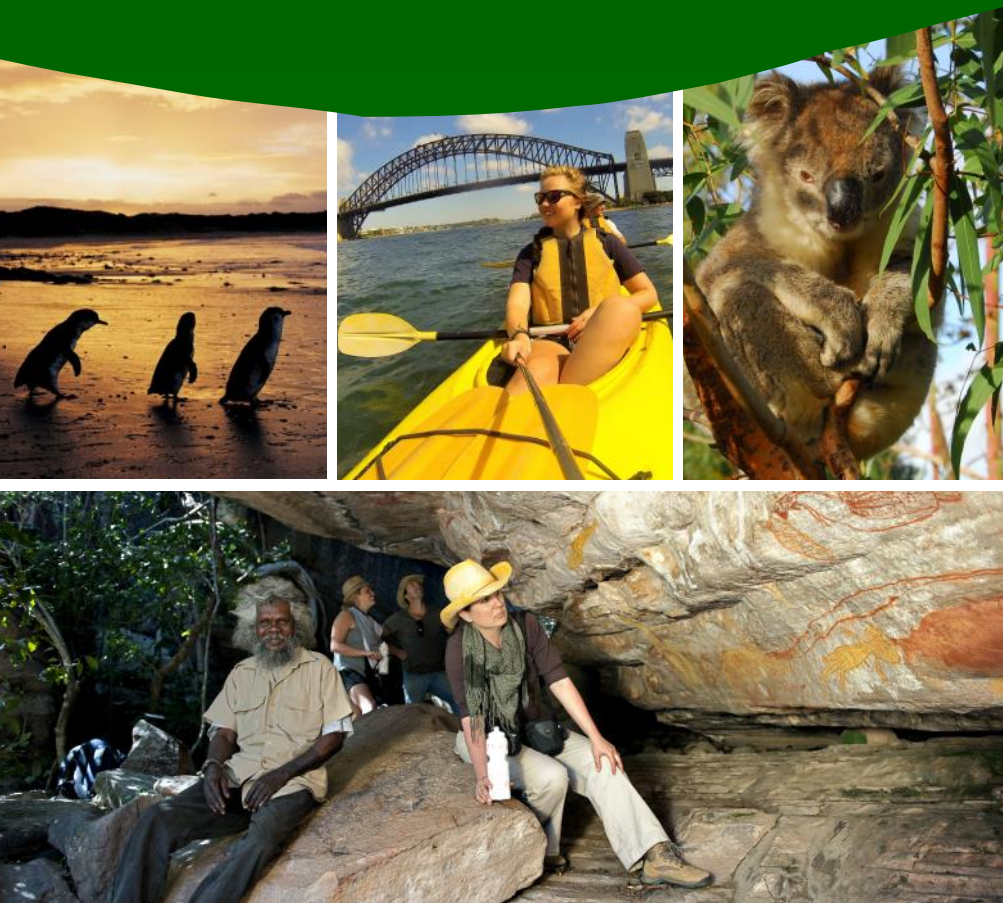


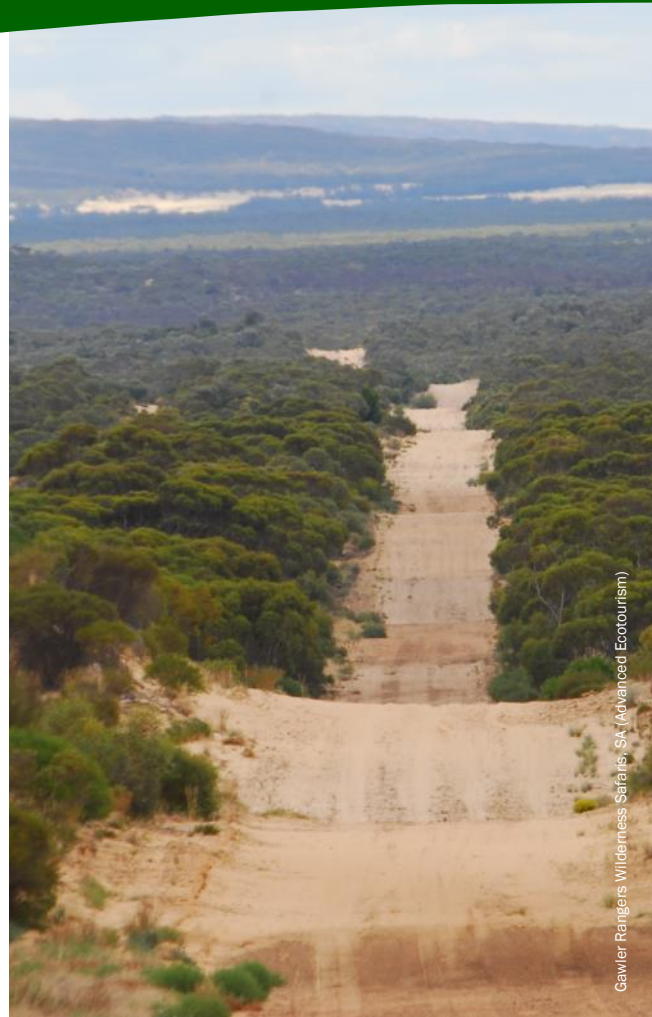
ECO and Respecting Our Culture certification

ESSENTIALS



www.ecotourism.org.au

What is ecotourism?	2
What is certification?	3-4
A smart move for your business	5
What are the benefits?	6
Industry recognition	7
Certification process	8-10
What does the criteria include?	11-22
About Ecotourism Australia	23



Gawler Rangers Wilderness Safaris, SA (Advanced Ecotourism)



Front page (left to right): Phillips Island penguin parade, VIC. Longhorn YOUNique Tours (ROC & Ecotourism).

