ECO and ROC Certification Essentials

www.ecotourism.org.au
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What is Ecotourism?

Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.

Why Apply Ecotourism Principles to your Business?

Mass tourism has had a significant impact on a wide range of destinations worldwide. Governments and environmental organisations are working towards regulations which will hopefully make a difference. Following the ecotourism guidelines offered by Ecotourism Australia will ensure that your business has a minimal impact on the environment and is supportive of local communities.

The impact tourism should have on a destination is to raise awareness about environmental and community issues. This will ensure the sustainability of the destination and your business and encourage authenticity for satisfied visitors who will share and promote their holiday experience.

Did you know?

Ecotourism is the perfect deal for Australia’s most frequent type of visitor, “The Experience Seeker”.

Australia has something to offer for every holiday type, whether it be trekking, snorkelling and diving, honeymoons, spa, or cruising, and whatever category of visitors your product covers, you want your business to attract the largest number of visitors. Reports from Tourism Australia have shown that 30% to 50% of inbound visitors could be categorised as “The Experience Seeker”.

“The Experience Seeker” is looking for authenticity, opportunities to learn and experience something different, adventure and like most consumers, quality and value for money.

Ecotourism Australia certification is a great way to show these visitors that you have what they are looking for.

Have you already implemented eco-friendly practices?
Does your business offer a high quality experience aiming at educating visitors about your destination?

Get Ecotourism Australia certified and get your efforts recognised!
What is Ecotourism Australia Certification?

ECO & ROC Certification Programs

ECO Certification is product-specific—this means that you will need to answer the criteria as it applies specifically to each of your products. This also means that you are able to apply for ECO Certification even if not all of your products are nature-based.

Tourism in natural areas that leaves minimal impact on the environment.

Tourism in natural areas focusing on optimal resources use, conservation practices and helps local communities.

Tourism with strong interpretation values, commitment to nature conservation and helping local communities.

Did you know?

You do not need to decide which level you want to achieve beforehand. You will have access to the criteria for each level of certification and you can decide which level is the most appropriate for your business.

You will still be able to upgrade to an upper level of certification later if you wish to!

The Respecting Our Culture program encourages the tourism industry to operate in ways that respect and reinforces Indigenous cultural heritage and the living cultures of Indigenous communities.

ROC certified tourism operators are committed to protecting cultural authenticity and integrity, developing sound business practices, environmental protection and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' spiritual connection to the land and water.
What is Ecotourism Australia Certification?

Get Climate Action Business Certification

Did you know?

You can also achieve Climate Action Business certification through your ECO certification application.

The Climate Action Business certification is the first level of Ecotourism Australia Climate Action certification program, followed by Innovator and Leader.

Climate Action Certification is designed for all sectors of the tourism industry including hotels, attractions, tours, transport, restaurants, travel agents, tourism commissions and industry bodies. The Climate Action Certification program is dedicated to reducing carbon emissions and assuring travellers that certified products are backed by a commitment to sustainable practices related to addressing climate change.

The Climate Action Business level of certification recognises businesses which have undertaken a set of adaption and emissions reduction actions but are not necessarily measuring their carbon footprint.

What does it involve?

If you wish to get Climate Action Business certified through your ECO certification, you will only have to address a few additional criteria and submit a Climate Change Action Plan (templates available).

As you already hold ECO certification, you are entitled to the discounted annual fee for your Climate Action certification—refer to page 9 for pricing.

For information about the other levels of Climate Action certification, please contact us.
A Smart Move For Your Business

ECO and/or ROC certification is a way for your tourism business to get officially recognised for best environmental and professional practices.

As the program is endorsed by different government authorities, you can gain access to government grants, government PR initiatives and other marketing initiatives (e.g. visiting journalists wanting to promote those who are making a difference). Depending on the area in which you operate, you may have the opportunity to apply and obtain longer permits and licences.

Going through certification enhances the sustainability of your business, focusing on product development. It will encourage you to implement and maintain high standard practices that will help you, your staff and the destination to plan for the long-term.

All ECO and ROC certified tourism operators are listed on Ecotourism Australia’s website and on Ecotourism Australia’s annual publication, the Green Travel Guide. Networking opportunities with industry stakeholders is another benefit.

…Get rewarded for doing the right thing…

The Green Travel Guide

The Green Travel Guide is Ecotourism Australia’s online publication listing all the ECO, ROC and Climate Action certified tourism operators and EcoGuides. It is launched annually at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) and it was downloaded 60,000 times from EA’s website in 2012.

Get your online free version by clicking here

GBRMPA Permit

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) promotes businesses that are operating to a high standard by managing their environmental impacts.

Tourism operators certified through the ECO Certification Program (at the Ecotourism and Advanced Ecotourism levels) and actively demonstrate their commitment to reducing their impact on the environment can apply for an extended permit.

