

# Setting a worldwide standard for ecotourism

THE INTERNATIONAL  
ECOTOURISM STANDARD FOR CERTIFICATION



**DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

An initiative of the ECOTOURISM ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA's  
Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program and the  
CO-OPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OF AUSTRALIA  
in partnership with GREEN GLOBE 21



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## Acknowledgments

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International Ecotourism Standard

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# INVITATION TO COMMENT

This package contains a draft of the International Ecotourism Standard and introductory text that has been developed by the Ecotourism Association of Australia (EAA) in conjunction with the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Sustainable Tourism of Australia. This International Ecotourism Standard will form the basis of the Green Globe 21 Ecotourism Certification Program under an exclusive licence agreement.

The International Ecotourism Standard is based principally on the highly regarded Australian Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation [Certification] Program (NEAP) Standard combined with elements of the very latest Green Globe Benchmarking performance system. Criteria have been adapted to ensure their applicability in an international setting and both the Standard and Certification Program incorporate the fundamental principles for sound ecotourism certification identified in the Mohonk Agreement.

The finalised International Ecotourism Standard will be launched at the UNEP endorsed International Year of Ecotourism (IYE2002) Conference that is taking place on 21-25 October in Cairns, Australia. The supporting systems that underpin a working Standard and Certification Program including training courses, assessment and operating manuals, marketing and sales will be in place at this time. The Users Guide and supporting case studies will be released on the web over the next two months.

Although this Standard has been developed in consultation with select tourism/ecotourism certification experts and is being piloted with ecotourism operations from a wide range of countries and products, the Ecotourism Association of Australia and Green Globe 21 are seeking additional and more wide-ranging feedback. We welcome comment on the criteria, format and accessibility of the International Ecotourism Standard and associated Certification Program. This feedback will be reviewed and will help mould, in conjunction with the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council accreditation outcomes, the International Ecotourism Standard's final form.

Feedback is requested in the format provided by the questionnaire provided at the end of this document, but additional comments, observations or materials (such as case studies) that may help shape the final structure of the International Ecotourism Standard or content of the Users Guide are very much welcomed. We would request that completed questionnaires, case studies and other feedback be sent no later than August 1st 2002 to:

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For further information on:

- The Ecotourism Association of Australia and NEAP: [www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)
- Green Globe 21: [www.ggasiapacific.com.au](http://www.ggasiapacific.com.au) and [www.greenglobe21.com](http://www.greenglobe21.com)
- IYE2002 conference in Australia: [www.ecotourism.org.au/conf2002](http://www.ecotourism.org.au/conf2002)



## INTERNATIONAL ECOTOURISM STANDARD

### INTRODUCTION

The International Ecotourism Standard has been developed by the Ecotourism Association of Australia in conjunction with the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Sustainable Tourism of Australia. The International Ecotourism Standard is based on the highly successful Australian Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP), Agenda 21, and guiding principles for sound ecotourism certification (Mohonk Agreement) developed by a gathering of ecotourism certification experts at Mohonk Mountain, New York State, USA in November 2001. Green Globe 21 has the exclusive licence for the distribution and management of the International Ecotourism Standard. Green Globe 21 is the global Affiliation, Benchmarking and Certification program for sustainable travel and tourism. The Green Globe brand signifies better environmental performance, improved community interactions, savings through using fewer resources and greater yields from increased consumer demand.

### OBJECTIVE:

The principal objective of the International Ecotourism Standard is to facilitate environmentally sustainable ecotourism. The International Ecotourism Standard provides a basis for assessing a baseline environmental management performance standard for ecotourism products and recognising best practice ecotourism.

Certification to the Standard helps to:

- provide ecotourism businesses with a benchmark of best practice ecotourism principles, and encourage continual improvement of their product;
- provide primary consumers - the visitors - and secondary consumers such as local communities, protected area managers, and tour wholesalers with a means of recognising genuine ecotourism product;
- protect local and global environmental quality;
- encourage contribution to local communities and conservation;
- improve profitability by being less wasteful and more efficient.

Ecotourism products that have been certified are entitled to use the Green Globe 21 logo with tick and the NEAP Ecotourism Certification logo to promote their environmental achievements.

### Ecotourism: definition and key principles

The International Ecotourism Standard has adopted the Ecotourism Associations of Australia's definition of ecotourism:

***Ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.***

However, a more definitive "definition" of ecotourism is the expansion of this statement into a core set of principles with specific performance indicators (i.e. the key ecotourism performance areas).

The core set of eight principles are that ecotourism product should:

1. Focus on giving visitors the opportunity to personally and directly experience nature (Natural Area Focus);
2. Provide opportunities to experience nature in ways that lead to greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment (Interpretation);
3. Represent best practice for environmentally sustainable tourism (Environmental Sustainability Practice);
4. Contribute directly to the conservation of natural areas (Contribution to Conservation);
5. Provide ongoing contributions to the local community (Benefiting Local Communities);
6. Be sensitive to, interpret and involve the culture/s existing in the area (Cultural Respect);
7. Consistently meets consumer expectations (Customer Satisfaction) ; and
8. Be marketed and promoted honestly and accurately so that realistic expectations are formed (Responsible Marketing).

These principles have been used to develop the International Ecotourism Standard criteria – with specific indicators for each of these eight performance areas. The criteria support the major principals and are based on a hybrid of ‘process’ (i.e. creating a documented procedure) and ‘performance’ (e.g. that sewage treatment meets certain effluent standards) standards.

Although some criteria are relatively general and rely on a commitment by the operator to implement a process to meet a desired outcomes (e.g. provision of an interpretation plan in order to stimulate better designed interpretative activities, leading to quality experiences) there is distinct emphasis on specific performance indicators. These are technically prescriptive and deliberately target real environmental outcomes. These criteria include quantification of environmental performance for most of the key environmental indicators. This allows recognition and encouragement of ecotourism product that are making measured environmental improvements that result in a more sustainable world.

We have tried to ensure that the criteria provided by the International Ecotourism Standard are not too technical, but still set credible, measurable and practical criteria. Where possible we will provide simple explanations in the Users Guide, supply proformas, or give examples that illustrate the level of detail required.

### **Certifying Product NOT Business Entity**

Ecotourism activities are extremely diverse and a significant number of tourism businesses and companies (i.e. a single operating entity) have a wide range of products, some of which may not be eligible for ecotourism certification. This may be because some product is not nature-based, or may be because some product does not meet the benchmark or rigour dictated by the Standard. The International Ecotourism Standard thus addresses individual products rather than the entire company, and certification and use of the logo is restricted to specified product.