A kayaking tour in Sidney, NSW. Life's an Adventure (Ecotourism).

Koala at Mikkira Station, Eyre Peninsula, SA. Gawler Rangers Wilderness Safaris (Advanced Ecotourism).

Front page (bottom): Rockart, Alice Springs & MacDonell, NT. Wayoutback Australian Safaris (Climate Action, ROC & Advanced Ecotourism).

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?

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry worldwide. Ecotourism Australia's (EA) guidelines help businesses become ecotourism leaders by ensuring the sustainability of destinations and supporting local communities.

Following EA's best practice standards will enable you to provide a high-quality recognisable product to consumers whilst increasing your sustainable development. This can create cost savings, improve your organisation's image and help you establish closer connections with your local tourism and protected area management organisations.

Do you operate a nature based tourism product?

Have you already implemented eco-friendly practices?

Does your business offer a high quality experience aiming at educating visitors about your destination?

Get EA certified and have your efforts recognised!

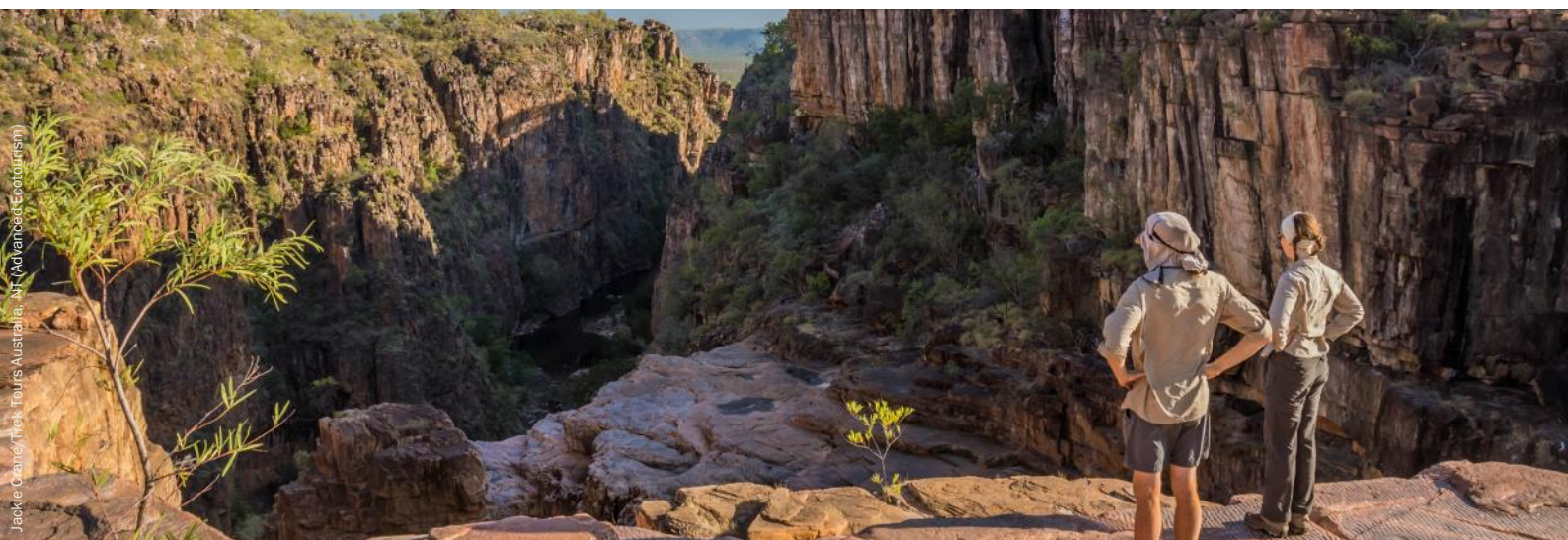
Did you know?

EA's ECO certification has been around since 1996 and was one of the first programs of its kind in the world.

ECO certification was created by industry for industry, with collaboration and consultation by academics, industry experts, environmental scientists and tourism operators.

ECO certification is one of three tourism sustainability certification programs globally to be approved through the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's Integrity Program.

In 2015 EA entered a licensing agreement with Coastal and Marine Eco Tourism to introduce ECO certification in southern Africa. In February 2016 we awarded the first ECO certification under this agreement.



What is Ecotourism Australia certification?

ECO & Respecting Our Culture 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 that focuses on optimal resources use, conservation practices and helping local communities.

