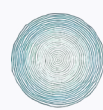
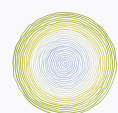




Sustainable Tourism
Certification Essentials



SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM CERTIFIED ✓



ECO
TOURISM
australia

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing custodianship of the land, waters and culture for over 60,000 years. We pay our respects to them and their elders past and present. We are privileged to learn from them in the way we care for and share Australia's diverse nature and culture, and we strive to walk humbly in the footsteps of those who have walked these paths before us.

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Welcome to being part of sustainable tourism

The Sustainable Tourism Certification Essentials is your comprehensive guide to our Sustainable Tourism Certification program, launched by Ecotourism Australia in 2022.

We recognise the growing demand for sustainability across the entire tourism industry and want to ensure that every business in the tourism supply chain has access to a credible, independently verified certification program that captures their individual circumstances.

Using Ecotourism Australia's globally recognised criteria of our ECO Certification program, the world's first national ecotourism accreditation program, the new Sustainable Tourism Certification program is a great option for tourism businesses that are committed to improving their sustainability and business practices but do not provide nature-based or ecotourism experiences.

This guide will help you assess whether our certifications are right for you. Choosing Sustainable Tourism Certification for your operations means adopting a framework for business development and gaining access to a continuous development tool.

We are always happy to help, so if you still have questions or would like to know more, please [get in touch](#).

The Ecotourism Australia team

HELLO

What is sustainable tourism?

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities."

Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

*United Nations World Tourism Organisation
(UNWTO)*





Why apply sustainable tourism principles to your business?

Sustainable Tourism is everyone's business! As one of the fastest growing sectors worldwide, the tourism industry has a responsibility to minimise negative impacts and maximise benefits for environment, communities and culture. Ecotourism Australia guidelines help businesses become sustainability leaders through meeting global best practice standards that enable you to provide a high-quality, recognisable product. This can save you money, improve your organisation's image and help you establish closer connections with your local community, industry organisations and other stakeholders.

Get Sustainable Tourism certified and have your efforts recognised!

PRINCIPLES



Did you know?

Ecotourism Australia's Sustainable Tourism Certification criteria are based on our globally recognised ECO Certification program - the world's first national certification program for nature-based experiences, established in 1996.

We want to ensure that every tourism business in Australia has access to a credible, globally recognised sustainability certification and are excited to launch this new program for non-nature based businesses.



Sustainable Tourism Certification program

Our Sustainable Tourism Certification is designed for all businesses that operate in the tourism supply chain in a non-nature-based space, including hotels, attractions, tours, transport, restaurants, breweries, and others. It assures travellers that certified experiences are backed by a strong, well managed commitment to sustainable practices.



Tourism businesses that minimise negative impacts on the environment and maximise positive impacts for community, culture and local economy.



Industry leaders in best-practice sustainable tourism practices. Businesses that minimise negative impacts on the environment and maximise positive impacts for community, culture and local economy.

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 also have the option to revisit your criteria and achieve another level of certification later.



A smart move for your business

Sustainable Tourism Certification is a way for your tourism business to receive official recognition for your sustainable initiatives and practices.

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 Sustainable Tourism certified tourism businesses will be listed on Ecotourism Australia's [Green Travel Guide](#) and promoted by Ecotourism Australia in communications and marketing activities. Certification also offers networking opportunities with diverse industry stakeholders.

As the program is 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.

Green Travel Guide

The Green Travel Guide is Ecotourism Australia's online search engine showcasing all of our certified tourism operators and destinations. Each operator receives a free listing with an opportunity to upgrade to a premium listing in order to maximise their reach.

SMART

Become Ecotourism Australia certified and experience these benefits

1

Business development and training

Certification is a business development tool. By getting certified, you get access to:

- Specialised resources and business documentation templates
- Fact sheets and hints on how to improve your business
- Benchmarking through our ReviewPro partnership
- Business coaching with certification experts
- Regular audits and reviews from our independent, expert auditors
- Access to free webinars with industry experts
- Our online portal, so you can keep tracking your progress

2

Credibility

By becoming certified, you also become part of an international community of globally recognised certified operators and destinations.

