ECO Destination Certification ESSENTIALS

Douglas Shire. ECO Destination certified.

www.ecotourism.org.au

Last updated May 2020
“Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.” - Ecotourism Australia
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is ECO Destination Certification?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking the first steps towards certification</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do the criteria include?</td>
<td>6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the levels of certification?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the application process?</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the costs involved?</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What support can I seek?</td>
<td>13-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What resourcing and commitment are required?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What types of documentation will be required?</td>
<td>16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of the program</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial from an ECO Destination</td>
<td>19-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A smart move for your destination</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next steps</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Ecotourism Australia</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry worldwide. Visitors are increasingly seeking sustainable practices from not only tourism businesses but the entire destination.

The ECO Destination Certification program assures travellers that certified destinations are backed by a strong, well-managed commitment to sustainable practices and provide high-quality nature-based tourism experiences within the region.

The certification is for regions or destinations with a clearly defined boundary. It requires one organisation, like the local council or local tourism organisation, to be responsible for the management of the certification, however it assesses the entire region’s tourism destination management practices community-wide.

Why apply ecotourism principles to your destination?

By becoming a certified ECO Destination, you will join an established global network of like-minded destinations striving for ecotourism excellence. Increasingly, visitors are demanding authentic, unique and environmentally sustainable experiences. A core belief is that visitors experiencing certified ECO Destinations do notice the difference. Destination certification is about much more than the tourism sector: real, tangible environmental sustainability is demonstrated by how the community as a whole operates. We therefore encourage you to consider engaging with local businesses and residents throughout this process.

Becoming a certified ECO Destination means you will be demonstrating internationally recognised ecotourism credentials to visitors, stakeholders and the community in a manner that is credible and authenticated.

It’s not just the destination saying it, it’s independently assessed, verified and audited!

Bay of Plenty, ECO Destination applicant
The first step is to consider if this program is suitable for your region by reviewing the above text boxes and consulting with key internal and external stakeholders. If it is, we recommend organising a presentation by Ecotourism Australia to the region’s decisions makers to explain the process and assist in garnering support for and approval of the program.

The internationally recognised ECO Destination Certification program combines Ecotourism Australia’s ecotourism criteria with the Green Destinations Standard for sustainable tourism, creating a framework for the region to:

- Build a business environment in which ecotourism thrives.
- Ensure internal and external destination management practices are in line with international best practice sustainability standards.
- Encourage high yield visitation by offering visitors an easy way of determining where genuine and authentic ecotourism experiences are found.
- Join an established global network of like-minded destinations striving for ecotourism excellence and learn from others’ best practice examples of sustainable tourism management.
- Demonstrate that their sustainable and ecotourism credentials have been verified by a third-party independent auditor.

The destination also receives free submission into the Sustainable Destinations Top 100 competition for the first two years. This is an optional addition.
WHAT DO THE CRITERIA INCLUDE?

Ecotourism Australia’s ECO Destination Certification program is an Australian-developed program designed for the Australian context. The program combines Ecotourism Australia’s ecotourism criteria with the Green Destination Standard for sustainable tourism.

The Green Destinations (GD) Standard is accredited by the peak international sustainable tourism certification body, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

The **Green Destinations Standard** assesses the sustainability practices of the destination in environmental, social and economic sustainability, and covers these six (6) themes:

1. **Destination Management**
   - COMMITMENT & ORGANISATION Sustainable development and management of the destination is supported by an adequate organisational structure.
   - PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT Tourism in the destination is carefully planned.
   - MONITORING & REPORTING Sustainability issues and developments are monitored and reported.
   - LEGAL & ETHICAL COMPLIANCE The destination adheres to legal and ethical requirements.

2. **Nature & Scenery**
   - NATURE & CONSERVATION Nature is enhanced and effectively protected.
   - NATURE EXPERIENCE Tourism is respectful to nature and wildlife, and supportive to their protection.
   - LANDSCAPE & SCENERY Open landscapes and scenic views are protected, and landscape degradation is avoided.