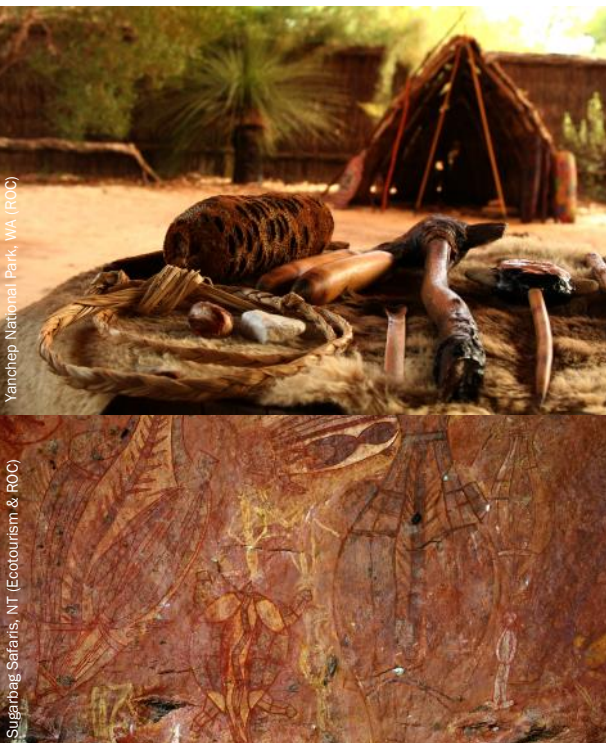


Tourism with strong interpretation values and a commitment to nature conservation and helping local communities.

Did you know?

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

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



Yanchep National Park, WA (ROC)

Sugarbag Safaris, NT (Ecotourism & ROC)



The Respecting Our Culture (ROC) program encourages the tourism industry to operate in ways that respect and reinforce 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 achieve Climate Action Business certification through your ECO certification application.



The Climate Action Business certification is the first level of EA's 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 that help address climate change.

The Climate Action Business level of certification recognises businesses that 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 become Climate Action Business certified through your ECO certification, you 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.



Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort, QLD (Advanced Ecotourism & Climate Action Business)



Venus Bay Eco Retreat, VIC (Advanced Ecotourism & Climate Action Business)

A smart move for your business

ECO and/or ROC certification is a way for your tourism business to receive official recognition for best environmental and professional practices.

As the programs are endorsed by different government authorities, you can gain access to government grants and promotion, as well as other marketing initiatives such as visiting journalists showcasing those who are making a difference. Depending where you operate, you may have the opportunity to apply for and obtain longer permits and licences for operations within protected areas and parks.

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

All ECO and ROC certified tourism operators are listed on EA's website, the Green Travel Guide. Certification also offers networking opportunities with diverse industry stakeholders.

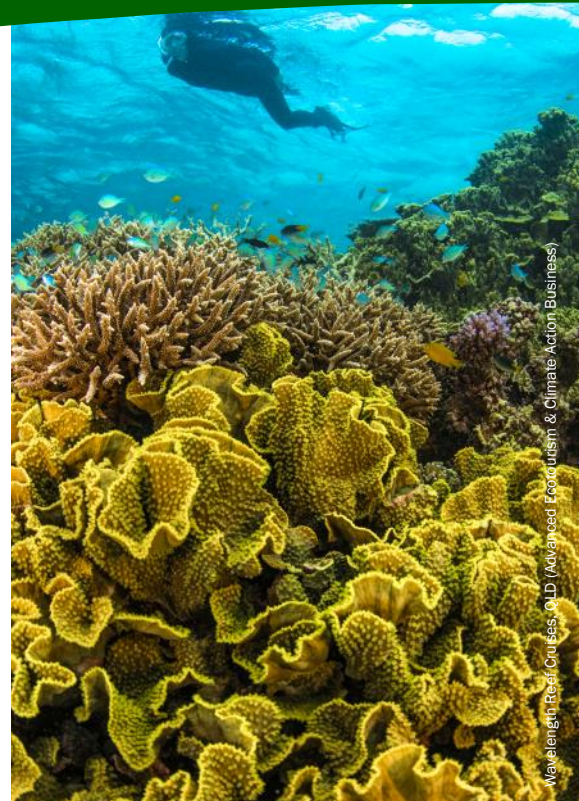
...Get rewarded for doing the right thing...



The Green Travel Guide

The Green Travel Guide is EA's online search engine showcasing all our ECO, ROC and Climate Action certified tourism operators.

Launched in May 2014, the **Green Travel Guide** lists all EA certified products. Each operator receives a free listing with an opportunity to upgrade to premium listings to maximise their reach.



Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Permits

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.

Certified operators are also listed on the GBRMPA website and are showcased at various trade events (such as the Australian Tourism Exchange) and publications.

Become Ecotourism Australia certified to:

- **Showcase your certification.** Receive a certificate to display and certification logos to use on all of your print and digital marketing material.
- **Be featured on the Green Travel Guide,** 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 the world!** If you have photos, footage or exciting news, tell us and we will share them through our news page and social media channels. The more actively you share with us, the greater the benefits and exposure you receive.
- **Gain international marketing exposure** with a free web listing with our South African partner, Coastal and Marine Eco Tourism.
- **Receive free listing and marketing opportunities** with Our Planet Travel website and magazine.
- **Be represented at the annual Australian Tourism Exchange.**
- **Grow your certification with ease.** Once certified, it is simple and inexpensive to upgrade and add additional products to your certification.
- **Receive free advertising** of holiday specials and job vacancies on our website.
- **Receive government recognition.** ECO certification can entitle you to extended permits and licences with a range of different State and National Park agencies and protected area managers.
- **Receive a 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.



