

Indigenous cultural experiences offer a competitive advantage to the Australian tourism industry.

In a competitive industry environment, tourism businesses that operate at national industry standards have the greatest potential to benefit from opportunities available. A business with ROC accreditation will be recognised in the industry as having sustainable business and sound cultural ethics and environmental practices. The ROC Program is unique in that it also provides the recognition of cultural protocols and authenticity.

## How do I go about getting certified?

1. Contact Ecotourism Australia to order a workbook on **07 3252 1530**
2. Complete the self-assessment criteria
3. Submit your application and supporting information to Ecotourism Australia for independent assessment to:  
Suite 3, 47 Brookes Street, Bowen Hills QLD 4006
4. An onsite audit will be conducted within the first 3 years of applying to ensure the standards are being maintained. The audit may be within a few weeks after gaining certification or 1-3 years thereafter.

## The Process...

The program is based upon a self-assessment process. You review the criteria contained within the program and identify which criteria you currently satisfy and which criteria you need to implement. All core criteria are mandatory – this means that you either need to be able to satisfy this criteria or it is not applicable to your business. Templates are available for the documentation required for the ROC certification program. Please contact Ecotourism Australia if you require a copy of these templates.

Following the assessment of your application, the assessor will advise whether certification can be awarded or if additional information is required. You will have the opportunity to submit additional information. Once certified, an onsite audit will need to be conducted to verify the information contained within your application. Audits may be within a few weeks after gaining certification or 1-3 years thereafter. Ecotourism Australia will contact you regarding your onsite audit.

The fees\* below are based on the turnover of your business and the table below details the cost for each level.

A \$75 workbook fee is applicable for all applications.

Gross Turnover	Once-only Application Fee	Annual Fee
< \$250,000	\$370	\$440
\$250,001 - \$1,000,000	\$420	\$640
\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	\$520	\$890
\$5,000,001 - \$10,000,000	\$630	\$1,060
> \$10,000,000	\$840	\$1,180

Annual fees are due once certification has been granted and then each year on your certification anniversary. Certification annual fees include business membership to Ecotourism Australia.

# Summary of **Respecting Our Culture** Program 2013

**NB.** If you already have ECO Certification, you only need to complete the revised sections 9 and 10 and pay a \$150 assessment fee

**NB.** If you have already achieved certification under the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP), then you will receive credit for section 1 – you won't have to complete this section, just provide us a copy of your certificate.

## **1. Business Management and Operational Planning**

If the 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 meets the criteria.

If the business does not have the documentation in place, blank electronic templates are available for use by the business.

If the business is currently accredited under one of the ATAA national tourism accreditation programs, and is already using the logo (green circle with gold tick), the Business Management and Operational Planning section does not need to be completed.

### **1.1 Legal Compliance**

There are a number of regulations, licences and permits including vessel surveys that are required to operate a nature tourism or ecotourism business

### **1.2 Insurance Details**

Public Liability Insurance, and other business insurance provide the nature tourism and ecotourism business with necessary 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 nature tourism and ecotourism business and facilitates sound future decision making. Ecotourism Australia has a template that you can use if you need to develop a Business Plan.

### **1.4 Marketing Plan**

A Marketing Plan helps the nature tourism and ecotourism businesses identify where its visitors are coming from and how to best access and communicate with those visitors. Ecotourism Australia has a template that you can use if you need to develop a Business Plan.

### **1.5 Human Resources**

Effective management policies for staff, combined with staff training, will result in more motivated and loyal staff.

### **1.6 Operational Management and Business Systems**

The operational management of nature tourism and ecotourism businesses is documented to ensure consistent standards and service quality outcomes.

### **1.7 Customer Service**

Established customer service standards set by the nature tourism and ecotourism businesses lead to greater customer satisfaction and consistency of service.

### **1.8 Risk Management**

The nature and ecotourism 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.

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## **Business Ethics**

The business and all its personnel adopt and follow ethical business practices such as:

- accepts a commitment to best practice ecological sustainability and the provision of quality tourism experiences;
- works through tourism to protect and preserve the natural/cultural heritage and Indigenous relationship to land;
- values the social, cultural and natural heritage diversity of Australia;
- values cultural and natural integrity and authenticity in business;
- will eliminate any practice that is unacceptably damaging the environment or Indigenous culture/beliefs;
- will eliminate any practice that could be damaging to trade or consumers or to the dignity of the tourism industry;
- acknowledges its responsibilities in meeting the reasonable expectations of all customers to the best of its ability. Customers include any individual or business wishing to use or receive the goods or services of the business;
- is committed to complying with the National Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act.
- shall endeavour to treat all customers equally;
- reserves the right to change its goods and services to meet the expectations of its customers;
- is responsible for all of its advertising/promotional activities, which accurately reflect the activities of the business;
- will inform direct customers of all the terms and conditions of the contract including the terms of payment and any cancellation conditions. We will do this prior to or at the time of entering the transaction or purchase of our goods and/or services. This business will adhere to those terms and conditions;
- will ensure that all money received from a customer is receipted and an authentic copy provided to the customer;
- will fairly and amicably deal with all reasonable customer concerns and queries. The decision of any mediator who may be employed will be final and binding
- will present its goods and services in the best possible way;
- will exercise all reasonable care to address customers' safety and comfort;
- will take all reasonable measures to ensure that all plant, equipment and products are in good working order. We will, under duty of care, list potential hazards and risks that exist within the business and implement methods to regularly assess and minimise them;
- will where possible inform customers of pertinent facts concerning other tours, transportation, accommodation or other tourist services available to our customers; and
- will adhere to industry codes of practice where they apply.