3. **Environment & Climate**
   - LAND USE & POLLUTION Sustainable land use and pollution are effectively addressed.
   - WATER MANAGEMENT Water quality, water management and efficient water use are adequately addressed.
   - SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY Impacts from transportation on people, environment and climate are adequately addressed.
   - WASTE & RECYCLING Separate waste collection, recycling and reuse of waste is adequately addressed.
   - ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE Renewable energy and reduction of greenhouse gases are promoted.
   - CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION Adaptation to climate change is getting all necessary attention.

4. **Culture and Tradition**
   - CULTURAL HERITAGE Cultural sites and landscapes, built heritage and artefacts are effectively protected.
   - PEOPLE & TRADITION Tourism is respectful of the living culture and traditions, and supportive to their protection.
WHAT DO THE CRITERIA INCLUDE?

5 Social Wellbeing

HUMAN RESPECT Inhabitants and visitors are protected against violations of civil rights and corruption.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION Community participation and stakeholder involvement in destination management and development are ensured.

LOCAL ECONOMY Tourism's contribution to the local economy is optimised.

SOCIAL IMPACT MANAGEMENT The effects of tourism are adequately managed.

HEALTH & SAFETY A healthy, safe and secure environment is ensured for inhabitants and visitors.

6 Business & Hospitality

BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT The tourism sector takes its responsibility for sustainability in the destination.

INFORMATION & MARKETING Destination promotion and information for visitors is accurate and respectful.

HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION The destination is a good host, caring about feedback from tourists.

‘All ecotourism is sustainable but not all sustainable tourism is ecotourism.’
- Ecotourism Australia

To ensure the ECO Destination Certification program includes an ecotourism focus, Ecotourism Australia developed 15 additional ecotourism criteria in consultation with industry and academic professionals. These additional criteria confirm the destination is nature-based, supports quality interpretation and offers a business environment where ecotourism can thrive.

Ecotourism differs from sustainable tourism by having a focus on nature and natural systems and providing meaningful interpretive and educational experiences to engage visitors in nature.
WHAT ARE THE LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION?

There are three levels of ECO Destination Certification. These allow the region to choose the level which is best suited to the sustainability practices and ecotourism experiences offered in the region.

The destination does not need to decide which level of certification to aim for prior to beginning their application. Completed via the online platform, the program allows for changing to a another level of certification at a later date, as long as the additional criteria can be complied with.

**Certified Nature Destination**

- A nature-based tourism destination with a focus on sustainability.
- 80% of total criteria complete

**Certified Ecotourism Destination**

- An ecotourism destination with a strong focus on sustainability and which offers a variety of ecotourism product.
- 90% of total criteria complete

**Green Destinations Certified (Ecotourism)**

- An ecotourism destination with a very strong, dedicated ecotourism focus and exceptional ecotourism products throughout the region.
- 100% of total criteria complete

Did you know?

Ecotourism Australia also designs and delivers certification programs for tourism products, representing 500 environmentally responsible ecotourism operators and almost 1,700 products.
WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

The program requires one organisation to hold the responsibility of certification, however the criteria are holistic and consider all aspects of the region, the community and various stakeholder inputs.

It is recommended that one representative from the destination management organisation is the main lead and contact for this program. This person is required to liaise with multiple council departments, the local tourism organisation, community groups and other levels of government to collect the resources and information required for the application. Ecotourism Australia’s Programs Manager works closely with the destination representative in a coaching role to assist with the application. Various levels of support are available.

Once initial interest is expressed in the program, a follow up phone call is made and if the destination is still interested in learning more or wishes to proceed, a personalised cover letter and engagement letter will be forwarded for completion.