Get industry recognition for being ECO and ROC certified



EA partnered with TripAdvisor to launch their GreenLeaders national program.

Accommodation providers that apply for ECO certification are automatically eligible to apply for the GreenLeaders program via a fast-tracked application process!

green.tripadvisor.com.au



Our ECO certification program is the first in Australia to meet the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's (GSTC) Approved status.

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

Protected area managers

EA works closely with protected area managers (PAMs) and State tourism organisations (STOs) in an effort to build stronger relationships and provide local benefits to certified operators.

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

Get in touch with your local PAM to explore current benefits.

ACT Territory & Municipal Services

NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service

Parks & Wildlife Commission NT

QLD Parks & Wildlife Service


Parks Victoria

SA National Parks & Wildlife Service

WA Department of Environment & Conservation

TAS National Parks & Wildlife Service

Can you apply for certification?

	<input type="checkbox"/>	The products you wish to certify offer at least a 50% nature based focus to customers such as accommodation in a natural area or outdoor tours. Advanced Ecotourism certification requires a 75% nature based focus.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	You have obtained all necessary operating licenses, permits and approvals from the relevant authority and understand these will be verified as part of your application.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	You commit to and meet the Business Ethics practices (PDF download) that EA requires.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your operation consistently meets customer service expectations and has defined customer service procedures.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	You have a commitment to delivering a quality tourism experience.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Economic, social and environmental sustainability principles are core to your operation.

When applying for certification, EA requires evidence of business sustainability planning. This gives applicants an opportunity to recognise pre-existing, develop new and implement appropriate management planning. Depending on the level of certification you wish to achieve, you will need to provide the following supporting documents:

	Nature Tourism	Ecotourism	Advanced Ecotourism	ROC	Climate Action Business through ECO
Business plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Marketing plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Operations plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Environmental plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Interpretation plan		✓	✓		
Climate change action plan			✓		✓

Templates and free coaching sessions are available and you can always get in touch for assistance.

How does it work?

1

Visit the **ECO Certification page** on our website and select "Apply now!"

2

Fill out the online application form and pay your once-only application fee.

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

3

Receive a confirmation email, follow the instructions and get started on your application!

Free coaching sessions are available; contact the EA office with any questions.

4

Submit your completed application to EA!

5

Your application is assessed and any corrections followed up with you. This process usually takes about 2 weeks.

Certification granted

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

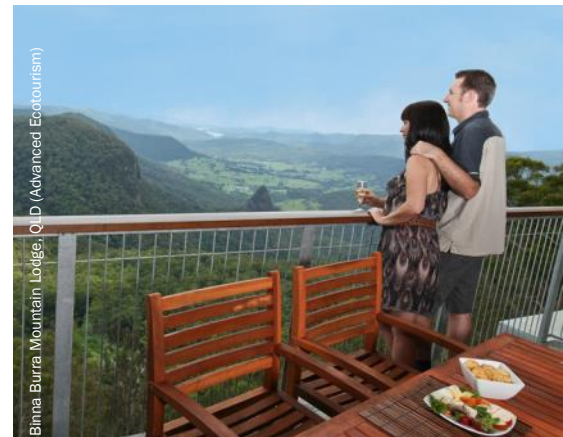


South West Eco Discoveries, WA (Nature Tourism)

Did you know?

EA's certification programs 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



Binna Burra Mountain Lodge, QLD (Advanced Ecotourism)

How much does it cost?

Your turnover	Once-only application fee	Ongoing annual fee	Discounted annual fee (if combined with Climate Action)
< \$250,000	395	540	130
\$250,001 - \$1,000,000	455	775	194
\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	575	1,085	264
\$5,000,001 - \$10,000,000	695	1,280	320
> \$10,000,001	925	1,450	374

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 agreed terms.

