Travel Shouldn’t Cost the Earth

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www.ecotourism.org.au
‘Driving Visitation To Australia Using Experience Themes’

Research travellers from 11 international markets and the domestic market. ‘Nature in Australia’ and ‘Australian Journeys’ are the two experiences that are the most motivating to travel to Australia. Also ranked as the most ‘appealing, exciting and relevant.’

Tourism Australia, 2011

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OECD

Ecotourism is travel undertaken to witness the unique natural or ecological quality of particular sites or regions, including the provision of services to facilitate such travel.

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National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations Sustainable Tourism definitions:

• "First, do no harm."
• Protects its product—the destination.
• It conserves resources.
• It respects local culture and tradition.
• It aims for quality, not quantity.

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Ecotourism is:

"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."

(TIES, 1990)

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)

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Ecotourism Australia:

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

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Principles of Ecotourism:

Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel.

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The scope of ecotourism to finance national park conservation


The study used a mathematical model to calculate the trade-off between ecotourism and conservation from the viewpoint of a park manager for the endangered rock partridge *Alectoris graeca saxatilis* in the Hohe Tauern national park, Austria. The partridge is a protected species and is unintentionally disturbed by visitors to the park, mainly hikers. The model analysed how a national park manager can balance the money for conservation generated from visitors with disturbance to the rock partridge in order to ensure that the species is not negatively affected.

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“The ‘two-edged’ effect of ecotourism, whereby visitors provide revenues for costly conservation efforts, whilst at the same time potentially affecting endangered species, can be managed to ensure species’ population levels are not affected.”

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Our Programs

ECO Certification – for nature tourism

Respecting Our Culture – for all involving culture

Climate Action Certification – any tourism business

EcoGuide Certification – for individual tour guides

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ECO Certification – 3 Levels

1. Nature Tourism

2. Ecotourism

3. Advanced Ecotourism
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) High Standard Tourism Programme

- Relies on independent certification to identify tourism operators as “High Standard”
- Recognises the Eco Certification Program (Ecotourism and Advanced Ecotourism levels of certification) as a certification scheme for the Marine Park
- Major benefit offered by the GBRMPA is an extended permit term of 15 years for tourism programme permits.

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High standard tourism

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) encourages tourism operations to adopt high standards for protection, presentation and partnership within the Marine Park. These standards enhance environmental protection, reef resilience and tourism sustainability.

The GBRMPA relies on independent certification to identify high standard operations. It recognises the ECO Certification Program operated by Ecotourism Australia as a certification scheme for the Marine Park.

Through the ECO Certification Program, Ecotourism Australia identifies and monitors...
High standard tourism operations

The list of high standard tourism operations is based on the main area of operation - Port Douglas, Cairns, Townsville, the Whitsundays, Capricorn Coast and Reef wide.

Far North

- Lizard Island Resort
- Mike Ball Dive Expeditions
- Ocean Safari
- Spirit of Freedom
- Taka Dive Adventures
- Eye to Eye Marine Encounters

Port Douglas

- Aristocrat Reef Cruises
- Enterprise Charters
- Low Isles Sailaway
- Malaita Low Isles Cruises

Planning your visit
Experiences on offer
Great Barrier Reef National Landscape
Sightings network
Choosing a high standard tourism operation
High standard tourism operations
Responsible Reef Practices
Moorings
Visitor contributions
Zoning
Choosing a high standard tourism operation

If you’re looking to choose a tourism operator for your trip to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, consider selecting a high standard operator that are ecologically sustainable.

They also help to protect and present the Marine Park to a consistently high standard, and are recognised by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for their good standards.

These operators are independently certified as high standard tourism operations by gaining the Ecotourism or Advanced Ecotourism levels of the Ecotourism Australia’s ECO Certification Program.

Look for these logos:

Look for these logos:

Use our interactive map to find details of the certified high standard tourism operations or view a complete list of high standard operators.

The GBRMPA’s own ReefHQ Aquarium, the National Education Centre for The Great Barrier Reef, is an example of an operator that has achieved the highest level of Ecotourism Certification.
Tourism partners

The marine tourism industry is a key partner in the protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef. Tourism operators help enhance visitor experiences of the Reef and play an important role in protecting the amazing biodiversity that supports their industry.

Many tourism operators ensure their activities are best practice by following the Responsible Reef Practices for tourism operators.

