the course, the sward is 60 % Agrostis and 40% Poa annua. Poa and Lolium are predominantly species across fairways, and tees. Greens and some tees are overseeded with new Agrostis varieties more performant and tolerant. During the visit I had the opportunity to see the handling of the 13th green, which is in the coldest area of the course where snow accumulates. With the aim of favouring the melting, they were experimenting by applying black sunflower seeds that were helping to melt the ice due catching heat energy from the sun.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Good cultural practices are undertaken to reduce thatch, reduce compaction and to encourage deeper rooting. Light topdressing programme on greens, approaches and tees is being implemented with excellent results.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil tests are carried out every 3 years at the beginning of the season to know physical properties and need of nutrients. In terms of fertilization the applications are made from granular and liquids, applying small amounts during the growing season. CIP - The club should consider soil tests every year.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Mowers cylinders and blades are sharpened by an external company once a year. The mechanic maintains equipment during the season. Machines are washed every time after they have been used. Dew moisture is removed to keep the turf as dry as possible. Standard good practises (daily inspections, local weeding etc) are used to reduce chemical use to the minimum. Due to the peculiarity of the drinking water that the subsoil has, the phytosanitary treatments are limited to the greens, being occasional and very punctual in other areas of the course.
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Establish patterns and levels of risk for pests and diseases; Scout the course daily for early signs of pests and disease; Accurate pest and disease identification;	The head greenkeeper experience helps to minimize the need and use of pesticides. Weather conditions and past events are monitored and discussed along with the extensive site knowledge contained within the department to determine risks.

		Map and track pest and disease hotspots; Establish pest and disease thresholds	The maintenance crew review and report any signs of stress or indications of pests and diseases. It is mainly snow mold & dollar spot the problems on the greens.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use only legally registered and approved products; Ensure staff are fully qualified and licenced to use pesticides; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Use appropriate protective equipment; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf	Only legislated chemicals are used. They are stored in a separate, locked, and secure storage. The applications are made by the head greenkeeper who is trained and qualified using the necessary security measures. Ecological conditions and weather are considered before the application is carried out. Untreated turf areas are used for disposal of diluted leftovers.
N3 Pollution Prevention			
N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site	N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from golf course operations	Document procedures for emergency spill responses; Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Maintain spraying and spreading buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	Golf Club Sion is perfectly respecting the Swiss law in terms of pollution prevention and emergency spill responses. The security perimeters established are respected. There are no treatments in the rough areas, wet areas and near lakes. The greens were built with a waterproof liner system that collects all the drained water at certain points, avoiding possible contamination by products applied to the greens. CIP - The club should redact an emergency spill responses plan.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Contracts for disposal of hazardous waste from the facility are established with external local companies that are specialists in waste management. Wastewater is led to the municipal wastewater treatment plant. This point is being improved a lot with the new clubhouse construction well designed and built.
	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	Pesticides and fertilizers are mixed and loaded in the maintenance with concrete floor and drain connected to a collecting tank. In the workshop all drums with oils for machinery maintenance have their corresponding anti-spill containment system. Hazardous waste is stored on bunded platforms prior to collection by a licenced waste contractor.

<p>N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances</p>	<p>N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances</p>	<p>Maintain a register of hazardous materials available to authorised staff; Safe storage in secure and ventilated concrete or metal building; Sufficient storage capacity; Impermeable flooring; Spill containment kits present; Emergency wash area; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks</p>	<p>All personal that handle pesticides have an education and valid authorizations (licenses). Personal protection equipment is used, and the treatment machine is modern and well calibrated. Products and treatments recorded in the computer. Chemicals are maintained in a suitable room for the storage of phytosanitary products. Fire extinguishers are placed in locations with fire risks. They are inspected annually by a certified company. All fuel tanks are installed according to legislation and have approved inspections and controls.</p>
<p>N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water</p>	<p>N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences</p>	<p>Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)</p>	<p>An innovative system for separating grease from the restaurant has been installed in the clubhouse facilities. Wastewater from club house is collected and sent to the Sion public water treatment service. The machinery washing area in maintenance has an oil and solids filter in a waterproof cement construction complying with local regulations.</p>

<h2>RESOURCES</h2>			
<p>R1 Water</p>			
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>Requirements</p>	<p>Mandatory Practices</p>	<p>Verifier Notes</p>
<p>R1.1 Minimise water demand</p>	<p>R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water</p>	<p>Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only</p>	<p>Only irrigates when is necessary based on local experience in combination with weather data. The club has recently acquired a moisture sensor. The club has an automatic irrigation system with block sprinklers on tees and couples on greens. The fairways have a single row irrigation and no irrigation on roughs. Hose pipes are ready to go when needed.</p>
<p>R1.2 Maximise water efficiency</p>	<p>R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course</p>	<p>Conduct regular irrigation performance checks;</p>	<p>With an update of irrigation software a couple of years ago efficiency is being improved.</p>

		Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Ensure effective application of water to target areas; Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture analysis	'Pumping' and irrigation system works by gravity with water coming from a tank on the hill. It is important to highlight this point, it leads to significant energy efficiency with considerable savings in electricity consumption. CIP - Consider water & irrigation audit.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	Bills and volumes reviewed regularly. The new clubhouse has upgraded to the latest and most efficient bathroom and shower fittings with flow restrictors and controls. An innovative system for cleaning the clubs has been installed on the driving range, which has led to a great improvement in efficiency and water savings. The maintenance facility has LED exterior lights with a motion sensor for automatic activation.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	The club has legal access to water. The water consumption is read and reported to the municipality that is the supplier of freshwater to the club.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	A great job of naturalizing areas in the course over the last few years. Natural areas that are not cut or only cut once a year. Some areas are harvested by local farmers.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	The property complies with the Swiss directives in terms of energy. The new clubhouse buildings are modern and efficient, built with new materials that are more sustainable and respectful of energy consumption. All the buggies for rental are electrics. CIP - Consider making improvements plan for maintenance buildings.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	A line of solar panels has been installed on the roof of the clubhouse, being enough to produce hot water for use both in restaurants and club changing rooms. It is worth highlighting the installation of a toilet on the course which works without the need for electricity or water due to a new ventilation and storage system. It is supplied by a Swiss company and could serve as an example to follow for other golf courses in the country.

R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	Undertake a review of materials consumed	The club works with a local waste management plant for recycling. All waste is stored according to legislation. They are composting some vegetal material, collected, and used for landscaping areas around parking and club house.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy	Adopt a sustainable, or ethical / environmental purchasing policy to maximise the use of locally sourced goods and goods made from recycled, recyclable and certified materials	Mainly local distributors are used, and some furniture of the golf course has been built by local companies (like the wood construction on the driving range pro-tee). In the restaurant the use of local products are preferred and desired by members and visitors. CIP – Could develop a more structured, formal sustainable purchasing policy.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	The club keeps internal bills and invoices of annual quantities of waste and recycled materials. Almost all waste is recycled or reused, including PET, aluminium, metals, glass, paper, and cardboard. Wood from removed trees is used for creating brush piles and habitat areas. Materials from the kitchen and maintenance area such as detergents, oils, lubricants, pesticides, and batteries are collected and disposed by specialized company. The club dispose different points with labelled bins around the facility and waste receptacle areas. The greenkeepers are preparing new tee-box markers from tree branches collected on the course.
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	The club complies with all Swiss waste management regulations. Authorized waste and recycling contractors are used for both housekeeping waste, industrial and hazardous waste.

COMMUNITY

C1 Outreach

Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		<p>The club is involved in different projects.</p> <p>The new facilities of the clubhouse have a room for seminars and meetings that is used by different companies in the area.</p> <p>The clubhouse restaurant is open to players as well as non-player visitors who use it for daily meals or events.</p> <p>Bordering the river there are several paths that are used by the community to exercise walking and with their bicycles.</p>
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		<p>The club provide staff with time and opportunities to volunteer, encouraging golfers to volunteer on tournaments, committees, and projects.</p> <p>The members meet annually to collect the pears from the pear trees and make liquor in collaboration with the greenkeepers in what's a convivial and fun day for everybody.</p> <p>The club has established a system in which they give a member the opportunity to sponsor a hole by planting a tree of their choice.</p>
C1.3 Establish active community partnerships	C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	Create a 'sustainability working group'	<p>The club communicates using social media, newsletter as well as daily through its website and the information panel of the clubhouse.</p> <p>The sustainability group is very active and meets several times a year. They have the help of external companies to carry out different environmental and analytical studies.</p>

C2 Golfers & Employees

C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Seniors, ladies and juniors enjoy the facilities weekly.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	<p>The restaurant is open to the public and many people from the city use it to eat daily.</p> <p>Through its golf school, the club organizes numerous introductory courses for companies and students, bringing the sport of golf closer to the citizens of Sion and its surroundings.</p>

C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities	C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	Compliant with the extensive Swiss health and safety legislation for safe, ethical, equal, and legal working conditions. The club promote education and membership of the professional's associations. Continuous training and giving maximum stability to employees. Personal protection equipment and working clothing are provided.
C3 Communications			
C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	The club communicates monthly with a newsletter as well as daily through its website and the information panel of the clubhouse. Members are quite proactive, and the club encourage them to promote the facility in the community. The club truly promotes awareness within the employee community with respect to energy and safety aspects.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	Golf Club Sion is an open club that offers the opportunity to play golf to many citizens of the area. Members and players are properly informed of all activities and actions carried out in the club.

Golf and Sustainability

Among all sports, golf has a particularly close relationship with the environment and communities, golf facilities can bring many benefits to people and nature - from the protection of greenspace and conservation of biodiversity; healthy recreation for all ages; local supply chains; and jobs, tourism and other forms of economic value.

Adopting a more sustainable approach is also good for golf. It's about presenting a high-quality golf course and providing a memorable experience in natural surroundings. It's about being as efficient as possible. And it's about supporting the community in a range of ways that bring increased recognition, respect and contact.

At a broader level, it's important that golf credibly demonstrates its commitment, and its social and environmental value – strengthening the sport's image and reputation for the long term.

Golf facilities that participate in OnCourse®, an international sustainability initiative assured by the non-profit GEO Foundation, are taking a comprehensive approach and striving to be leaders in the community.

Find out more at www.sustainable.golf