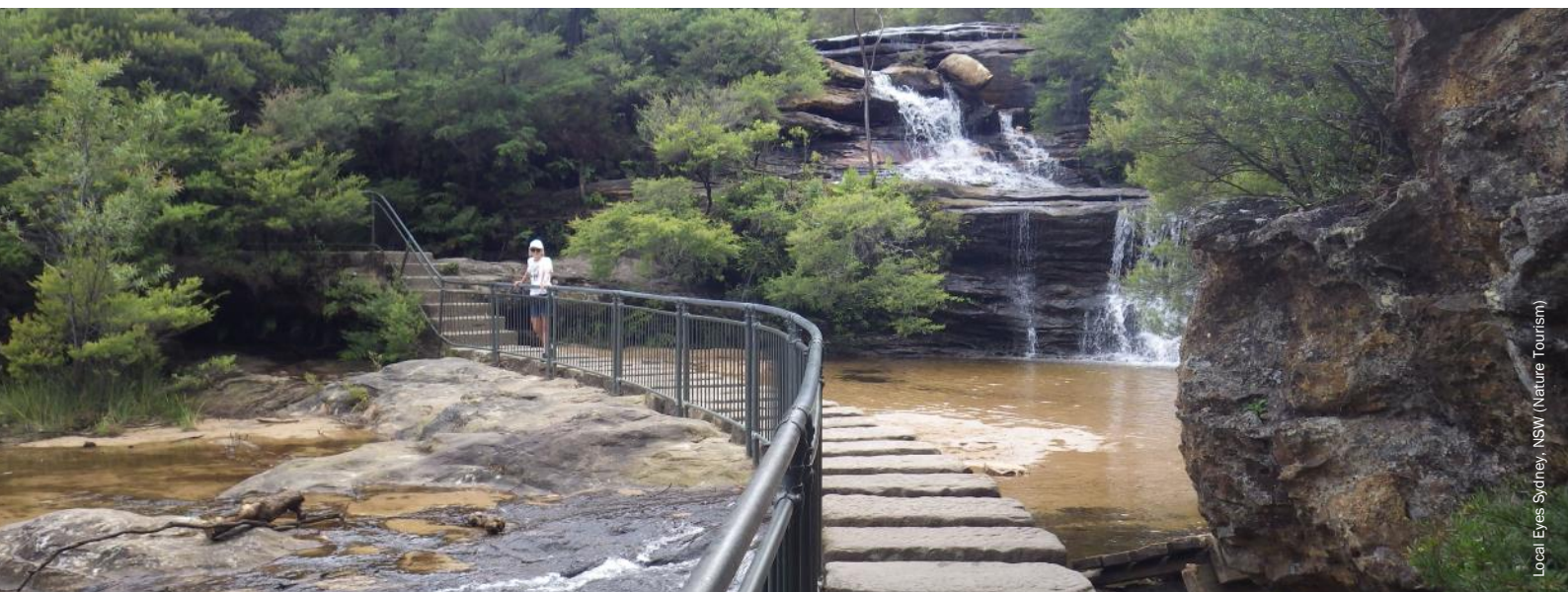
An on-site audit will be conducted in the first three months of your certification and every three years thereafter. In order to keep your certification up-to-date and to facilitate the audit process we require your documentation to be updated regularly.



Adventure Tours Australia, NT (Climate Action Business, ROC & Advanced Ecotourism)

The ECO certification program has eight sections:

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



Local Eyes Sydney, NSW (Nature Tourism)



1. Business management and operational planning

If your business has an existing business and marketing plan and operational strategies it is not necessary to redo these as long as the existing plan and operational policies and procedures meet the criteria. If your business does not have documentation in place, blank electronic templates are available.



If your business is currently accredited under one of the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program national tourism accreditation programs and is already using their logo (left), you will receive credit for all of section one.

Natural area focus: Nature tourism and ecotourism occur in and rely on using the natural environment. They focus on directly and personally experiencing nature, including its biological, physical and cultural features.

To become ECO certified, your product must be based in nature or have a nature focus.

Indigenous Cultural Focus: Tourism involves diverse cultures and many tourism areas have significant cultural values. Tourism should involve different cultures, particularly Indigenous culture, and include interpretation where appropriate.



1. Business management and operational planning

The nature tourism or ecotourism business must have legal compliance and insurance and document and implement the following management plans and procedures:

- 1.1 Legal compliance:** This covers the regulations, licences and permits required to operate, including vessel surveys.
- 1.2 Insurance details:** Public liability insurance and other business insurance provide security in the event of an accident affecting the business operation.
- 1.3 Business plan:** A business plan helps set out a vision for the business and enables sound future decision making.
- 1.4 Marketing plan:** A marketing plan helps the business identify where visitors are coming from and how best to access and communicate with those visitors.
- 1.5 Human resources:** Effective management policies for staff, combined with staff training, results in more motivated and loyal staff and increased efficiencies within the business.
- 1.6 Operational management and business systems:** Documenting the operational management of nature tourism and ecotourism businesses ensures consistent standards and service quality outcomes.
- 1.7 Customer service:** Established customer service standards set by the nature tourism and ecotourism business lead to greater customer satisfaction and consistent service.
- 1.8 Risk management:** The business is committed to providing a safe workplace, providing safe experiences to all customers and has documented risk management and emergency procedures accessible to staff and customers.



2. Responsible marketing

Marketing provides clients with information that increases respect for the natural and cultural environments visited. Operators provide clients with an accurate and responsible depiction of what to expect from the product.

Nature tourism and ecotourism marketing and supplementary information provide customers with an accurate and responsible depiction of what to expect from the product and how to respect the natural and cultural environments visited.

3. Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is achieved when the experience offered consistently meets or exceeds the realistic expectations of customers. Tourism operations monitor and act upon customer feedback.





Trek Tours Australia, NT (Advanced Ecotourism), Credit: Sean Whitehill.

4. Environmental management

Nature tourism and ecotourism activities should not degrade the natural environment. Tourism operations should be developed and managed to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural environments in which they operate in, through the recognition and application of ecologically sustainable practices.

4.1 Environmental management procedures: All operations have considered their environmental impacts and documented their impact management in an environmental management plan or a sustainability management system.

4.2 Suppliers and business partners: A business can help reduce emissions by choosing suppliers that are also taking action to reduce the emissions involved in the production and sale of their products and services. Consider collaborating with other operators in your region to make a positive contribution to the environment.