High Standard Tourism Operators voluntarily operate to a higher standard than required by legislation as part of their commitment to ecologically sustainable use. These operators are independently certified as meeting best practice standards for the key areas of protection, presentation and partnership.

As an iconic global destination, tourism operators are taking proactive action to tackle climate change to ensure the best outlook for the Great Barrier Reef into the future.

There are also many tourism operators situated across the Marine Park who regularly work in partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to monitor the Reef.

- Tourism staff who are involved in the Eye on the Reef Monitoring Program are trained to monitor and record the health of the Reef. Scientists use this information for their research activities and Marine Park managers use it to identify areas requiring concentrated effort.
- Tourism staff assist with management of the Reef by reporting any interesting and unusual things they see in the Marine Park through the Sightings Network

In the face of an emerging outbreak of crown-of-thorns starfish, the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators and individual operators are working with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on crown-of-thorns starfish control activities in the Marine Park. The program is funded under the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program.
Visitor contributions

Tourism is a major industry along the coastline of the Great Barrier Reef and it contributes exponentially to both the Queensland and Australian economy. Up to 2 million visits are made each year to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by visitors using a tourism operation. These visitors usually pay an Environmental Management Charge (EMC).

It is a way for visitors to contribute to keeping the Great Barrier Reef great for future generations to enjoy.

The funds received by the GBRMPA through the EMC are vitally important in the day-to-day management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

It is used to monitor, manage and improve the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef with the money applied across all aspects of Marine Park management including:

- Education and research
- Ranger patrols
- Site planning
- Public moorings
- Reef protection markers
- Information signs and maps.

The standard charge per person per day is $3.50*, however tourists spending less than three hours in the Marine Park are only charged $2.75* each.
Tourism in Protected Areas
Sustainable nature-based tourism in Queensland's national parks
Information booklet

REVIEW OF
NATURE-BASED TOURISM

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<td>ACT</td>
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| NSW   | ECO           | • 3 year license – Nature, Ecotourism & Advanced Ecotourism  
|       |               | • 10 Year Eco Pass – Advanced Ecotourism - extended 10 year permits are available through NSW National Parks. |

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| NT    | ECO & ROC    | • Tourism NT and Territory Discoveries will only support operators certified through one of their approved programs (includes ECO and ROC).  
• Kakadu Board of Management: From 1 January 2013, Tourism Accreditation Australia Limited (TAAL) programs (includes ECO & ROC) – 3 year standard land-based permits. |

[www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)
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| SA    | ECO, ROC & CA| • South Australian Tourism Industry Council (SATIC) assist with administering the ECO, ROC and CA programs.  
• 3 year Commercial Tour Operator License – Nature Tourism + Climate Action  
• 5 year Commercial Tour Operator License – Ecotourism + Advanced Ecotourism |
| TAS   | -            | • Just decided to add ECO certification at all levels as one of the recognised certification schemes |

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| WA    | ECO           | • 1 or 3 year license – Nature Tourism  
|       |               | • 5 or 7 year license – Ecotourism  
|       |               | • 10 year license – Advanced Ecotourism |

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| QLD   | ECO          | • The GBRMPA offers 15 year permits to those operators on the Reef who have products certified at the Ecotourism or Advanced Ecotourism Levels.  
• QPWS - TIPA: Touring products operating within the Daintree, Whitsundays, Fraser Island, Moreton Island, Natural Bridge and Cooloola will be required to hold ECO Certification under their Commercial Activity Agreements. |
What does the tourism industry think?

Pros:
• Can reduce red tape
• Can lift the quality of the tourism operator
• Can remove ‘rogue’ operators
• Can create a partnership/a vision for shared custodianship
• Can add value to their business

Cons:
• Can add process and regulatory burden
• Parks agencies can still fail to understand commercial realities of doing business
• Does not manage bad behaviour of independent park users
What does Ecotourism Australia think?

- Certification can assist the Park Managers in ensuring the best operators (carry the same values as well as operate properly) are getting access
- Assist Park Managers in compliance management
- Not all the certification schemes recognised have strong environmental component particularly in conservation and interpretation
- Like to see all PAMs use permitting and certification/accreditation to build partnerships in custodianship with ecotourism operators
15. We must support the effective and equitable governance of nature’s use at all relevant levels: stewardship of natural resources by indigenous peoples, integrated management of protected areas and natural resources, and national and international decision making for sustainable development.
We are in this together!

Thank you!

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