The process from engagement to certification is in four stages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 – Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The destination commits to the program by returning the completed engagement letter, paying the annual certification fee and purchasing one of the support packages. Ecotourism Australia runs an in-depth onsite induction to assist the destination to get started on their application, to create clear goals and ensure a thorough understanding of the requirements of all involved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2 – Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The destination works through the online application process with coaching from Ecotourism Australia via phone, email or face to face (various support packages are available). The process of certification allows a destination to proceed at its own speed, however the average application period is 12 months. Engagement with tourism operators and community stakeholders is crucial throughout the application.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3 – Audit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once ready for certification, an independent third party audit of the destination’s application is arranged. This is undertaken onsite (within the region) to verify the documentation submitted online and to offer opportunities to add more information that cannot be uploaded to the platform. An audit normally takes three days (depending on the scope of the region and level of certification).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 4 – Certification and Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once a compliant audit report is received, the destination is awarded certification at the appropriate level. It can then choose to continue to work towards the next level of certification or remain with the current level. Marketing and communication tools are provided to assist the destination in spreading the news of its certification, and continuing opportunities for the destination are provided as they arise. Ongoing auditing is undertaken every two to four years thereafter to maintain certification.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

ECOTOURISM AUSTRALIA’S
ECO Destination Application Process

1. Destination enquiry. Further information provided & discuss suitability of program for the region. Engagement letter and forms provided.
2. Engagement form & pre-qualifying criteria returned to EA Programs Manager. Certification and support package fees paid.
3. Site induction scheduled. Site induction provided online portal login & resources.
4. Site induction (1 day) completed in destination by EA Programs Manager. Works action plan developed.

Optional

8. Host an ECO Certification workshop for operators run by EA Certification Manager. May involve additional costs.
9. Complete all sustainability and ecotourism criteria for application submission. EA Programs Manager undertakes a technical check and provides initial feedback. Destination has the opportunity to adjust.

85 criteria = Nature Destination
120 criteria = Ecotourism Destination
115 criteria = GD Certified (Ecotourism)

10. Audit successfully completed. CELEBRATE!
Certificate, logo and communication tools provided to promote your certification.
11. Independent auditor conducts a desktop and onsite audit of the destination’s application. Audit fee + cost of logistics optional
12. Update your responses and re-start from #11 for the continuation of the audit process (2-4 years)

Optional

13. Continue to work towards next level of certification by completing the required criteria or corrective actions.
14. Continue to foster ecotourism within your region. Share your certification & sustainability achievements and outcomes.
15. Note: If there are any corrective actions from the audit, the destination may have time to provide further information to the auditor before the final decision is made.
WHAT ARE THE COSTS INVOLVED?

First-year only: To ensure the destination is supported effectively throughout its application, the certification fee (p.10) is payable in conjunction with one of the support packages (p.11). This guarantees the support can be personalised and tailored to suit the region’s needs.

Second-year & onwards: From the second year onwards, just the annual certification fee (p.10) is billed at the anniversary of engagement.

Included in the annual certification fees:

- Access to the online platform for the destination's application and certification, including built in guidance and best practice examples.
- Ecotourism Australia membership, communications and marketing support.
- Green Destinations membership & communications.
- Invitation to attend and (possibly) present at the annual Ecotourism Australia Global Eco Asia-Pacific Tourism Conference.
- Invitation to attend and (possibly) present at the annual Global Green Destinations Day Conference
- Nomination into the Top 100 Sustainable Destinations competition (available for 2 years)
- Listing on the Green Travel Guide (once certified)
- Listing on the Good Travel Guide (once certified)
- Desktop/online audit fee
**WHAT ARE THE COSTS INVOLVED?**

**Destination with population** = Municipal or local council, regional tourism organisation (RTO), island authority or other management organisation with control over a defined area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination population:</th>
<th>Annual certification fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applying destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nature or Ecotourism certified Destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5,000</td>
<td>$2,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 25,000</td>
<td>$3,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 50,000</td>
<td>$4,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 100,000</td>
<td>$5,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 250,000</td>
<td>$6,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1,000,000</td>
<td>$6,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1 million</td>
<td>$8,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Protected area without population** = Nature or national park, protected area, marine park, etc. and large attractions (destinations usually with little or no resident population).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected area size in km²:</th>
<th>Annual certification fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applying destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nature or Ecotourism certified Destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>$2,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 200</td>
<td>$3,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1,000</td>
<td>$4,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1,000</td>
<td>By negotiation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the first year, this certification fee cannot be purchased on its own, one of three support packages must be chosen (see p.11).