- We provide independent, third party verification of your sustainability efforts
- We actively fight against greenwashing

BENEFITS

3

Recognition

When you become certified, you receive access to:

- Certification logos and certificates to display in your facilities, vessels, website and marketing collateral
- A listing on our Green Travel Guide
- Official recognition of your certification on your Google and Booking.com listings*
- Recognition of your certification on the ATEC Trade Ready checklist for international buyers
- Access to special offers through our industry partners
- Marketing and promotion through our digital and social channels

4

Community

Once you're certified, you're part of our community. We advocate for you, and connect you to:

- Our member network of 500+ passionate, likeminded operators and stakeholders
- International buyers and stakeholders at the Australian Tourism Exchange and Global Eco Conference

**For accommodations only*

The certification application process for **your business**

To be eligible for Sustainable Tourism Certification, you must answer YES to ALL the following questions:

- Do you operate a tourism business or a business within the tourism supply chain?
- Are you committed to sustainable business and operational practices and ongoing improvements?
- Are you committed to reducing your business' emissions and carbon footprint?
- Are you engaged with, and do you give back to, your local community?
- Do you operate your business with respect for Indigenous culture?

Note: If the majority of your customers' activity is spent within a natural area or with a focus on experiencing natural and cultural values of your area, our ECO Certification program for tours/accommodations/attractions is the most suitable program for you. Please [contact the Ecotourism Australia office](#) if this is the case and we will advise the most suitable certification option for your business.

APPLYING





What you'll need to supply to apply for **certification**

When applying for certification, Ecotourism Australia requires evidence of business sustainability planning. This gives applicants an opportunity to recognise pre-existing, develop new and implement appropriate management planning. Below are the required documents for your application.

Sustainable Tourism and Advanced Sustainable Tourism

Business Plan	✓
Marketing Plan	✓
Operational Management Plan	✓
Environmental Management Plan	✓

Templates and free coaching sessions are available and you can always [get in touch for help](#).

Understanding what's **involved**

Completing your certification application takes time. You will have 12 months to submit your application, but it's important to allocate enough time and resources to complete all criteria and submit required documentation. This varies for each business and can take anywhere from one to two months up to one year.

How the Ecotourism Australia certification **process works**

1

Visit the Ecotourism Australia website and select '[Apply now](#)'.

2

Pay your first annual certification fee.

3

Receive a confirmation email, follow the instructions and get started on your application! Free coaching sessions are available; contact the Ecotourism Australia office with any questions.

4

Submit your completed application to Ecotourism Australia! Our Certification Coaches will conduct an internal review and will provide feedback.

5

Your application will be sent to an independent, third-party Auditor who will review your application and schedule a suitable time for your audit (online or onsite). This process takes between 2-3 weeks.

Regular compliance audits will be conducted every three years and are a mandatory component for all certified businesses.

What happens after your business is certified?

Once you are certified, we will send you your certificate, logo and an announcement toolkit so you can proudly display your achievement.

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





Investing in certification offers great value

Annual certification fees are based on the size of your business. This is calculated based on the number of rooms (for accommodations only) or full-time employees (FTE) for all other businesses.

Annual fee for Sustainable Tourism Certification

Price tier	FTE	Rooms	Annual fee
Micro	<2	1-2	\$900
Small	3-10	3-24	\$1,200
Medium	11-50	25-99	\$1,600
Large	51-100	100-249	\$2,200
Enterprise	100+	250+	\$2,800

- Certification fees are current as at 01 July 2022 and are exclusive of GST. Fees will be reviewed annually and may be subject to change.
- Please note that the annual certification fee does not include independent audit costs which occur upon completion of the initial application and every 3 years thereafter. Audit costs range from \$300-\$1,000 and include travel costs.

PRICING



The Sustainable Tourism Certification program has **eight sections**

1. Business management and operational planning
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



CRITERIA

1. Business management and operational planning

Sustainable businesses must comply with all legal requirements, carry adequate insurance, and document the following management plans and procedures:

1.1 Business Sustainability Planning

Business plan

A business plan helps set out a vision for the business and enables sound future decision making.

Marketing plan

A marketing plan helps the business identify where visitors are coming from and how best to access and communicate with those visitors.

Operational management plan

Documenting operational policies and procedures ensures consistent standards and service quality outcomes.

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.

Human resource management

Effective management policies for staff, combined with staff training, results in more motivated and loyal staff and increased efficiencies within the business.