It is necessary for an operation to fulfill the criteria of the International Ecotourism Standard for each of their products they wish to obtain certification for. A generic ecotourism policy, or environmental management approach (or indeed environmental management system) that addresses whole of company rather than individual product is, providing a sufficient level of detail is provided, acceptable.

### **Sub-sectors**

The International Ecotourism Standard addresses three distinct sub-sectors of the industry: accommodation, tours and attractions. The principles in the Standard are the same for all three sub-sectors, but the way in which the product may meet the principle may well differ. Explanations for where this is likely to occur will be provided in the Users Guide under each Performance Area (principle) and for some specific criteria. The definitions of the three sub-sectors covered by this Standard are:

**Accommodation** is any type of structure of a permanent or semi-permanent nature that is designed to house visitors overnight. Lodges, resorts, standing camps and camping/caravan grounds are included in this category. A major objective of the accommodation is to encourage guests to interact with natural areas adjacent to the accommodation. Tours offered as a separate ticketable item are assessed separately to the accommodation product.

**Tours** are activities that involve being taken on an excursion with a guide (or guides) for the purpose of viewing and interacting with the natural environment. Tours typically combine activities such as driving, walking or riding with viewing and interacting with the environment. A tour may offer overnight accommodation (from camping or staying in huts, to hotel and resort-type lodgings) but these are not assessed as part of the *tour* product. However, if they meet ecotourism criteria for accommodation products (see above), they can be certified under the accommodation category.

**Attractions** are facilities that combine a natural area (or natural area focus) with fixed infrastructure designed to help people explore and learn about nature. Typical examples of an attraction are a Wildlife Park, sanctuary, or interpretive center. Tours or accommodation offered as separate ticketable items are assessed separately.

## **CERTIFICATION CRITERIA AND LEVELS**

### **Ecotourism Certification**

For a product to achieve **Ecotourism Certification** it must meet all (i.e. 100%) of the basic performance standards. **BENCHMARKING** criteria are listed at the start of many of the key ecotourism performance areas (i.e. the principles). It is also necessary for product to complete the relevant quantification of **BENCHMARKING** criteria and meet

the Green Globe baseline standard (these will be determined on a country-by-country basis) in order to become certified. From 2003 Green Globe 21 will be publishing national baseline standards as they are determined. These baseline standards will be published annually.

### **Advanced Ecotourism Certification**

Those products that complete all core criteria and reach baseline or above in the quantified *BENCHMARKING* criteria are encouraged to complete **ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE** criteria (identified throughout the text by name or though ***bold italics***) and apply for Advanced Ecotourism Certification. Seventy-five percent of available **ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICES** need to be obtained to be awarded the higher accreditation status – that of **Advanced Ecotourism**. Best practice levels achieved through *BENCHMARKING* will be recognised by Green Globe 21 on the Certification Report, whether or not Advanced Ecotourism status is obtained.

### **Best Practice Innovation**

Ecotourism is constantly evolving, and technological advances and knowledge continue to advance. The International Ecotourism Standard encourages innovation in all performance areas that support the principles of ecotourism. Where a product significantly exceeds criteria for one or more aspects, credit(s) towards Advanced Ecotourism Certification may be awarded at the time of Assessment. The key test is that the aspect is truly best practice and/or is original innovation toward the principles of ecotourism. Claims for recognition of **BEST PRACTICE INNOVATION** may be made at the time of application for certification.

### **Assessment process**

Products that indicate through self-assessment (see sample form) that they meet all of the relevant criteria of the International Ecotourism Standard are then required to submit quantification data to be measured by Green Globe 21 against specific indicators (components marked as “*BENCHMARKING*” throughout the text). The certification process is completed only if all indicators for benchmarking criteria are above a baseline level.

To become certified all products then proceed to a compulsory on-site visit with an accredited third-party auditor who verifies and ensures compliance with the nominated criteria.

### **More on BENCHMARKING**

“*BENCHMARKING*” refers to components of the IES that relate to specific quantifiable indicators. These ‘benchmarks’ require the certification applicant to assess their performance against a baseline and best practice level that have been developed from national environmental performance data.

The *BENCHMARKING* criteria are mainly modified Green Globe 21 Indicators that have been carefully researched and chosen to grade sustainability performance, but also include some newly developed ecotourism-specific indicators. Like the Green Globe 21 Sustainable Tourism Certification Program for Travel and Tourism Companies, the IES integrates the *BENCHMARKING* indicators as part of the certification application with additional verification of these measures required by an on-site audit. However, a separate stage of “Benchmarked” product does not exist.

For more information on *BENCHMARKING* refer to the Green Globe 21 websites: (<http://www.ggasiapacific.com.au> or <http://www.greenglobe21.com>).

### **Ensuring access to certification**

Specific performance criteria ensure that every product receiving certification has committed to a specified baseline standard. These baselines meet, and often exceed regulatory compliance, in line with the need for ecotourism product to embody best practice environmental, social and economic management.

The obvious concern in setting an international standard is that in dictating baseline performance levels you have to set the level at a relatively low level – or run the risk of producing a standard that is unattainable in developing nations or areas with limited infrastructure and access to technological expertise. However, ecotourism certification wants to differentiate product that has gone well beyond compliance, it does not want to codify “just enough” is good enough.

This difficulty has been dealt with in a number of ways:

- deliberately including some process-based components (i.e. a hybrid performance-process system) such as the environmental management approach (i.e. effectively an environmental management system) that allows for the variability in threshold performance levels between countries but demand at least a commitment to improving standards;
- developing a certification program with two levels that recognizes different ways of obtaining best practice;
- *BENCHMARKING* indicators are country specific: baseline and best practice levels for these indicators are analyzed according to that countries environmental performance data, or if this is not available, a country with similar technology and infrastructure, and
- providing specific rules for micro-businesses.

### **Micro-businesses**

Certain criteria in this standard are likely to challenge some businesses due to their small size, relatively low financial capital and revenue. These ecotourism businesses may be very small, but they can have very significant positive benefits for local communities and conservation initiatives. In recognition of this, there are special “rules” for micro-businesses. Wherever a micro-business is achieving the principles of ecotourism but cannot meet the specific criteria in the Standard, consideration will be given to exemption from those criteria (depending upon the circumstances). The intention is not to lower standards, but to allow these operations to access the Certification Program and the expected advantages/tangible benefits whilst they work towards meeting all relevant criteria. For the purpose of these rules, micro-businesses are defined as:

Businesses that consist of at least two of the following:

- 5 or fewer employees;
- have a turn-over of less than US\$20 000 pa;
- are a not for profit business that is essentially owned and operated by traditional custodians or the local community for the community's benefit.