4.3 The changing climate: Climate, such as annual rainfall or the frequency of drought, underpins most nature based tourism operations. Identifying and measuring your business emissions can help you determine the best ways to reduce your emissions, increase your energy efficiency and help combat the impacts of climate change.

4.4 Business vulnerability and adaptation to climate change: Climate change is likely to cause a range of unavoidable impacts such as changing rainfall patterns or more frequent storms. Identifying which impacts may affect your business is part of the business planning process. Negative impacts should be minimised and potential opportunities maximised.

4. Environmental Management

4.5 Location: Operations are only undertaken in appropriate locations where use and impacts are minimised.

4.6 Construction methods and materials: Construction has maximised the use of renewable and recycled materials and has involved practices to minimise environmental impacts.

4.7 Site disturbance and landscaping: The operation involves minimal disturbance; any areas disturbed are rehabilitated to restore ecological processes.

4.8 Drainage, soil and water management: Site drainage reflects the natural site topography and the operation does not cause soil loss, or impacts such as erosion and sediment pollution to downslope lands and waterways.

4.9 Lighting: Where natural lighting is inadequate, lighting is minimised to a level where the visibility of signs and displays still provides safety and security.

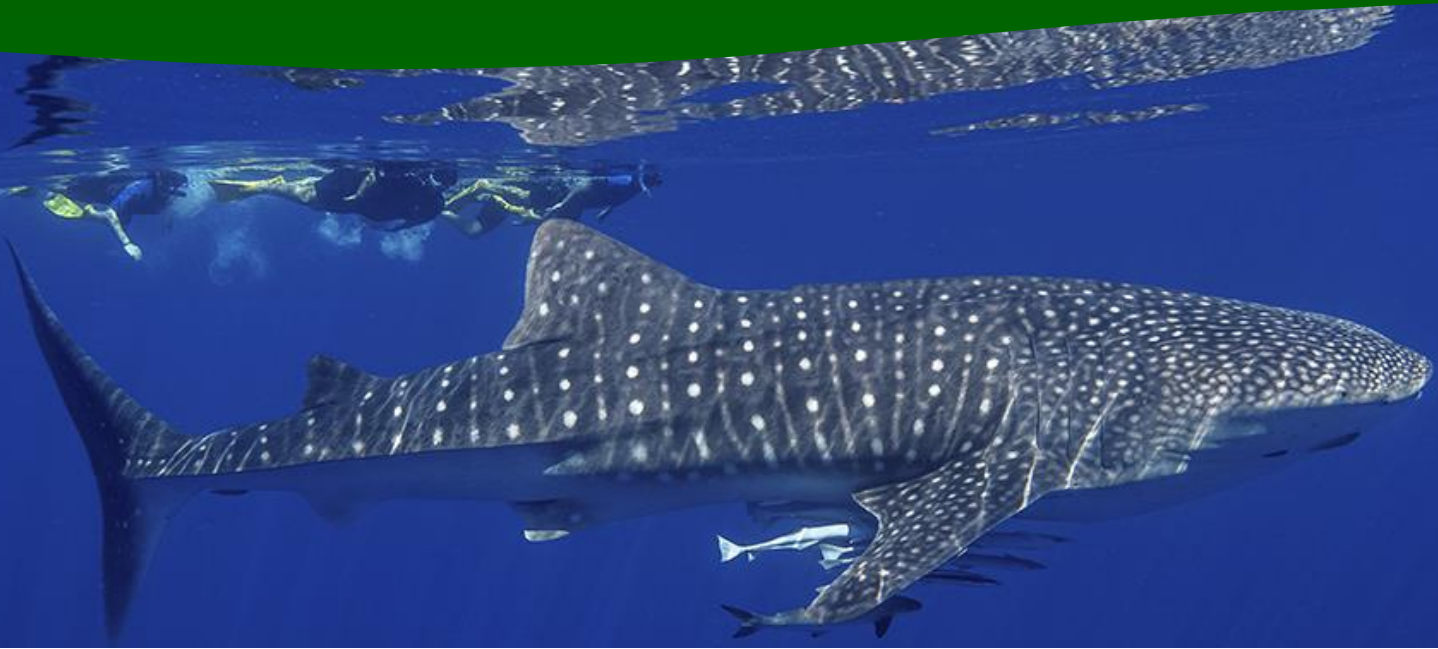
4.10 Water supply and conservation: Operations involve minimal use of an ecologically sustainable supply of water.

4.11 Wastewater: Sewage and effluent is minimised and has no significant environmental impact.

4.12 Noise: The product and operations enable customers to experience the natural soundscape.



Pyndan Camel Tracks, NT (Nature Tourism)



Ningaloo Reef Dive, WA (Advanced Ecotourism)

4. Environmental Management

The following criteria apply to specialty products:

4.13 Air quality: Products and operations encourage cleaner air quality and reduction of pollution.

4.14 Waste minimisation and management: The waste minimisation policy of reduce, reuse, and recycle underpins operation of the product.

4.15 Energy use and minimisation - buildings and equipment: Nature tourism and ecotourism facilities involve minimal use of energy.

4.16 Energy use and minimisation - transport: Business operations aim to minimise transport energy to the greatest extent.

