GEO Certified® Report
Terre Blanche Golf

Prepared by independent verifier, Marc Geens

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

Terre Blanche Golf has clearly taken a lot of effort to respect the natural environment and developed internal systems to protect nature and manage resources efficiently. The club has recently switched to Bermuda grass with significant savings in water and other turf inputs and trials are ongoing for the most appropriate varieties of turfgrass. State-of-the-art irrigation monitoring, on-site wastewater treatment, strict maintenance of the large modern machine park, as well as being an outstanding employer and community asset mean that Terre Blanche continues to be an exemplar for sustainability.

Marc Geens

(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Terre Blanche Golf** 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.

Terre Blanche Golf 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, **Terre Blanche Golf** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

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

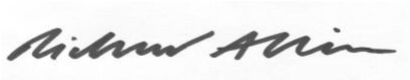
The GEO Certified® Report that follows comments on the actions undertaken against the criteria, as observed by the independent verifier during the assurance process.

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**

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

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	• Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	• Water • Energy • Materials
Community	• 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	Currently mapped all vegetation zones. (And have some info on the site e.g. with the different types, and smaller ecotopes) New trees are planted on a geo-referenced place.

				Working on drone mapped vegetation zones based on moisture conditions to optimise grass management and adapt ecological measures accordingly. Work together with an ecological external partner that maps the findings of biodiversity on the site reported by visitors /co-operators using a designated app (the society does the determination and afterwards maps and groups findings to ecotopes / habitats)
		N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	Support from external specialised company (ECO-MED). Removed the exotic water turtles (southern US) from the ponds and placed them at a turtle sanctuary (100€ per turtle to house them there until end of life). Knowledge of protected species as well as what are local and non-local species; On natural zones only local (plant) species are reintroduced.
		N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There is an old mansion (castle) on the site that is being restored gradually. It is classified as a monument by the authorities.
	N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course	**N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass**	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Tracking of golf carts so they cannot enter into non golf designated areas or on certain areas of a course. (Also used for safety, so maximum speed reduced on hilly parts to avoid accidents). Dying trees (dry summers, insect damage on pines and palms) are replaced by local tree species (e.g. white oaks) as advised by external partner based in the condition of the planting site.
	N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	**N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf**	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	The out-of-play areas of rough grass at the side of the courses that are only once a year mown are left at least 10 cm height to protect local fauna and flora. Zone around the small creek not fenced so that boars and other wild animals can migrate over the terrain but cannot harm the turf layer. Buildings on the courses (toilets e.g.) have been adapted to house bats (with success, and this info is shared with the visitors by one of the info boards)

	N1.4 Conserve key species	**N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species**		Several species of migrating birds use the golf as a rest stop. Water elements are attracting local species (amphibians e.g.) Info boards make visitors aware of the different aspects and wildlife.
	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	Different turf species are present. Bermuda grass has been widely introduced to help cope with the hot summers, but still under assessment during the cold winter. Currently experimenting with Bermuda grass mixed with other species. The young testing zone showed a lot of herbs that will disappear with the frequent mowing.
		N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Only organic products used. Plantings in the hotel area are covered with wood clippings to prevent the soil drying out and improve soil quality organic matter.
		N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Recycled materials composted and re-used and only organic fertilisers where necessary. Only registered organic products are used to control problems, and only the affected areas are treated
	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	**N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management**	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Small scale mechanical weeding is infrequent, could be extended. Early observation indicates potential problems and management is able to prepare early with their organic product regime.
	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; Map and track pest and disease hotspots; Establish pest and disease thresholds	Curative policy based on monitoring. Daily moisture content of greens is controlled. Increased light and improved air flow by cutting some lower branches on trees.
		N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use only legally registered and approved products;	Elaborate digital procedural system for security and follow up are installed and implemented (and nearly everything else that involve people's actions, data collection…)

			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 trained people can apply products. Leftovers and cleaning waters are treated in the specialised wastewater installation. Products are only applied by trained employees and all necessary protective measures are available and compulsory used.
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.	In place (digital procedures, accessible by all employees, warning signs and instructions on the walls…) Good performance. Positive (and most products in use are not influencing water related organisms). Playing zones are well mapped, and as such also the buffer zones and different long grass and nature zones.
	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	All OK (digital information management systems).
	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	Kept very clean. Wastewater is captured and purified on site. Rest fraction is extracted by a specialised company (certificates present). Cleaned according to internal (and legal) requirements.
N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	**N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances**		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;	Available on site. OK (and certified). OK (always responsible person available for visitors and own personnel) All points comply.

			Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	
	N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	**N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences**	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	Available. Wash bays are clean and wastewater is recycled (grass clippings are separated and discharged as waste) They have a specialised wastewater treatment system. Rest fraction is collected by a specialised company.

RESOURCES

R1 Water

Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
R1.1 Minimise water demand	**R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water**	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	Audit is ongoing to improve further irrigation (3000 sprinklers) to see whether some areas can be further optimised to reduce needed volume of irrigation water.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	**R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course**	Conduct regular irrigation performance checks; 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	In place. Currently audit is ongoing to see whether irrigation can be further optimised in certain zones (expected to be finished in 2023). The weather station and soil humidity steered program is eventually adjusted by greenkeepers control of humidity of the tees in a specific irrigation zone.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities;	In the Mediterranean climate water is extremely valuable, so water consumption is monitored.

			Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	However the comfort of hotel guests is not compromised by special measures. Established digital program.
	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	Available. Pipeline from the lake to their system (for purification) and untreated to ponds (for irrigation of turfgrass). Pond is also used for the intake of firefighting water by the helicopter during natural fires in the region.
	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	Large areas are only mown once a year (+10cm height) to allow natural flowers and animals to re-establish (results are monitored). Daily mowing is with electric mowers (Li battery allows 18-hole area to be covered).
	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	Currently establishing an extensive spreadsheet to monitor in detail all types of consumption at different levels. Bought in energy is monitored (digital data system) but are looking to locate the consumption into more detail (see previous point).
	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	Legal barriers are in place for companies (insurance, construction measures…) that prohibit an economical implementation of renewable energy sources.
	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	Present on site (informatic system). Chemical pesticides are eliminated – only registered organic products are used, plastic materials have been reduced drastically (e.g. drop-drop packings for water to eliminate plastic bottles,…)

	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	Maximised local products, also in the restaurant where seasonal products are on the menu.
	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	OK, even in the hotel rooms waste bins contain a recyclable versus non-recyclable part. Monitored. Organic waste (kitchen) is dehydrated in specialised units (4 on site). They produce a type of dry compost. This has to be reused in site as according to French legislation a much higher temperature is required to be able to use it elsewhere.
	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	Documented on site.

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**		Mainly directed to young people of the village (golf initiation, development of virtual golf contest for youngsters).
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	**C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes**		Cooperating with local communities (e.g. constructed sports facilities for the community). Home of one of the two French golf academies for girls.

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'	Ecological team of three supported by external ecological company. Support of local community directed to growing foods (communal garden). The chef organises every year a cooking session for local children with vegetables and herbs grown on-site. Establishing an “atlas de biodiversity communal” (ABC) (local biodiversity atlas) program with the community, directed to children to improve local knowledge of the flora and fauna in the area, similar to what they currently use on the golf with the ultimate goal to get a better understanding of what is living on the golf terrain and what also is available in the village.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	**C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities**		Try to make people aware of the environment and respect for nature and the beautiful managed hotel surroundings and the natural value of the golf courses.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	**C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies**	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Golf club has members, people only using the practice facilities (subscription) and people only using the hotel facilities.
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	Specific well documented introduction system for permanent and seasonal workers.
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	Committed to sustainability and ecological improvement of the golf course. Intern currently working on all these aspects (posting videos on different items related to the club’s golf and environmental activities) Employ several interns each year in cooperation with schools and universities and sometimes these are afterwards also employed at the facility.

				Also these aspects are communicated during tournaments and sometimes hit the media.
	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	Management supports employees in maximising contacts with different stakeholders on different levels and shown them the sustainability project as are ongoing on the golf course.

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