Justification for exemption for any criteria must be made at the time of assessment, with the vital test being that the principles of ecotourism must still be met.

### **Established versus NEW PRODUCTS**

Many tourist operators who will seek certification of their products will already be operating their tours, accommodation houses, and attractions. It is likely that some will have been developed and established well before the introduction of formal environmental impact assessment laws, town planning laws, and other environmental protection regulations, as these are relatively recent initiatives of governments.

The International Ecotourism Standard recognises this historical change and the need to apply realistic criteria to those aspects of a product (for example, the accommodation house, associated infrastructure and interpretive centres), that already exist. While existing products are required – as per Part A (Regulatory Framework) – to be able to show that they have met all relevant environmental and land use laws which apply to them, these operations are *not* expected to meet environmental impact assessment and other requirements which have been put in place *since* their construction.

However, someone contemplating starting a new ecotourism business will need to meet the relevant new criteria presented in this Standard. To make using this Standard as simple as possible, criteria for accommodation, infrastructure and other physical works which have the potential to adversely impact upon the environment, and that have not yet been constructed, are headed **NEW PRODUCTS**.

### **THE INTERNATIONAL ECOTOURISM STANDARD IS PRESENTED IN THREE PARTS:**

**PART A:** defines a requirement for an Ecotourism Policy and Regulatory Framework requirements.

**PART B:** defines requirements for 8 Ecotourism Performance Areas.

**PART C:** defines a requirement for an Ecotourism Product Minimum Impact Code and provides a Schedule of Codes of Conduct.

A comprehensive Users Guide is at an advanced stage of development and will be released shortly on the web. This will provide comprehensive information and examples that will help ecotourism product achieve Green Globe Ecotourism Certification against the International Ecotourism Standard. The Users Guide will provide a step-by-step guide to the key ecotourism performance areas, illustrate best practice, provide details on how to collect and organise the data needed for **BENCHMARKING**. It is anticipated that the final version of the Users Guide will also contain proformas, a self-assessment checklist and significant case study examples.

## **PART A: ECOTOURISM POLICY AND FRAMEWORK**

### **A.1. ECOTOURISM POLICY**

An ecotourism product shall have a guiding policy that:

- is appropriate to the size, location, nature, scale of activities, and services provided by the ecotourism product;
- commits to comply with relevant environmental legislation and regulations;
- commits to staff training;
- commits to planning and monitoring environmental and social performance through setting relevant targets based on the principles of Ecotourism;
- commits to the collection of specified *BENCHMARKING* information;
- commits to achieving **ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE** for at least three identified ecotourism principles;
- is available on request to stakeholders and is on public display;
- is reviewed annually; is adopted and promoted by management of the ecotourism product;
- commits to contributing to conservation and management of the natural areas, culture, and heritage site/s visited, and
- includes a commitment to promoting regional and global conservation.

### **A.2. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

Managers of an ecotourism product shall:

- maintain an up to date register of relevant environmental, public and occupational health and safety, hygiene and employment legislation, regulations and other requirements to which the ecotourism product is obliged to adhere;
- comply with relevant legislation, regulations and other requirements;
- maintain records of compliance, and
- where compliance was not maintained, record the remedial action taken to ensure compliance is attained as soon as practicable.

## **PART B: ECOTOURISM PERFORMANCE AREAS**

The International Ecotourism Standard recognises eight ecotourism performance areas. Each ecotourism performance area is underpinned by an ecotourism guiding principle. For product to achieve Green Globe 21 Ecotourism Certification it will need to meet all of the criteria (performance indicators) of this Standard and complete the relevant quantification of *BENCHMARKING* criteria and perform above a baseline level before proceeding to a site audit. Ecotourism product performance against the International Ecotourism Standard is independently assessed.

### **SECTION ONE: NATURAL AREA FOCUS**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism focus is on a direct and personal experience of nature.***

*BENCHMARKING: Images of nature in marketing material/ all images on marketing material.*

B.1 Ecotourism product information, operational records and customer feedback records demonstrate that:

- the majority of each customer's activity time is spent within a natural area or with a natural area focus;
- the prime focus of the ecotourism product is presentation of the natural, cultural and social values of the ecosystem/s in the local area;
- the ecotourism product helps customers to directly and personally experience nature in a sustainable manner;
- the ecotourism product is designed and operated to maximise the opportunity for customers to achieve a quality ecotourism experience;
- opportunities are provided for each visitor to personally experience nature in relative solitude.

### **SECTION TWO: ECOTOURISM INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism provides opportunities to experience nature in ways that lead to a greater understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment.***

*BENCHMARKING: Total customer time spent on face-to-face interpretive opportunities pa / total customer time pa.*

#### **B.2.1 INTERPRETIVE SERVICES**

##### **The principle**

***Ecotourism provides access to interpretive opportunities that allow visitors to learn more about the natural and cultural heritage of the area they are visiting.***

B.2.1. Ecotourism products shall provide at least three of the following interpretation opportunities for customers (**ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is recognised as 6 opportunities, one of which must be face-to-face**):

For face-to-face interpretation

- a tour led by a qualified guide;
- educational talks or lectures by experts;
- theatre performances;
- other interactive educational activities (e.g. role-plays, junior ranger program, craft activities - provide details).

For static/non-personal interpretation

- pre-tour printed, electronic, and web based ecotourism educational material;
- ecotourism focused audio-visuais;
- ecotourism printed materials including brochures, educational fact sheets and interpretive guides;
- informative displays (which can include signage);
- nature, culture, social-focused reference materials in a specialised small library or holding;
- self-guiding trails (must include interpretive signage or brochures);
- other (provide details).

## **B.2.2 CONTENT OF INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION**

### **The principle**

***Information used for interpretive materials and services is relevant and appropriate to the site and audience, and has been verified as accurate by reference to credible sources.***

B.2.2. Ecotourism product information shall:

- Include a register of the major interpretive and educational stories for the region/ site.
- Identify the primary source(s) of ecotourism information used for the ecotourism product which may include (**ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE recognises cross referencing with 2 or more sources**):
  - reference books, scientific journals or the like;
  - professional persons (scientists, academics, anthropologists, environmental managers, etc.);
  - knowledgeable local people (specifically indigenous people where relevant);
  - scholarly documentaries.
- Include a compendium of interpretive resources.
- Include interpretive materials which communicate:
  - the conservation significance of the area;
  - minimal impact methods appropriate to the area;
  - appropriate behaviour in culturally sensitive regions/sites.
  - (**ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE if the key principles of ecotourism and the role of ecotourism certification are enunciated**).

