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.

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!

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.
What is Ecotourism Australia Certification?

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.

**ECO & ROC Certification Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECO Certified Nature Tourism</td>
<td>Tourism in natural areas that leaves minimal impact on the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO Certified Ecotourism</td>
<td>Tourism in natural areas focusing on optimal resources use, conservation practices and helps local communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO Certified Advanced Ecotourism</td>
<td>Tourism with strong interpretation values, commitment to nature conservation and helping local communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 official recognition for best environmental and professional practices.

As the program is endorsed by different government authorities, you can gain access to government grants, government PR 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 for operations within protected areas and Parks.

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 search engine listing all the ECO, ROC and Climate Action certified tourism operators.

The online Green Travel Guide was launched in May 2014, and lists all Ecotourism Australia certified products. Each operator received a free listing, with opportunity to upgrade to premium listings to maximize their reach.

View the Green Travel Guide 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.
The benefits of Ecotourism Australia’s certification include:

- You receive a **certificate** to display, and **certification logos** to use on all of your print and digital marketing material.

- The **Green Travel Guide** is our online search engine for certified tourism products and operators, certified operators receive a free bronze level listing, with the opportunity to upgrade to a premium level listing for further reach.

- **Share with us and we’ll share with the world!** If you have photos, footage or exciting news; tell us and we will share them through our news page, blog and social media streams. The more actively you share with us, the greater the benefits and exposure you receive.

- Receive **international marketing exposure** with a free web listing with our South African partner, Coastal and Marine Eco Tourism (COMET).

- Receive a free web listing, and other marketing opportunities with **Our Planet Travel** website and magazine.

- Representation at the annual **Australian Tourism Exchange** (ATE).

- **Grow your certification with ease;** once you are certified it is simple and inexpensive to upgrade and add additional products to your certification.

- **Free advertising** of holiday specials and job vacancies on our website.

- **Government recognition:** ECO certification can entitle you to extended permits and licences in with a range of different State and National Park Agencies and Protected Area Managers.

- 25% Member discount to our annual **Global Eco Conference**.

- Receive full membership rights to Ecotourism Australia, including voting rights, and the right to nominate and stand for the Board of Directors.
Did you know?
If you have an accommodation product certified at the Advanced Ecotourism level, you can become a member of the EcoLodges of Australia marketing consortium.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nature Tourism</th>
<th>Ecotourism</th>
<th>Advanced Ecotourism</th>
<th>ROC</th>
<th>Climate Action Business through ECO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Plan</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Plan</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations Plan</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Plan</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change Action Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Templates and free coaching sessions are available and you can always get in touch if you need assistance.
How does it work?

Logon to:
our-certification-programs/eco-certification/
and select “Apply now!”

Register and pay your once-only application fee
and get started on your application.
You have 12 months to complete your application.

Complete your application and submit it to Ecotourism
Australia. Free coaching sessions are available, contact
the EA Office with any questions.

Your application is assessed and any corrections
followed up with you.

Certification granted

This usually takes
about 2 weeks

An on-site external audit will be conducted
within the first three months and then
every three years thereafter.

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $250,000</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,001 - $1,000,000</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000,001 - $5,000,000</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000,001 - $10,000,000</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $10,000,001</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 in the first three months of your certification, and every three years thereafter. 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.
There are 8 section components for the ECO certification program, these are:

1. Business Management and Operational Planning
   - Business Ethics
   - Natural Area Focus | Indigenous Cultural Focus
2. Responsible Marketing
3. Customer Satisfaction
4. Environmental Management
5. Interpretation and Education
6. Contribution for Conservation
7. Working with Local Communities
8. Cultural Respect and Sensitivity
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.

Follow us on social media and the EcoBytes blog!
Get in touch!

ECO and ROC Certification - Essentials & Criteria

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