**Additional costs:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onsite audit fee</th>
<th>$650/day + cost of logistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional Support</td>
<td>$950 for 10 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An initial onsite audit is required to become certified, and then an onsite audit is required every four years for Nature and Ecotourism Destinations. An onsite audit is approx. 3 days. (GD Certified Destination level onsite audit fee is included in the certification fee)

If you require additional support on top of the chosen support package. This can be used for coaching support by the Ecotourism Australia Programs Manager or Communications Manager. Additional support can be purchased any time during the application phase.

Please note: All prices are excluding logistics which may include accommodation, transport (including flights), meeting rooms and other incidentals. Pricing is in AUD, excluding GST and subject to change.
**WHAT SUPPORT CAN I SEEK?**

**Destination certification support packages:**

In conjunction with the certification fee, the destination has the choice of one of three support packages listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note new prices as of 1 September 2020</th>
<th>Basic support package (12 months)</th>
<th>Online support package (12 months)</th>
<th>Fully inclusive support package (18 months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended for destinations</strong></td>
<td>Recommended for destinations with high capacity and resource availability to undertake the certification process with minimal support, have engaged an external consultant or those seeking a low-cost approach.</td>
<td>Recommended for destinations seeking support and guidance during the certification process. This is the most popular package.</td>
<td>Recommended for destinations seeking strong support and guidance throughout the certification process and wanting to take a slower approach to the application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-day onsite induction* with Programs Manager upon engagement in the program.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One ecotourism product workshop for tourism operators.**</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten (10) hours online/phone coaching support for the destination by Programs Manager.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional twenty (20) hours coaching support from EA Programs Manager &amp; Communications support for destination by EA Communications Manager (making a total of 30 hours).</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirty (30) hour Preliminary Assessment which is highly recommended and will save time and resourcing for the destination. See page 14 for more information.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional thirty (30) hours coaching support from EA Programs Manager &amp; Communications support for destination by EA Communications Manager (making a total of 60 hours).</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An additional Ecotourism product workshop for tourism operators.**</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investment</strong></td>
<td>$1,250 + certification fees &amp; GST</td>
<td>$5,850 + certification fees &amp; GST</td>
<td>$9,450 + certification fees &amp; GST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Two (2) days of the Programs Manager’s time is allocated for the site induction (including travel time). If further time is required for travel or onsite, it is a cost of $760 per day.

** Two (2) days of staff time is allocated for an ecotourism product workshop (including travel time). If further time is required for travel or onsite, it is a cost of $760 per day.
Preliminary Assessment

The Preliminary Assessment inputs existing (publicly available) information into the online application portal on behalf of the destination. It combines researching the region’s tourism, council and land management websites for information, with interviews of key stakeholders who can provide further information and understanding.

A report is then provided to the destination summarising the quantity of criteria already completed with existing information that was found through online research and interviews. Click here to see a blank sample of a Preliminary assessment report. It also highlights the areas of strength and weakness in the destination to assist with planning and developing the detailed works plan to achieve certification. The destination then is given access to the information which has already been inputted onto the platform - saving substantial time and resourcing for the destination management organisation which is tasked with completing the certification application.

This is a highly recommended step in the application process as it provides the region a clear understanding of the level of work ahead (and for whom). It also takes some of the initial workload off the allocated staff member who is to complete the certification application.
The time commitment varies from destination to destination. It depends on several variables including the deadline in which the destination would like to achieve certification, the complexity of the destination’s management, the scope of the region and the support packages chosen.

The process of certification allows a destination to proceed at its own speed, but on average an application for Nature level certification is reached within 12 months.

As mentioned previously, it is recommended that one representative from the lead organisation is the main contact for this program. This is normally an allocated staff member of the organisation who is tasked with managing the application and certification of the region.

Optional engagement of consultants can assist with the speed of the application; however it is suggested that the main responsibility still sits with an internal staff member of the destination’s lead organisation to ensure the destination organisation is satisfied with the information submitted on its behalf.

The program is best used as a business development tool to assess the existing sustainability practices in the destination and to then consider improvements and international best practice standards. Hence, the program requires a considerable time commitment, especially to take advantage of the opportunities the framework offers.
WHAT TYPES OF DOCUMENTATION WILL BE REQUIRED?