### **B.2.3 PLANNING FOR INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION**

#### **The principle**

***Interpretation is planned so that effective communication occurs.***

B.2.3.1 Specific interpretive activity plans shall be prepared and include:

- goals and objectives in terms of educational and/or conservation outcomes;
- the principle audience and their needs;
- relevant themes/messages that address the natural, cultural and social values of the site;
- suitable interpretive methods;
- assessment of risks and risk mitigation measures;
- contingency planning.

**B.2.3.2 An Interpretation Program Plan is prepared which includes:**

- ***defined interpretive objectives, themes and central messages;***
- ***a summary of the product's natural, cultural and social values and links to related or regional attractions;***
- ***listing the interpretive stakeholders and their needs/abilities (visitors, traditional owners, protected area managers, the local communities);***
- ***a summary of interpretive resources and materials;***
- ***a description of the suite of integrated interpretive activities including the resources/infrastructure and materials required, interpretive content, costs, monitoring and evaluation techniques including performance benchmarks.***

B.2.3.3 Ecotourism product operational records shall be maintained which include:

- customer participation in the interpretive activities;
- customer feedback from participation in the interpretation activities;
- review and improvement of the interpretive program.

B.2.3.4 Interpretive program performance is monitored using at least one of the following techniques (***ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE integrates at least one formal technique***):

- written visitor comments including compliments and complaints;
- formal customer surveys;
- written feedback from focus groups;
- formal written peer review;

### **B.2.4 STAFF TRAINING**

#### **The principle**

***Guides and other staff in contact with customers are able to provide accurate information on the natural and cultural heritage and conservation issues of the sites visited, and are adequately trained in minimal impact and interpretive techniques.***

***BENCHMARKING Criteria 1: Number of customer service staff inducted /total number of customer service staff.***

***BENCHMARKING Criteria 2: Number of customer service staff formally trained /total number of customer service staff.***

B.2.4.1 Ecotourism induction training shall be completed for all customer service staff and shall include (***ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE recognises the development of a training manual and/or the development of supplementary resource information kits for staff***):

- the natural and cultural values of the area;
- the environmental management issues in the area;
- the principles of ecotourism and how they are achieved by the product;
- practices that they are to follow as part of their duties to minimise adverse impacts, and
- advice for customers that assist in minimising impacts.

B.2.4.2 Ecotour Guides can demonstrate competence through a portfolio of evidence or training records in the following skills and knowledge:

- knowledge of the natural and cultural heritage and environmental management issues of the area;
- skills in interpretation and communication;
- relevant minimal impact procedures;
- where relevant, specialist hard skills/formal qualifications for ‘adventure’ activities such as snorkeling.

***B.2.4.3 Lead or Head Guides are qualified as Ecotour Guides either through a formal certification scheme or through competency based, on-the-job training which has been certified by an appropriate training authority.***

## SECTION THREE: ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICE

### The principle

***Ecotourism represents best practice for ecologically sustainable tourism. The principles of ecologically sustainable tourism are that:***

- a tourist activity should not degrade the natural environment;***
- the principles of sustainability are applied in both the development and operation of the product.***

### B.3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

#### The principle

***Ecotourism operations have considered environmental risks that the ecotourism product, and its activities could cause, and as a consequence, are prepared to respond appropriately.***

B.3.1.1 An environmental management approach appropriate to the nature and scale of the ecotourism product shall be documented and include:

- an assessment of the product’s ecological sustainability aspects (including risks of causing environmental harm) with respect to its location, nature and scale of activities, and the conservation issues of the ecosystems visited;
- be approved, implemented and reviewed annually by senior management;

- identify staff training requirements and programs that fulfill these requirements;
- identify and monitor BENCHMARKING measures of current performance to reduce negative, and where appropriate, increase positive performance;
- establish and implement mechanisms to maintain aspects of BEST PRACTICE ecological sustainability and undertake continual improvement toward set targets of other aspects not at BEST PRACTICE;
- take appropriate steps to correct situations not conforming with the Ecotourism Policy and relevant performance targets, and prevent their reoccurrence;
- assesses potential for environmental harm from planned, accidental and emergency situations and provided appropriate responses (including the provision of emergency response equipment) to minimise likelihood of events and mitigate impacts if they occur.

***ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is where an Environmental Management System has been prepared which meets the requirements of ISO 14001 and/or the Green Globe 21 Standard for Travel and Tourism companies.***

B.3.1.2 All Ecotourism product operational staff shall be trained in:

- the environmental management issues for the ecotourism product for the natural area(s);
- the natural and cultural values of the area;
- the potential risks of environmental harm and measures which need to be undertaken to prevent such and, if necessary, to respond to an emergency;
- the environmental protection and management measures that they are to follow as part of their duties to minimise adverse impacts, and
- advice they can provide to customers to assist in achieving ecotourism;
- the principles of ecotourism and how they are achieved by the product.

### **B.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism operations are established on the basis of a scientific understanding of potential environmental impacts.***

B.3.2.1 Established ecotourism products that required a statutory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report and process shall provide evidence of official approval for the ecotourism product and the EIA. ***(ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is where a formal assessment of environmental impacts is not required by regulation for approval of the operation and where potential and ongoing environmental impacts have been assessed and action has been taken to minimise them).***

B.3.2.2 NEW PRODUCTS have an environmental impact assessment process that includes:

- identifying the location and geographic extent of the ecotourism product;
- evaluating alternative sites and designs to achieve the optimum environmentally sustainable ecotourism product;
- assessing the existing integrity of ecosystem processes;
- determining the known sensitivity of ecosystem processes and natural values to human-induced change;
- assessing the natural change and the resilience of ecosystem processes;
- describing the risk of irreversible damage to ecosystem processes;

- defining the potential for cumulative environmental impacts;
- assessing mechanisms to rehabilitate the area;
- assessing mechanisms to effectively monitor ecosystem processes;
- evaluating strategies to minimise ecological risk.

### **B.3.3 LOCATING AN ECOTOURISM PRODUCT**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism is located only where it is appropriate and ecologically sustainable.***

B.3.3.1 Evidence is required that the ecotourism product is a permitted use for the site or area.