Customer service standards

Established customer service standards set by the business lead to greater customer satisfaction and consistent service.

1.2 Legal compliance

This covers the regulations, licences and permits required to operate.

1.3 Insurance details

Public liability insurance and other business insurance provide security in the event of an accident affecting the business operation.

1.4 Accessibility

Providing equal opportunity for people of all abilities to access tourism services and activities.

2. Responsible marketing

Responsible marketing is the accurate depiction of the products or experiences you offer to your customers, providing useful information about the natural and cultural environments in which you operate and being honest and transparent about your sustainability efforts.

Responsible marketing ensures guests have realistic expectations of the product or experience prior to their visit and an awareness of the responsible and sustainable behaviours of the business. It ensures your business will be seen as credible and your offering will consistently meet or exceed customer expectations, resulting in happier and better-informed guests.

3. Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is achieved when the products and experiences you offer consistently meet or exceed your customers' realistic expectations. By monitoring, responding to and acting upon customer feedback, you can continue to develop your products and experiences to better suit visitor demands.

What this means is that your business will enjoy word of mouth publicity and you will have satisfied return customers – both of which will assist your long-term financial sustainability.



4. Environmental management

The experiences and products you offer should conserve and protect the environment in which your business operates. By incorporating ecologically sustainable practices and minimising disruption to your local environment, your business will be protecting the very assets on which it depends, ensuring that these will be around for years to come and, in turn, ensuring longevity for your business.

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 Emissions measurement, reduction and offsetting

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. Carbon offsetting compensates the remaining emissions, once the largest possible reductions have been made.

4.4 Business vulnerability and adaptation to climate change

Climate change is likely to cause a range of unavoidable impacts such as extreme weather events, sea level changes and redistribution of flora and fauna. Identifying which impacts may affect your business is part of the business planning process. Negative impacts should be minimised, potential opportunities maximised and mitigation strategies implemented.

4.5 Location and site selection

Operations are only undertaken in appropriate locations where use and impacts on the surrounding environment are minimised and sustainable.

4.6 Waste minimisation and management

Elimination of waste can be beneficial to reduce impacts on human health and the environment. Sustainable businesses are well positioned to lead by example, educate guests and influence behaviour on day-to-day decisions regarding waste.

4.7 Minimal disturbance to wildlife

Sustainable tourism experiences should have no enduring impact on the natural behaviour of wildlife and customer behaviour is managed appropriately (if applicable).

4.8 Site selection: built infrastructure

Design and construction of building and infrastructure pertaining to the selection of the site which includes legal compliance with local zoning, protected areas and cultural heritage. The project utilises the sustainable development framework, is aesthetically pleasing and reduces negative impacts across all elements.

4. Environmental management

4.9 Operational resources: built infrastructure

Beyond building design, the business should aim to reduce the need for resources like energy and water by implementing minimisation strategies, and, where possible, producing its own resources.

4.10 Landscape, drainage, soil and water management

Landscaping, drainage, soil and water management should involve minimal disturbance to the site's ecological processes. Ongoing monitoring of the site is important for mitigating the risk of damage caused by the business' products and activities.

4.11 Embodied energy – construction methods and materials

Embodied energy is the energy consumed by all of the processes associated with the production of a building, from the mining and processing of natural resources to manufacturing, transport and product delivery. Different building elements contain different amounts of embodied energy. Decisions should be made during the design and construction phase to minimise embodied energy associated with the project.

4.12 Operational resources: Tours and transport

Sustainable businesses that operate tours and guest transport for their products should implement strategies and initiatives to minimise operational resource use and any potential environmental impacts.

4.13 Minimal impact swimming pools and spas

Swimming pool and/or spa facilities are available onsite for guest use.

4.14 Minimal impact aircraft use

Products involve transport and/or scenic flights by light aircraft.

4.15 Animals in captivity

Products involve viewing or interaction with wildlife in captivity.



5. Interpretation and education

Tourism provides opportunities for customers to learn about and experience sustainability in ways which lead to greater understanding and appreciation of the environment, culture and communities. Interpretation enables visitors to develop their knowledge and awareness and encourages them to travel responsibly.

5.1 Interpretation planning

As a tourism operator, interpretation can help you explain your ideas and feelings about your destination. Good interpretation and education guarantee a more enjoyable and meaningful guest experience, encourages respect and appropriate behaviour among customers, and promotes feelings of pride among staff.

