



ECO Destination Certification | Ecotourism additional criteria

Pre-qualifying criteria:

This section is to be completed in the engagement letter upon beginning the application process.

1. The destination contains geographical space that is identified by categories II to VI from the IUCN's Protected Areas Category System?
 - II. National Park
 - III. Natural Monument or Feature
 - IV. Habitat/Species Management Area
 - V. Protected Landscape/Seascape
 - VI. Protected area with sustainable use of natural resourcesOr please explain other types of protected areas you have within your destination.

Guidance: A destination must include natural (and cultural) assets and areas that are protected and cared for.

2. Brief the relevant stakeholders (protected area managers, tourism marketers, destination management, etc) and ensure they support the promotion and strategic direction of becoming a certified ecotourism destination?

Guidance: Representatives from each section of the organisation need to be briefed on the destination undertaking the certification process. There needs to be majority of support by stakeholders as the destination certification includes the entire destination community. Examples of stakeholders include: Residents, business owners (tourism and other), protected area managers, the relevant regional and local tourism organisations, Traditional Owners of that region and destination management organisation staff directly involved in the process.



Nature Destination Certification

This section is to be completed for certification at Nature, Ecotourism or Green Destinations Certified (Ecotourism) levels.

A) Respecting our culture: Reconciliation action plan (RAP) – please attach.

Guidance: Create and attach a [reconciliation action plan](#) (at minimum addressing the 'Reflect' level) . or equivalent for an international destination.

B) Ecotourism Product – High standard ecotourism product is part of several products offered by a destination.

Guidance: High standard ecotourism products are available within the destination.

Definition: An ecotourism/nature destination needs high standard ecotourism products. These products are defined by being certified and independently audited through reputable 3rd party organisations.

C) Reward and recognition - Design, deliver and maintain a business environment where high standard ecotourism offerings thrive.

Guidance: The destination needs to ensure that high standard ecotourism product that is operating within their region is rewarded and/or recognised. The destination needs to grow and/or maintain the number of ecotourism operators within their region.

This may include:

- *Offering special license conditions or extended permits for ecotourism certified operators*
- *Creating targeted marketing campaigns and collateral for high standard operators*
- *Provide preferential marketing opportunities for high standard operators – famils, visiting journalists programs, and public speaking*
- *The destination's positioning includes nature and ecotourism experiences*
- *Sponsoring/assisting operators to become high standard*



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- *Holding certification workshops and training programs to build high standard ecotourism product within the region*

Definition: An ecotourism/nature destination needs high standard ecotourism products.

These products are defined by being certified and independently audited through reputable 3rd party organisations.

D) Protected area managers – The region’s protected area management agency/ies are a mandatory stakeholder who will be contacted during the audit process and serve as a referee for the destination.

Guidance: Provide a list of protected area management agencies within the destination and their key contact personnel. The protected area managers will be contacted by the auditor to discuss the relationship between both parties.



Ecotourism Destination Certification

This section only needs to be completed for certification of Ecotourism or Green Destinations Certified (Ecotourism) levels. You do not need to complete this to be only certified at a Nature Destination level.

- A) Interpretation and guiding**– Submit a copy of the destination’s current regional interpretation plan.

Guidance: Please email the EA office for a template of a destination interpretation plan.

Please attach a copy of the interpretation plan.

- B) Positive contribution to conservation** – The destination promotes, supports and facilitates existing natural and cultural conservation programs.

Guidance: Demonstrate how the destination is promoting and supporting the existing inventory of conservation programs (cultural and/or natural) within the region.

- C) Respecting our culture:** The destination’s interpretation plan includes appropriate consultation with Traditional Owners, ensuring the correct knowledge and permissions are used in interpretation of natural and cultural sites.

Guidance: The destination needs to demonstrate how interpretation of any information connected to Indigenous communities within the region is done so in consultation with the Traditional Owners. There needs to be careful consideration that any information provided through interpretation and guiding is accurate, respectful and with permission from the Traditional Owners within that region. May also wish to note how the destination manages and supports authenticity of Indigenous artwork within the region.

Please include your interpretation plan.



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D) Ecotourism product – High standard ecotourism products are widely found and highly visible in the destination.

Guidance: High standard ecotourism products are a drawcard for the destination and hero experiences showcase ecotourism products.

Definition: An ecotourism/nature destination needs high standard ecotourism products. These products are defined by being certified and independently audited through reputable 3rd party organisations.

E) Protected area managers - The region's protected area management agencies are represented on the destination tourism board or in its management group.

Guidance: Representation of protected area management agencies on destination tourism management board groups demonstrates a strong and effective relationship between the stakeholders. An ecotourism destination needs to demonstrate that it has involved and considers its protected areas with every tourism-related decision made within the region.



Green Destinations Certified (Ecotourism)

This section needs to be completed to reach certification of the Green Destinations Certified (Ecotourism) level. You are not required to complete this for certification as a Nature Destination or Ecotourism Destination.

- A) Interpretation and guiding** – The region’s guides and interpreters have access to regionally focused, high quality guiding content and delivery training.

Guidance: The destination management authority needs to demonstrate how they support and educate their region’s guides and interpreters to ensure that there is a high-quality level of interpretation throughout. This may include web resources, workshops/training sessions, acknowledged qualifications and active involvement in/support by the destination management organisation.

B) Positive contribution to conservation

- I. **Visitor’s engagement in conservation** - The destination ensures that visitors have opportunities to be engaged in the conservation of natural and cultural assets.

Guidance: Conservation can be used as a tool to engage and educate visitors, there is a greater cumulative impact when all stakeholders are involved – including visitors to the region. Destinations should demonstrate how visitors are engaged in the conservation process and educated throughout their engagement. For example; this could include citizen science commercial opportunities and running tree planting/clean-up/land care programs with visitors to the region or asking them to assist with conservation projects that already exist in the region.

- II. **Positive contribution to conservation** - The destination maintains an inventory of the existing conservation programs within their destination and actively addresses its shortfalls.



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Guidance: The destination should be aware of gaps in the existing conservation programs within the region and facilitate implementation of those required programs. They should work with community groups, businesses and/or individuals to meet the needs of conservation efforts within the region. For example, there may be an opportunity for a Low Carbon Living Community to be setup or a Landcare program to be initiated.

C) Respecting our culture – Appropriate Traditional Owners are involved in strategic decisions related to the presentation and interpretation of their culture.

Guidance: The destination needs to demonstrate how they do more than just consult the Traditional Owners; rather, the destination should involve Traditional Owners in strategic level decision-making processes which affect the presentation and interpretation of their culture.

D) Ecotourism product – High standard ecotourism products are the destination's primary tourism offering and define the destination's character.

Guidance: High standard ecotourism products are the major drawcard for the destination and key hero experiences showcase ecotourism products. This can be demonstrated through strategic/marketing plans prioritising ecotourism, and proof of the large proportion of high standard ecotourism products within the destination.

Definition: An ecotourism/nature destination needs high standard ecotourism products. These products are defined by being certified and independently audited through reputable 3rd party organisations.

E) Protected area managers – An MOU exists between the protected area manager and the destination management. Please attach.



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Guidance: The destination needs to provide evidence of a strong connection and working relationship with the protected area manager. This should facilitate a strong dialogue around tourism management and sustainability within and around the protected area.

Please attach MOU.