See below for a guide of the type of documents which you may be required to submit as part of an ECO destination. Please note: This is not an exhaustive list, and in many cases another document might suffice for the requirements of the application.

Nature Destination Certification

- PD of sustainability coordinator
- Organisational structure
- Vision with sustainability principles
- Sustainable tourism policy
- Sustainable tourism action plan
- Financial plan/budget for sustainable tourism management
- Procurement policy
- Staff and management ethical code of conduct
- Tourism impact assessment (template provided)
- Visitor management plan for sensitive sites (cultural or natural)
- Monitoring reports and procedures for key sustainability indicators
- Management plans/strategies for:
  - Protected areas
  - Natural resources
  - Animal welfare/wildlife
  - Biodiversity and invasive species
  - Tourism impact monitoring reports
- Landscape development plans
- Planning scheme with sustainability principles
- Environmental management plan
- Air quality/noise/light/carbon management plans/policy
- Water management plans and monitoring reports
- Waste reduction, recycling and management plans/policy
- Energy reduction or renewable transition plans and monitoring reports
- Sustainable/soft mobility plan/policy
- Climate change action plan
- Cultural heritage management plan/policy
- Intangible heritage conservation plan/policy
- Marketing & communication plan (which is respectful and honest)
- Health & safety plan
- Crisis & emergency response plan
- SME & local product support program
- General visitor satisfaction monitoring reports
- Reward/recognition program for sustainable tourism businesses
WHAT TYPES OF DOCUMENTATION WILL BE REQUIRED?

**Ecotourism Destination Certification**

- Sustainable and ecotourism business education and promotion
- Climate change risk assessment and adaption plans
- Tour guide code of practice
- Accessibility plan
- Socio-economic development plan
- Inclusive tourism development plan
- Interpretation plan (including sustainability and community involvement)
- Strong community engagement and consultation policy (particularly in relation to sustainable tourism)
- Community conservation programs

**Green Destinations Certified (Ecotourism)**

- In-depth sustainable and ecotourism tourism business programs
- Tour guide code of practice
- Accessibility plan
- Socio-economic development plan
- Inclusive tourism development plan
- Sustainability focused visitor monitoring reports
BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

**BUILD**

a business environment in which ecotourism thrives in the region.

**USE**

the ECO Destination Certification framework as a business development tool for the region.

**JOIN**

an established global network of like-minded destinations striving for ecotourism excellence and learn from each other’s best practice examples of sustainable tourism management.

**DEMONSTRATE**

that the destination’s sustainable and ecotourism credentials have been verified by a third-party independent auditor.

**ENSURE**

internal and external destination management practices are in line with international best practice sustainability standards.

**PROMOTE**

the destination to the right type of visitors, i.e. the type that seeks a high-quality ecotourism experience and values the landscape they are travelling in.

**RECEIVE**

a regular onsite visit from an industry expert who can assist you to continue to improve in your sustainability practices.
TESTIMONIAL FROM AN ECO DESTINATION

We sat down with Tara Bennett, Chief Executive Officer from Tourism Port Douglas Daintree and asked her what it was like for the Douglas Shire Region to undertake the ECO Destination Certification program.

Why did Douglas Shire decide to join the ECO Destination Certification program?

The process provided a valuable opportunity to identify and consolidate many of the government, not for profit, commercial actions and initiatives that were in place and bring them together in a structured way. The process importantly allowed us to identify future opportunities to pursue on our process of continuous improvement in sustainable tourism and living.

How has the program benefitted your processes/destination management?

The framework that was developed for the program has assisted in destination management practices and ongoing monitoring. The content developed for the program helps us align future activities with the aspirations of ECO Destination Certification.
Achieving Nature level certification is just the start of your sustainability journey, what’s next?

Our certification journey began with the private sector where the tourism industry has been involved for decades. The first level for a destination is Nature which we always viewed as step one, next up work begins on final criteria to achieve Ecotourism level. Beyond certification we also hope to bring businesses outside tourism along with us to see activities throughout the Shire aligned on a pathway of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

What has the response been from your community and visitors now that you have achieved Nature level certification?