B.3.3.2 Evidence is required that an ecotourism product has been located for a site or area following an evaluation of at least the following criteria: ***(ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE includes an independent expert appraisal of the following points):***

- appraisal of alternative locations and alternative uses of the site;
- identification and avoidance of areas of high conservation value;
- utilisation of previously disturbed sites in preference to undisturbed sites;
- rehabilitation of natural processes on the site;
- avoiding culturally sensitive sites (unless the activity involves appropriate presentation of cultural values or conservation of cultural heritage);
- endorsement by traditional custodians (including native title holders);
- minimising any potential adverse effects on local communities;
- minimising adverse effects on other visitors to the natural area, and
- avoiding disturbance to protected areas.

B.3.3.3 Evidence that land acquisition and/or the securing of access process has met all legal obligations and has involved negotiated compensation for landowners or users adversely affected. ***(ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE includes measures are formally in place that ensure local communities and businesses have access for traditional economic activity, social or community use, and tourism business ventures).***

### **B.3.4 CONSTRUCTION METHODS AND MATERIALS**

#### **The principle**

***In the construction of ecotourism accommodation houses, interpretive centres, and other infrastructure, maximum use is made of renewable and recycled materials, and the construction methods minimise environmental impacts.***

B.3.4.1 In constructing, establishing and maintaining ecotourism product infrastructure provide evidence that environmental impacts have been minimised through the application of at least 3 of the following requirements ***(ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is achieved where 3 of these requirements have been met for existing structures and 6 have been met for NEW STRUCTURES):***

- excavation has been minimised;
- building materials have been sourced locally;
- recycled building materials have been used as a dominant source of material;
- building materials are from environmentally sustainable renewable resources;
- timber treated with arsenic or copper is not used;
- soil and gravel used in construction is free from weeds and plant diseases;



- vehicles used to transport materials to the site are cleaned to control the transfer of weeds and diseases;
- renewable energy is used to provide power used in construction;
- waste to landfill has been minimised during construction;
- water run-off from a disturbed site is minimised.

B.3.4.2 Provide evidence that construction staff, employees and contractors are briefed on natural and cultural heritage values of an area and measures necessary to protect the environment.

B.3.4.3 For areas of special historical or cultural significance provide evidence that culturally sensitive construction techniques and materials have been used to help maintain the cultural identity of a place.

### **B.3.5 SITE DISTURBANCE**

#### **The principle**

***The ecotourism product causes minimal disturbance to the local environment and any areas that may be disturbed are rehabilitated to restore ecological processes.***

B.3.5.1 In managing an ecotourism product, provide evidence that impacts have been minimised through the application of the following requirements:

- ecotourism product establishment has achieved minimal clearing of native vegetation and post development stabilization and replanting has occurred;
- ecotourism product establishment has a record of the natural and cultural values of the site prior to the commencement of construction of buildings and infrastructure or any other work that involves site disturbance;
- for ecotourism product establishment, a program is developed and implemented to protect vegetation, natural water flows, biodiversity, landscape, and cultural heritage during development of the site, and
- conservation of rare or endangered species has been maximised through an understanding of the presence of species, their needs and adaptive management practices implemented such as:
  - avoiding disruption of wildlife movement
  - avoiding breeding sites and breeding seasons;
- ecotourism product establishment has avoided extreme land shaping and surface modifications;
- ecotourism product establishment has ensured that drainage follows natural pathways and concentration of overland flow is avoided;
- ecotourism product establishment has avoided sealing land surfaces which may reduce infiltration to groundwater to a small area;
- ecotourism product management has ensured that there is no ongoing erosion (and rehabilitates any existing erosion);
- ecotourism product establishment has involved minimal disturbance to cultural heritage;
- ecotourism product establishment has involved landscaping that reflects the character of the nearby natural environment, and
- ecotourism product management avoids the use of pesticides and herbicides that cause residual pollution

**B.3.5.2** *The site(s) has involved rehabilitation of degraded lands (e.g., on an old quarry or degraded farmland).*

**B.3.5.3** *A program of re-landscaping with native, locally occurring species is implemented where exotic (or native but not locally occurring) plant species have been planted in the past.*

**B.3.5.4** *A drainage or erosion and sediment control plan has been prepared and implemented.*

**B.3.5.5** For **NEW PRODUCTS**:

- a record of the natural and cultural values of the site is undertaken prior to the commencement of construction of buildings and infrastructure or any other work that involves site disturbance;
- a program is developed and implemented to protect vegetation, natural water flows, biodiversity, landscape, and cultural heritage during development of the site, and
- landscaping is conducted using native, locally occurring plant species.

### **B.3.6 VISUAL IMPACTS**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism buildings, infrastructure, and the activities of ecotourists do not dominate the visual landscape.***

**B.3.6.1** In designing, developing and maintaining ecotourism products at least two of the following considerations are applied (***ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is achieved for existing products if 3 measures are met, and for NEW PRODUCTS if all of the measures are met***):

- building forms are compatible with the physical and cultural landscape;
- the height of buildings and structures is below the tree line or screened by topographical features;
- roads and tracks are screened by topographical features, or are otherwise designed to minimise visual impacts ;
- car parks are not visually obtrusive;
- the colour and reflectivity of surfaces are compatible with the physical and cultural landscape;
- native vegetation is retained or included in landscaping to screen facilities.
- structures and buildings are painted in colours that do not sharply contrast or conflict with the landscape.

**B.3.6.2** ***Vehicles, vessels and aircraft are painted in colours that do not sharply contrast or conflict with the landscape.***

**B.3.6.3** ***Vehicles, vessels, aircraft, buildings, and structures use traditional design (at least in style colour scheme and where possible, in materials).***

### **B.3.7 LIGHTING**

#### **The principle**

***Where natural lighting is inadequate, artificial lighting is used only to the extent necessary to meet safety and security purposes.***

B.3.7.1 Ecotourism product management shall minimise the impact of artificial lighting on the environment by implementing at least four of the following requirements

**(ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is achieved for 6 measures in place):**

- external lighting is kept to that necessary for orientation, security, and safety;
- illuminated signage is only used for emergency exits;
- spotlights do not point above the horizontal (excluding uplighting within buildings);
- incandescent floodlights are not used outside public areas;
- compact fluorescent bulbs are used wherever possible;
- natural light provides all necessary illumination to all areas of buildings during daylight hours;
- pathways, corridors and external areas are lit by lights with movement sensor switches;
- customers are provided with portable lights to avoid fixed lighting outside.