In addition, certified operators are listed on the GBRMPA website and are showcased at various trade events (for example, the Australian Tourism Exchange) and publications.
Get Industry Recognition for Being ECO and ROC Certified

T-QUAL Accreditation is the Australian Government’s quality framework for the tourism industry. The accreditation assesses and supports quality assurance schemes and endorses their members with its national symbol of quality, the T-QUAL Tick.

www.ret.gov.au

The ECO and ROC certification programs also get the Tourism Business Accreditation logo. The Tourism Business Accreditation logo is an assurance of best business management practice.

www.tourismaccreditation.org.au

Ecotourism Australia’s Ecotourism and Advanced Ecotourism certification standards have been recognised in 2011 by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) along with only nine other organisations worldwide.

The GSTC serves as the international body for fostering increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices, promoting the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles and building demand for sustainable travel.

www.gstcouncil.org

Pams and STOs

Ecotourism Australia works closely with Protected Area Managers (PAMs) and State Tourism Organisations (STOs) in an effort to build stronger relationships with these organisations and provide local benefits to certified operators.

All PAMs and STOs actively support our ECO and ROC program and prioritise certified operators licencing and permits, local marketing campaigns and other initiatives.

Get in touch with your local PAM to check the current benefits:

ACT Territory & Municipal Services
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
Parks & Wildlife Commission NT
OLD Parks & Wildlife Service

SA National Parks & Wildlife Service
Parks Victoria
WA Department of Environment & Conservation
TAS National Parks & Wildlife Service

Did you know?
If you have an accommodation product certified at the Advanced Ecotourism level, you can become a member of EcoLodges of Australia.

Contact eco@ecotourism.org.au for more information

www.ecolodgesaustralia.com.au
Can you apply for certification?

The products you wish to certify offer at least a 50% nature based focus to customers e.g. accommodation in a natural area, diving / snorkelling activities, outdoor tours. A 75% nature based focus is required for the Advanced Ecotourism level of certification.

You have obtained all of the necessary operating licenses, permits and approvals from the relevant authority and understand these will be verified as part of your application.

You commit to and meet the Business Ethics practices required by Ecotourism Australia (View Business Ethics as PDF here).

Your operation consistently meets customer service expectations and has defined customer service procedures.

You have a commitment to delivering a quality tourism experience.

Sustainability principles (economic, social and environmental) are core to your operation.

When applying for certification, evidence is required for Business Sustainability Planning (BSP). The benefit of the BSP system is it allows applicants an opportunity to recognize pre-existing, develop new, and implement appropriate management planning. Depending on the level of certification you want to achieve you will have to provide the following supporting documents:

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<th></th>
<th>Nature Tourism</th>
<th>Ecotourism</th>
<th>Advanced Ecotourism</th>
<th>ROC</th>
<th>Climate Action Business through ECO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing Plan</td>
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<td>Operations Plan</td>
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<td>Environmental Plan</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Interpretation Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate Change Action Plan</td>
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Templates are available and you can always get in touch if you need assistance.
How does it work?

Start your application online or contact us to receive an editable PDF version of the application workbook

Pay your once-only application fee and get started with your application

Once you have everything ready, you can submit your application

Ecotourism Australia will now conduct an internal review to make sure your application is complete. We will contact you if we need anything

You now have 12 months to submit your complete application and your supporting documents.

Do not hesitate to get in touch if you are having difficulties with your application, we are here to help!

This usually takes about 2 weeks

Your application will now be sent to an external independent assessor

Our assessor sends Ecotourism Australia the assessment feedback and the level of certification achieved

Did you know?
Certification programs through Ecotourism Australia cover the following areas:

- Business Management and Operational Planning
- Responsible Marketing
- Customer Satisfaction
- Environmental Management
- Climate Change Action
- Interpretation and Education
- Contribution to Conservation
- Working with Local Communities
- Cultural Respect and Sensitivity
How much does it cost?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Turnover</th>
<th>Once-Only Application Fee</th>
<th>Ongoing Annual Fee</th>
<th>Discounted Annual Fee (if combined with Climate Action)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $250,000</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>126</td>
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<td>$250,001 - $1,000,000</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>320</td>
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<td>&gt; $10,000,001</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>1295</td>
<td>374</td>
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After getting certified...

Once you are certified and have paid your first annual fee, we will send you your certificate and marketing material so you can proudly display your achievement.

Every year on the anniversary of your certification you will need to pay your renewal fees and send us your completed annual declaration stating that you are still committed to the previously agreed terms.

An on-site audit will be conducted every three years. In order for your certification to be always up-to-date and to facilitate the audit process we require your documentation to be updated regularly.
About us

Ecotourism Australia was formed in 1991 as an incorporated non-profit organisation and is the peak national body for the ecotourism industry.

The organisation offers certification programs for tourism products available in Australia such as accommodation, tours and attractions. Ecotourism Australia also has a diverse membership that includes key industry stakeholders, protected area managers and other government agencies, academics and students, tourism, environmental, interpretation and training consultants, local and regional tourism associations and travellers.

Contact Us

6/67 O’Connell Terrace
Bowen Hills QLD 4006

T: 07 3252 1530
F: 07 3252 0331
eco@ecotourism.org.au
www.ecotourism.org.au

Become part of our community

With over 450 certified tourism experiences around Australia, 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 Australia.

You can take part in our online social media campaigns and get your message out there! Images, articles, latest news, you can provide us with the content you want us to share for you.

Like us on Facebook and follow our blog EcoBytes!
Get in touch!