The Douglas Shire community has been very supportive and proud of the region’s participation in the program. The benefit of the program is it acknowledges the individual efforts of the community, businesses and local government helping to unify everyone on a common goal. There were some in the community who questioned the authenticity of the program when there are some aspects that don’t appear to be ‘sustainable’ however this helped everyone realise it’s a process of continuous improvement where we are introducing extra measures and support tools to try and bring all businesses along on the journey.

Would you recommend the program to other destinations (and why)?

Absolutely! From a tourism point of view the program brings together so much more than environmental practices with sections on visitor management, cultural inclusion, waste and water management and impacts on community. This holistic approach provides a roadmap for progressing the destination and tourism in a manner that will meet the needs of all stakeholders.
ECO Destination Certification is a way for your tourism destination to receive official recognition for best environmental and professional practices.

Undertaking certification enhances the sustainability of your destination, focusing on product development. It encourages you to implement and maintain high standard practices that will help you, your staff and the community plan for the long term.

All ECO Destination certified members are listed on Ecotourism Australia’s website in the online Green Travel Guide and on Green Destinations’ website. Certification also offers networking opportunities with diverse industry stakeholders.

**OPPORTUNITY: Sustainable Destinations Top 100 and “Best of” Awards at ITB Berlin**

An optional component of the certification process is to nominate into the Top 100 awards program where you could be selected as one of the world’s top 100 sustainable destinations. Then you could be presented as ‘best of’ in a category at ITB Berlin —The world’s leading travel trade show. http://sustainabletop100.org/

Internationally recognised standard & brand

Ecotourism Australia (EA) has partnered with Green Destinations to create and implement the ECO Destination Certification program throughout Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific.

Green Destinations is a non-profit foundation for sustainable tourism, leading a global partnership of organisations like EA to run assessment and certification programs. The Green Destinations Standard is recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and the “Green Destinations Certified” level of certification is GSTC Accredited.

GSTC establishes and manages global sustainability standards for the tourism industry, ensuring there is continuity internationally.

Becoming a certified ECO Destination means being promoted globally and joining a global network of other like-minded destinations who meet regularly and have created their own network to discuss issues and explore opportunities: collection.greendestinations.org
Once the destination expresses strong interest in the program, a personalised engagement letter and cover letter will be provided to the destination. On receipt of the completed engagement letter and the payment of the certification fee and support package the application process will be activated.

Interested? Get in touch with us via phone or email (eco@ecotourism.org.au / 07 3256 6777) and we’ll send you a personalised engagement letter and cover letter. Once we have these filled out documents back from you and have received your first payment, we’ll activate your application process.

Where to find more information

- Ecotourism Australia web page:  
- Green Destinations web page:  
  https://greendestinations.org/
- Destinations can host a presentation by Ecotourism Australia’s CEO to councillors/board/decision-makers of their region to provide further information on the program (costs involved).
- Destinations can participate in a free 1:1 demonstration of the online platform used by applicant destinations, via Skype, with Ecotourism Australia’s Programs Manager.
Certification Administrative Structure & Governance

Ecotourism Australia is partner of Green Destinations (accredited by GSTC) and licenced to implement the Green Destinations Standard within Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. The program is managed by the Ecotourism Australia national office. Advice, dispute resolution and leadership is provided through EA’s Certification Committee as a sub-unit of the Board of Ecotourism Australia.

Appeals Process

A destination agency with existing certification, an applicant applying for certification, or a destination agency reapplying for certification has a right of appeal if their application for certification is rejected, or certification removed, following an audit or application refusal.

Appeals will be evaluated by the Certification Committee and must be lodged with Ecotourism Australia no later than 21 days after notice of the decision has been given.

Terms and Conditions

The full terms & conditions for Ecotourism Australia Limited, as well as information regarding our compliance policy, administrative structure and governance can be found on Ecotourism Australia’s website: www.ecotourism.org.au.
Become part of our community

With almost 1,700 certified tourism products around Australia and a growing number of destinations, becoming certified is also a way to become part of Ecotourism Australia’s large community and interact with people who, just like you, are working to protect the world we live in.

Join the conversation with us on social media and get your message out there!

Follow and tag us on social media: #EcotourismAustralia