### **B.3.8 WATER CONSERVATION**

#### **The principle**

***Water supply is ecologically sustainable and water consumption is minimised.***

*BENCHMARKING: Water consumed (kL) pa / Guest nights pa or Area under roof (m<sup>2</sup>) or Guest day (for tours).*

B.3.8.1. Ecotourism products shall minimise environmental impacts when using water from natural sources, shall demonstrate that the water use is sustainable and that it does not unacceptably reduce:

- the amount of water available for local communities;
- the amount of water available for local vegetation and for aquatic flora and fauna;
- downstream water flow;
- groundwater resources.

B.3.8.2 Ecotourism products shall conserve water, with at least five of the following water conservation measures implemented (**ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE requires 6 measures**):

- small sinks (less than five litres) in guest rooms;
- low-flow shower-heads;
- use of treated sewage effluent;
- use of rainwater;
- dual and/or low flush toilets;
- composting toilets;
- provision of showers rather than baths;
- automatic turn-off taps;
- water-efficient gardens;
- water-efficient dishwashers;
- water-efficient laundry washing machines;
- guests encouraged to reuse cloth towels before laundering;
- guests provided with written advice on the importance of managing water use;
- tap aerators and flow restrictors;
- reuse of grey water.

B.3.8.3 *Treated sewage effluent is used for purposes other than irrigation, such as toilet flushing.*

### **B.3.9 WASTEWATER AND EFFLUENT**

#### **The principle**

***Sewage and effluent is minimised and treated to a level such that environmental harm does not occur.***

*BENCHMARKING: Total water samples passed pa / Total water samples tested pa.*

*BENCHMARKING: Amount of biodegradable cleaning chemicals pa / total cleaning chemicals used pa.*

B.3.9.1 Ecotourism products shall minimise environmental impacts caused by the disposal of waste waters by:

- Wastewater receiving at least secondary treatment with sustainable effluent reuse and preferably tertiary treatment or composting to avoid environmental harm. **(ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is treatment is to tertiary level, or secondary level with disinfection, and effluent being reused.)**
- Only using direct disposal or septic systems where the ongoing impacts on ground and surface waters can accommodate the loads.
- Management systems in place to prevent hazardous or toxic substances (including oil and grease) entering wastewater. **(ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE requires use of environmentally acceptable cleaning chemicals and/or treatment of wastewater from vehicle washing stations).**
- Management systems in place to deal with treatment sewage treatment plant failures.
- Monitoring of the quality of treated effluent and/or receiving water is undertaken (as required by regulatory authorities, that may include analysis of faecal coliforms, nitrogen, phosphorus, pH, and suspended solids).

### **B.3.10 NOISE**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism offers customers the opportunity to experience natural quiet when they are in natural settings.***

B.3.10.1 Ecotourism products shall minimise noise impacts to a level equal to or lower than background noise in nearby natural areas or in adjacent residences. **(BEST PRACTICE is achieved when natural quiet prevails for the majority of each customer's time in natural areas).**

B.3.10.2 Ecotourism products shall minimise noise impacts from machinery, generators, and air-conditioners by using sound insulation.

B.3.10.3 Ecotourism products shall minimise noise impacts from vehicles and vessel engines by reducing idle time.

### **B.3.11 AIR QUALITY**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism has minimal impact on local air quality and globally in terms of greenhouse gases.***

B.3.11.1 Ecotourism products shall minimise air emission impacts by:

- avoiding chlorofluorocarbon [CFC] emissions;
- using of LPG, natural gas, or ethanol-based fuel;
- using electric, diesel or four-stroke engines for outboard motors, motorbikes, and other small motorised vehicles;
- prohibiting smoking in any vehicles, vessels, or aircraft, or in any buildings used by guests

B.3.11.2 *Prohibiting smoking in natural areas.*

### **B.3.12 WASTE MINIMISATION**

#### **The principle**

***The waste minimisation hierarchy of REDUCE, REUSE and RECYCLE underpins all ecotourism operations.***

*BENCHMARKING: Volume of waste landfilled ( $m^3$ ) pa / Guest nights pa or Area under roof ( $m^2$ ) or Guest days pa.*

B.3.12.1: Ecotourism products shall minimize the generation of waste by implementing at least four of the following actions (***BEST PRACTICE is achieved when all of the measures are taken, and/or a waste minimisation strategy is documented and implemented***):

- minimising packaging through purchasing strategies;
- avoiding use of disposable items;
- purchasing materials in bulk in reusable containers, and returning containers for reuse;
- litter encountered is collected and removed;
- organic kitchen waste is used either for animal food or is composted;
- recycled and/or unbleached paper is used for printed materials;
- staff and customers are encouraged to participate in recycling programs, and
- materials are recycled or reused.

### **B.3.13 ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism products involve a minimal use of non-renewable energy sources and assist in reducing human-induced global climate change through energy efficiency (in terms of greenhouse gas emissions) by choice of fuels, energy-efficient appliances, etc.***

*BENCHMARKING: Total energy consumption (GJ) pa / Guest nights pa or Area under roof ( $m^2$ ) or Guest days pa (for tours).*

B.3.13.1 Ecotourism products shall minimise the use of non-renewable energy by implementing at least five of the following actions (***ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is achieved when all of the actions listed are undertaken***):

- use of insulation in roofs and walls;
- use of roofs with low heat absorption in hot climates;
- designing buildings to take into account climatic conditions (i.e. use of passive solar heating and/or tropical open ventilation techniques to minimise heating, ventilation and air conditioning requirements;

- use of movement detectors to control lighting and/or air-conditioning;
- use of key-tag switches and automatic controls to ensure that air conditioners and other energy consuming appliances are used only when required;
- selection of appliances and white goods (such as dishwashers and refrigerators) on the basis of energy efficiency;
- use of double-glazing for windows in cold climates;
- recovery and use of heat from equipment and put to use (e.g. waste heat from a generator is used to heat water, dry laundry etc.);
- use of electricity is managed to take account of peak loads, and
- monitoring energy consumption.

**B.3.13.2 Ecotourism products utilise one or more of the following renewable energy sources as a substitute for non-renewable energy:**

- **solar (photo voltaic) panels;**
- **solar hot-water systems;**
- **micro-hydro systems;**
- **wind power generators;**
- **wave power generators;**
- **thermal power generators.**

**B.3.13.3 Energy is purchased from a 'green' (ecolabel) supplier.**

**B.3.13.4 Ecotourism products shall reduce the use of energy for transport through at least four of the following measures (*ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is achieved when at least 5 of the measures are undertaken*):**

- all routes and schedules for tour and support vehicles are arranged to minimise distance traveled;
- congested and peak traffic is avoided;
- operating staff have been trained in fuel-efficient driving practices;
- all vehicles are regularly serviced and maintained;
- fuel-efficient vehicles are purchased, and
- electric vehicles are used where feasible.