5.3 Credibility of interpretation and educational information

It is essential that all information and educational content is accurate, verified and sourced from reliable sources.

5.4 Staff training, awareness and understanding

Interpretation and education form important components of any sustainable tourism experience, therefore it is essential that all front-line staff providing interpretation are trained, aware and have sound understanding of the subject matter, communications and delivery methods.



6. Contribution to conservation

Sustainability involves active participation in conservation. This goes beyond the minimal impact management of your operations and involves contributing to conservation outcomes that improve biodiversity, whether they relate to the biophysical environment, wildlife, or combatting climate change impacts.

6.1 Contributions to biodiversity conservation efforts

The business can contribute within its means to local, national or global causes that significantly benefit biodiversity conservation initiatives. This may be done through the provision of physical, financial or in-kind assistance.

6.2 Conservation education

Sustainable tourism also plays an important role in educating consumers and changing attitudes towards conservation - not only in consumers but also host communities, the broader tourism industry and influencing government policy.





7. Working with local communities

Working with local communities is core to sustainability. Community engagement by sustainable tourism businesses should well exceed the requirements of running the business and result in a supportive environment that will shine through to the guest experience, create excellent reviews and contribute to long-term business sustainability.

7.1 Provision of local benefits

Involvement with local communities helps build valuable relationships and encourages a support system that is mutually beneficial. When resources and employment are sourced locally, environmental impacts are reduced and the local economy is strengthened.

7.2 Minimal impact on local communities

Sustainable tourism businesses are developed and managed with consideration and respect for local communities.

7.3 Community involvement

Sustainable tourism businesses are regularly involved in the local community beyond what is required to run the business.

8. Cultural respect and sensitivity

Tourism in Australia is strongly linked to this country's ancient and diverse landscape and unique flora and fauna. Integral to this landscape are Australia's Indigenous peoples and their equally diverse cultures and spiritual beliefs. Whether in remote, regional or urban communities the significance of the land and sea to Indigenous peoples is ultimately bound in the spirituality surrounding the origins of landscapes and animals, plants and the people that inhabit them. It is a matter of responsibility for sustainable tourism businesses to know who the Traditional Owners are of the areas they visit, where any areas of cultural significance are located, any protocols that exist around visiting these areas and to respect the significance and diversity of belief systems which exist.

8.1 Consultation and training

Tourism operations should acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which the tourism business operates and consult with these. They may also involve local Indigenous communities in strategic decisions regarding the presentation and interpretation of their culture.

8.2 Cultural interpretation

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 and goods

Tourism operations should use and promote Indigenous goods and services while ensuring they are authentic. A formal agreement for purchase, distribution and/or promotion may be in place and all copyright patent and intellectual laws must be adhered to.

Note: Cultural criteria are country-specific.



National Art Glass Museum
Tourism Australia



We're 100% committed to supporting eco and sustainable tourism

As the peak body for ecotourism and sustainable tourism we connect, champion, inspire and inform through strategic partnerships and global best practice standards. Ecotourism Australia is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation, established in 1991, that promotes and supports the eco and sustainable tourism industries in Australia through building capacity and actively promoting sustainable tourism operations and systems. Our key program – ECO Certification – was the world's first national ecotourism certification program. Ecotourism Australia is acknowledged globally for our industry standards and recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). We are recognised as a credible, national peak body for sustainable and nature-based tourism.

We have over 1,700 certified experiences with 500 certified operators in our ECO, Climate Action, and Respecting Our Culture Certifications. In 2018 Ecotourism Australia launched the ECO Destination Certification program where operators and government work together to demonstrate a community-wide and entire regions' commitment to sustainable tourism management practices. Ecotourism Australia and our certified operators and destinations are committed to sustainable destination management, protecting the natural environment and bridging the gap between tourism and conservation.

To support the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, launched in 2022, Ecotourism Australia developed the Sustainable Tourism Certification program for businesses wanting to progress further on their sustainability pathway. Capturing tourism businesses and suppliers across the entire industry, these programs create a framework for sustainability management and see businesses strive for a more sustainable future.

Make a start on your certification - contact us today on 07 3256 6777

Become part of our community



Phone 07 3256 6777
Email sustainability@ecotourism.org.au
Web ecotourism.org.au

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