4.17 Minimal disturbance to wildlife: Activities involving wildlife are often legislated with requirements varying depending on the location.

4.18 Minimal impact nocturnal wildlife viewing: Products involve nocturnal viewing of wildlife which may include use of spotlights, camp fires and close encounters with wildlife.

4.19 Minimal impact marine and aquatic animal viewing: Products involve viewing of and/or swimming with megafauna, marine and/or aquatic wildlife.

4.20 Minimal impact walking: Products involve guided or self-guided walks that encompass bushwalking, boardwalks or aerial walkways.

4.21 Minimal impact camping, including regular rest stops for tours: Products incorporate overnight camping AND short day tours that include rest stops.

4. Environmental Management

The following criteria apply to specialty products:

4.22 Minimal impact vehicle use: Products involve any four-wheel driving, quad-bikes, trail bike riding and/or mountain bike riding.

4.23 Minimal impact power boat use: Products involve any power boat use in marine or inland waters for activities including tours, water sports, jet skis, or recreational activities.

4.24 Minimal impact non-powered boat use: Products involve any non-powered boat use in marine or inland waters for activities, including but not limited to tours, water sports, kayak, canoe, stand up paddleboard or recreational activities.

4.25 Minimal impact aircraft use: Products involve transport and/or scenic flights by light aircraft.

4.26 Minimal impact rock climbing and abseiling: Products include outdoor rock climbing and/or abseiling.

4.27 Minimal impact caving - show caves: Products include viewing of or tours through show caves.

4.28 Minimal impact caving - wild caves: Products include viewing of or tours through wild caves.

4.29 Minimal impact snorkelling and scuba diving: Products incorporate snorkelling and/or scuba diving.



4. Environmental Management

The following criteria apply to specialty products:

4.30 Minimal impact trail riding and animal tours: Products include but are not limited to horse riding, camel riding, alpaca and llama tours.

4.31 Minimal impact fishing: Products include recreational fishing in marine and/or inland waters and/or fish farms.

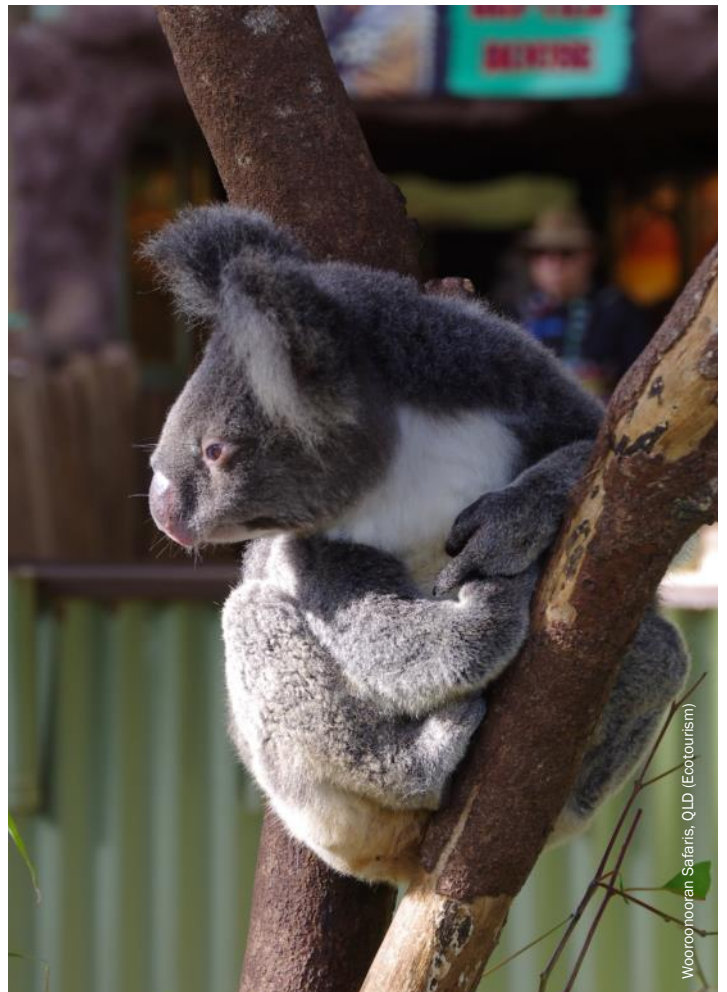
4.32 Minimal impact houseboat use - inland waters: Products involve houseboat and/bareboat use in inland waters.

4.33 Minimal impact houseboat use - marine: Products involve houseboat and/bareboat use in marine waters.

4.34 Animals in captivity: Products involve viewing or interaction with wildlife in captivity.



Tennessee Hill Chalets, WA (Ecotourism & Climate Action Business)



Wooroonooran Safaris, QLD (Ecotourism)

5. Interpretation and education

Ecotourism products attract customers who wish to interact with the natural environment and, to varying degrees, develop their knowledge, awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of nature. Ecotourism operators should provide an appropriate level of interpretation about the natural and cultural heritage of the areas visited by employing qualified guides and providing accurate information both prior to and during the experience. The level and type of interpretation should be planned, designed and delivered to meet the interests, needs and expectations of customers and include a broad range of interpretive opportunities, both personal and non-personal.