**B.3.14 MINIMAL DISTURBANCE TO WILDLIFE**

**The principle**

***There is minimal disturbance to wildlife, and feeding and other animal behaviour remains as natural as possible.***

**B.3.14.1 Ecotourism products shall demonstrate that they are actively managed to minimise:**

- deliberate and regular intrusion into wildlife habitat likely to cause disturbance to natural wildlife behaviour, such as foraging and breeding patterns and
- chasing or harassing of wildlife.

**B.3.14.2 Ecotourism products that involve disturbance to wildlife and /or feeding shall demonstrate that they have the appropriate approvals from the relevant authorities.**

**B.3.14.3 Ecotourism products involving wildlife shall demonstrate that:**

- unnecessary handling of wildlife is avoided;
- any handling of wildlife is carried out by trained staff;

- clients are advised of negative impacts of feeding wildlife;
- where feeding of wildlife is authorised, only appropriate food is provided to wildlife;
- viewing routes are rotated regularly to help protect wildlife;
- wildlife viewing does not threaten the survival of the species.

**B.3.14.4 *Ecotourism products involving wildlife do not engage in handling or feeding wildlife.***

### **B.3.15 MINIMAL IMPACT CODES OF PRACTICE**

#### **The principle**

***Ecotourism operations adopt and implement a minimal impact code of practice for the activities they undertake.***

B.3.15.1 Ecotourism products shall develop a minimal impact code(s) of practice for the activities they undertake and commit to a monitoring program and operational improvement. Code(s) must set out the measures to prevent or minimise environmental harm, social and cultural impacts from the activities undertaken. The code must be appropriate for nature and scale of the activities undertaken and the natural environments visited (PART C).

B.3.15.2 Where there is no relevant industry code of practice in place, a code of practice developed by the tourism business has been endorsed by other tour operators, protected area managers, land owners, government conservation agencies and where applicable, non-government conservation agencies.

B.3.15.3 The code(s) of practice should address measures such as those identified in the attached Schedules. The code(s) will be reviewed at the time of Assessment.

## **SECTION FOUR: CONTRIBUTING TO CONSERVATION**

### **The principle**

***Ecotourism should provide a tangible contribution to conservation.***

*BENCHMARKING: Total cash or value of in-kind contribution to conservation per customer.*

B.4.1 Ecotourism products can provide evidence that they contribute to conservation outcomes through hands-on, in-kind and/or financial assistance that include at least five of the following measures over the previous 12 months (***ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is achieved if 8 measures are implemented***):

- recycling;
- removal of litter;
- clean up days to remove litter from natural areas are organised and/or resourced;
- weed and/or pest control;
- rehabilitation;
- development and maintenance of facilities/infrastructure to reduce visitor impact;
- providing input/environmental planning and policy initiatives;

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- monitoring tourism impacts;
- recording of flora/fauna/natural events;
- ecological research;
- support of conservation projects;
- promotion of conservation issues.

B.4.2 Ecotourism products can provide evidence that they contribute to conservation outcomes beyond the immediate area of operation by implementing at least one of the following (**ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is achieved with two actions**):

- a donation to, or support of, an environmental or conservation NGO;
- participation in greenhouse gas abatement and/or carbon sequestration programs;
- involvement in regional or nationwide recycling scheme;
- a donation or other support for an environmental research project.

B.4.3 An ecotourism product shall be managed to ensure merchandise for sale:

- do not include rare or threatened species, and
- do not include items of significant cultural or heritage conservation value.

B.4.4 ***An ecotourism product provides advice to customers not to purchase merchandise derived from rare and threatened species, or heritage artifacts, from other sources.***

B.4.4 ***The ecotourism product shall provide evidence of tangible support to assist formal protection of a natural area or heritage site that is not an existing protected area.***

B.4.5 ***Managers of an ecotourism product provides linkages between and promotion of certified "green" tourism businesses and certified ecolabel products.***

## SECTION FIVE: ECOTOURISM BENEFITING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

### The principle

***Ecotourism provides ongoing contributions to the local community.***

*BENCHMARKING: Employees with their primary residential address within 20 km of the operation/Total employees.*

B.5.1 Ecotourism products shall demonstrate that at least five of the following measures are being undertaken (**ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is achieved where all of measures are achieved, and/or the local community has equity in the operation, and/or a local green to green purchasing policy is in place**):

- employment of local guides;
- employment of local ancillary staff;
- purchase of local products;
- purchase of local services;



- sale of appropriate locally-made souvenirs and handicrafts;
- cash or in-kind investments are made to local community infrastructure, events and activities;
- discounted access to the ecotourism product is provided for local people.

## SECTION SIX: CULTURAL RESPECT AND SENSITIVITY

### The principle

***Ecotourism must respect and be sensitive to cultural matters, preferably embracing the cultural aspects of the areas they visit. For cultural values to be treated appropriately, there is a need to consult with local people to ensure that their aspirations are met and that any presentation of cultural attributes is authentic.***

B.6.1 Managers of ecotourism products shall consult with people known to have a cultural (traditional) affinity with the location of the product to ensure:

- cultural sensitivities are being taken into account;
- cultural protocols are implemented;
- cultural obligations are respected;
- cultural information and interpretation is accurate.

B.6.2 Ecotour guides and customer contact staff shall be trained in appreciation of local and indigenous culture, heritage and people.

B.6.3 Ecotourism product customers shall be advised on appropriate behaviour (and taboos) prior to a visit to a culturally sensitive site or region including elements such as:

- how to greet people;
- form of clothing to wear;
- items that should not be touched;
- things or people that should not be photographed or approached;
- hand, feet and body movement/ placement;
- parts of the body which should not be touched.

