

The UNESCO Ecotourism Australia Memorandum of Cooperation outlines a commitment to the development and implementation of a world heritage tourism partnership and fund. The program has two phases. The first is the compilation and distribution of donated ecotourism products into Eco Escapes Itineraries for marketing and sale in the international arena. The funds from this project will be dedicated to the training and mentoring of organisations that operate in world heritage areas in developing nations by Australia's leading Ecotourism operators.

Ecotourism Australia

Ecotourism Australia was formed in 1991 as an incorporated non-profit organisation, and is the peak national body for the ecotourism industry in Australia. It has approximately 520 members and 210 accredited ECO Certified operators. The Board of Ecotourism Australia comprises members from leading government and ecotourism industry organisations.

The Association has a diverse membership that includes key industry sectors such as ecotourism accommodation, tour and attraction operators; tourism planners; protected area managers; academics and students; tourism, environmental, interpretation and training consultants; local and regional tourism associations and travellers.

It is envisioned that the role of Ecotourism Australia in the development and implementation of the world heritage fund will be mainly administrative. Ecotourism Australia will utilise its membership base to gain the commitment and support of ECO Certified operators in the provision of donated tourism product for the Eco Escapes Itineraries. Ecotourism Australia will communicate and market the scheme to operators and secure leisure services for inclusion in the itineraries. Ecotourism Australia will then provide a list of operators and an annual allotment of service to the nominated distributor of the Eco Escapes Itineraries. Ecotourism Australia will also be involved in some aspects of the financial management of the World Heritage fund.

UNESCO

UNESCO World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972 after recognising that world cultural and natural areas required protection. It has now become the world's leading organisation in the protection and preservation of these areas.

UNESCO will actively participate in the development and implementation of the World Heritage Program and Fund. They will be involved in the communication of the program goals with the appropriate organisations in world heritage areas in developing countries. UNESCO will directly communicate with these organisations and Ecotourism Australia to ensure that the mentoring and training program is successful. UNESCO will also be involved in the administration of the World Heritage fund.

Role of Prospective Distributor

It is envisioned that the distributor will play a pivotal role in the program. They will be responsible for the compilation, sales, marketing and daily administration of the Eco Escapes itineraries. They will be solely responsible for the associated legalities of the sales of the itineraries to leading destinations in Australia. They will also be involved in the collection of money and distribution of funds to relevant organisations including Ecotourism Australia and UNESCO.