## **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.

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.

## **4. Cultural Focus**

This section will assist in determining your suitability for this program. Tourism is sensitive to the value of interpretation and involves different cultures, particularly Aboriginal culture. Many tourism areas have significant cultural values and tourism should embrace the cultural aspects of an area visited.

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## **5. Environmental Management**

Tourism activities should not degrade the natural environment. Operations are 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. Some of the sections below are only applicable for nature-based tourism businesses – look for the green leaf to identify which sections are for nature-based tourism businesses.

### **5.1 Environmental Planning and Impact Assessment**

Operations have been established on the basis of understanding potential environmental impacts and are consistent with local and regional environmental planning.

### **5.2 Operational Environmental Management**

All operations have considered their environmental aspects and the management of such are documented.

### **5.3 Construction Methods and Materials**

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

### **5.4 Site Disturbance, Landscaping and Rehabilitation**

The operation involves minimal disturbance; any areas disturbed are rehabilitated to restore ecological processes.

### **5.5 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 down slope lands and waterways.

### **5.6 Lighting**

Where natural lighting is inadequate, lighting is minimised to a level where the visibility of signs and displays is still clear, and to also provide for safety and security.

### **5.7 Water Supply and Conservation**

Operations involve minimal use of an ecologically sustainable supply of water.

### **5.8 Waste Water**

Sewage and effluent is minimised and has no significant environmental impact.

### **5.9 Noise**

Nature tourism and ecotourism operations enable customers to experience the natural sound-scape.

### **5.10 Air Quality**

Nature tourism and ecotourism operations involve minimal air pollution.

### **5.11 Waste Minimisation and Management**

The waste minimisation policy of reduce, reuse, and recycle underpins the operation of the product.

### **5.12 Energy Use and Minimisation: buildings**

### **5.13 Energy Use and Minimisation: transport**

### **5.14 Minimal Disturbance to Wildlife**

## **6. 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. Benefits may include employment of local guides, the purchase of provisions and services and the use of local facilities.

### **6.1 Provision of local benefits**

### **6.2 Minimal impact on local communities**

### **6.3 Community involvement**

## **7. 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. Hence, ecotourism should also embrace the cultural aspects of an area visited.

### **7.1 Consultation and Training**

### **7.2 Visitor Information**

### **7.3 Indigenous Arts, Crafts & Goods**

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## Examples of Best Practice...

### Responsible marketing

- The operator uses only ROC or ECO Certified accommodation, tours and attractions.
- The operator's web site is hot linked to another operator's web site that offers ROC certified products.
- The operator promotes another operator's ROC certified business in his/her own marketing material.
- The operator takes bookings for ROC certified products on behalf of another operator.

### Environmental sustainability - impact assessment

- Remove vessel from the river each night via a fixed crane to: reduce stress to the riverbank; reduce marine growth on the bottom of the vessel, which reduces the need to anti-foul; and eliminate the need for anchoring or mooring in the river.
- The operation and management of the structures and facilities are undertaken in accordance with an environmental management plan, which meets the requirements of the International Environmental Management Standards in the ISO 14000 series or equivalent.
- A study has been undertaken to determine limits of acceptable change, or the social and environmental carrying capacity, of the tour site.
- An ongoing, independent monitoring program assessing environmental impact has been established.

### Environmental sustainability - site location

- Development of the ecotourism facility has occurred on a degraded site that is restored and rehabilitated with local native species.

### Environmental sustainability - energy consumption

- Using vegetable based oil for engines.
- The operation uses solar powered vehicles that are either directly charged by the sun or via an electricity supply sourced from renewable energy.
- The operation sources part or all of its energy from a methane-based composting system.
- The operation runs a program that rewards customers who choose to use less energy, water and resources during their experience.

### Environmental sustainability – waste minimisation

- The operation recycles waste paper into products for customers to purchase.

### Working with local communities

- Operators should encourage local and regional tourism bodies to experience all of their products.
- The operator offers a permanent discount off fares/entry for locals.
- The operator has identified how to minimise negative social impacts through discussions with specialists and has acted according to information gathered.
- The operator has been involved in a social impact study undertaken on the local community.
- The operator is assisting to implement the recommendations of a social impact study undertaken on the local community.
- The operator has a contract with a community-based food cooperative to purchase food in bulk on a regular basis.

### Cultural respect and sensitivity

- Invests in continual personal/professional development for Aboriginal/Indigenous staff
- Funding community activities and programs
- Support/marketing other Aboriginal enterprises including cultural tourism products, arts and crafts
- Non-Indigenous businesses ensures local Indigenous people deliver the Aboriginal cultural component of all tours

**\*\*To apply for ROC Certification, you will need to complete your application via workbook – please contact Ecotourism Australia for further information\*\***



For a full copy of the program, please contact the National Office on 07 3252 1530.