5.1 Interpretation planning: Adequate planning of interpretation is undertaken so that effective communication occurs and the experience provided is seamless.

5.2 Opportunities for interpretation: Customers have the opportunity to learn about the natural and cultural heritage of the environment they are visiting.

5.3 Credibility of interpretation and educational information: The accuracy of information provided to customers is verified with reference to reliable sources.

5.4 Staff training, awareness and understanding: Guides and other key staff in contact with customers should be able to provide accurate information. They should be adequately trained in product information, general knowledge of the area and communication/interpretive techniques.



Rawnsley Park Station, SA (ature Tourism, Advanced Ecotourism, Climate Action Business & Eco Lodge)

6. Contribution to Conservation

Ecotourism involves active participation in the conservation and enhancement of the natural area visited. In particular, ecotourism products provide constructive contributions to the management and conservation of natural areas. This contribution may include the provision of physical, financial or in-kind assistance.

6.1 Conservation initiatives – local: Operations should provide constructive contributions to the management of natural areas visited through financial and/or in-kind support.

6.1 Conservation initiatives – national/global: Operations should provide constructive contributions to the conservation of natural areas generally through financial and/or in-kind support.



7. Working with Local Communities

In many situations the local community is integral to the ecotourism product. The benefits of ecotourism should be distributed to the local community. These benefits may include employing local guides, purchasing local provisions and services and using local facilities.

7.1 Provision of local benefits: Operations should employ local staff where possible and support the local community by using local goods and services.

7.2 Minimal impact on local communities: Operations should minimise their impact on local communities by informing visitors about local customs and expectations and consulting with local communities regarding potential impacts of the activities.

7.3 Community involvement: Operations should be involved in local community activities above and beyond what is required to run the business.

8. Cultural Respect and Sensitivity

Although the focus of ecotourism is primarily on the natural values of an area, many of these areas have significant cultural values, especially Indigenous values. Embracing the cultural aspects of an area visited is an important part of ecotourism.

8.1 Consultation and training: Tourism operations should consult with and involve local Indigenous communities in the delivery of the product.

8.2 Visitor information: Tourism operations should consult with Traditional Owners to seek permission to deliver cultural content and to ascertain accuracy of cultural information delivered.

8.3 Indigenous arts, crafts & goods: Tourism operations should ensure that all goods and services sought are authentic and that local communities are adequately reimbursed for goods and services provided.



About us

Ecotourism Australia (EA) was formed in 1991 and celebrates its 25th jubilee this year. An incorporated non-profit organisation, EA is considered the peak national body for the ecotourism industry.

EA offers certification programs for tourism products available in Australia such as accommodation, tours and attractions. We also have 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

Ecotourism Australia
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 1,500 certified tourism products 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.

Join the conversation with us on social media and get your message out there! Images, articles, latest news, you can provide us with the content and we will share it for you.

Follow us on social media !

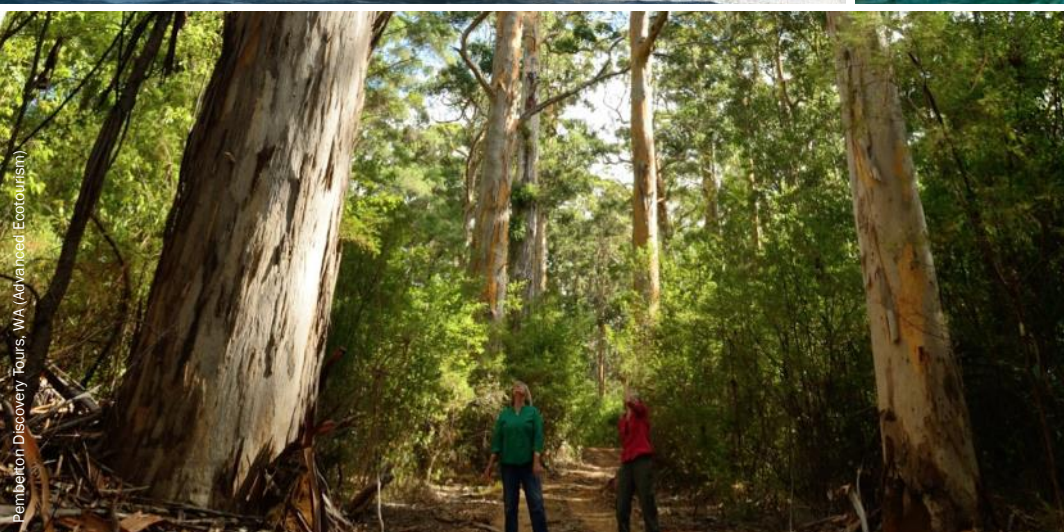




Tallship Island Adventures, QLD (Ecotourism)



Life's an Adventure, NSW (Ecotourism)



Pemberton Discovery Tours, WA (Advanced Ecotourism)

Get in touch!



The Busselton Jetty, WA (Ecotourism)



Old Leura Dairy, NSW (Ecotourism)



Red Cat Adventures, QLD (Advanced Ecotourism)

Ecotourism Australia
2016 Copyright. All Right Reserved.
Images: Courtesy of our certified operators 2013-16