B.6.4 ***Ecotourism product contributes to enhanced customer services through one or more of the following initiatives:***

- ***locally produced handicrafts and goods offered for sale are guaranteed authentic (through a label of authenticity / certification) to indicate they are of indigenous origin, manufacture and/or design;***
- ***interpretive material dealing with a local culture has been developed by members of that cultural group;***
- ***local indigenous people or endorsed experts on their culture are employed as guides or guide trainers;***
- ***local indigenous people are offered training in guiding by the operator;***
- ***cultural experiences are facilitated through integrating appropriate and authentic cultural elements from the local region into the product;***

- *in the presentation of cultural material, tourists are made aware of contemporary cultural practices in the context of the evolution of the people's culture;*
- *intellectual property and cultural copyright is respected through only using designs, photographs, performances, and objects with the permission of the traditional owners.*

## SECTION SEVEN: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

### The principle

***Ecotourism products meet or exceed customer's expectations.***

B.7.1 Ecotourism product managers shall maintain informal feedback on customer satisfaction through at least three of the following, and use this feedback for product review:

- staff discussions with customers;
- provision of visitor books to allow for written comments;
- seeking the views of agents (retailers and wholesalers);
- media reviews of the product;
- review of phone calls and correspondence from clients.

B.7.2 Ecotourism product managers shall achieve formal feedback through at least one of the following and use this information for product review:

- structured interviews;
- focus groups;
- analysis of comments in visitor books;
- survey questionnaires.

## SECTION EIGHT: RESPONSIBLE MARKETING

### The principle

***Ecotourism provides accurate and responsible information about the product that leads to realistic expectations.***

B.8.1 Marketing material generated for the ecotourism product shall provide accurate and contemporary information on the following attributes:

- the natural attributes of the area or site;
- the formal status, if any, of the site (e.g. National Park, World Heritage Area);
- the main nature-based activities available;
- the range and style of interpretive services provided;
- the number of people in typical group (e.g. tour) activities;
- the natural and cultural values (e.g. rare species);
- behaviour that will minimise damage to the environment;
- behaviour that is appropriate in culturally sensitive areas.

B.8.2 Ecotourism product marketing material generated for the product shall provides realistic expectations of what will be encountered/sighted or provides appropriate qualifications. All marketing material representing the product avoids presentation of operating practices that contradict minimal impact behaviour (as outlined in Ecological Sustainability Practices criteria).

**B.8.3 Ecotourism product marketing material shall include at least one of the following:**

- ***codes of practice or guidelines that address minimal impact or appropriate behaviour for the environment, or cultures visited;***
- ***means of accessing additional information on the destination and/or attractions;***
- ***advice on how the visitors can maximise their enjoyment of the product;***
- ***description of the key principles of ecotourism, how the product meets these, and the role and benefits of ecotourism certification.***

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## **PART C: CODES OF CONDUCT**

### **SECTION 1: ECOTOURISM PRODUCT MINIMAL IMPACT CODE**

#### **MINIMAL IMPACT CODES**

##### **The principle**

***Ecotourism products have minimal impacts on the natural, social and cultural environment, and are undertaken in accordance with a defined code of practice.***

C.1 Managers of ecotourism products shall develop and adopt a minimal impact code of conduct for their product(s). The Code shall:

- include measures to prevent or minimise environmental harm;
- include measures to prevent social and cultural impacts from ecotourism product activities;
- be appropriate for the nature and scale of the ecotourism product;
- be appropriate to the natural and cultural environments visited by the ecotourism product;
- incorporate elements of codes of conduct provided in the Schedule of the International Ecotourism Standard;
- incorporate input from a peer review from the ecotourism industry;
- receive endorsement as appropriate from protected area managers, land-owners, government conservation agencies and where applicable, non-government conservation agencies.

### **SECTION 2: SCHEDULE CODES OF CONDUCT**

C.2. Managers of ecotourism products shall have regard to the following Codes of Conduct for ecotourism activities in developing their ecotourism product minimal impact code.

#### **C. 2.1 WALKING AND TREKKING CODE**

The following measures are implemented:

- carry out all litter and food scraps;
- in situations where toilets are not available bury waste in a hole at least 15cm deep, and at least 100 meters away from water bodies or campsites;
- utilise defined tracks;
- fill in track log-books and provide monitoring information to management agencies;
- in the absence of defined tracks and to the extent feasible, avoid wet or soft ground; instruct customers to spread out so that no two walkers follow in the same footsteps; and to the extent feasible, avoid walking through vegetation or on fragile soils;
- for day walks (i.e. a walk that does not involve an overnight camp), the maximum group size is 25 people;
- for overnight walks or treks group size is limited to eight visitors or a number approved by the relevant government agency, and

- if camping or preparation of meals is involved, the minimal impact camping criteria (following) is adhered to.

***ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE includes in addition regular monitoring of the condition of tracks and trails by filling in log books and/or photographic records, carrying out human waste, and rotating tour routes in heavily used areas to minimise impacts.***

### **C.2.2 CAMPING CODE**

The following measures are implemented:

- whenever possible, existing official campsites are used;
- where there are no existing campsites, avoid using areas of high conservation value and ensure camps are set at least 30 metres away from the nearest water body;
- washing and bathing with soaps/detergents is carried out at least 100 metres away from the nearest water body;
- where toilets do not exist, human waste is buried in a hole 15cms deep and at least 100 metres away from the campsite and the nearest water body;
- all other wastes are carried out;
- campsite fires, if necessary are:
  - set in existing fireplaces;
  - are completely extinguished after use;
- made from firewood that has been brought in or is collected from further afield.
- *campfires are discouraged with the reasons explained to visitors;*
- ***fuel stoves are used for cooking;***
- ***the condition of the campsite is monitored by filling in log books or taking photographs;***
- ***data from the monitoring program is provided to the relevant management agency;***
- ***the use of campsites is rotated.***

### **C.2.3 VEHICLE USE CODE**

The following measures are implemented:

- designated tracks and roads are used where they exist;
- where tracks and roads do not exist, travel routes are selected to avoid sensitive areas such as alpine grasslands, dunes, salt pans, steep hillsides; and, if appropriate, the route is approved by the relevant management agency;
- rivers and creeks are forded only at designated crossings and undertaken at slow speed, and if possible, at a 90° angle to the bank;
- ***only designated tracks or roads are used; if these do not exist the tour does not take place in the area in question;***
- ***advice from relevant experts such as staff of government agencies, universities, or NGO's is sought to ascertain the appropriate route and level of use;***
- ***road and track conditions are monitored in log books or via photographic records; and the data provided to the relevant management/government agency;***

- ***the tour operator undertakes remedial work where necessary on tracks and roads (provided this is approved by the relevant government agency);***
- ***tour routes are regularly rotated.***

#### **C.2.4 POWER BOAT USE CODE**

The following measures are implemented:

- boat wash does not erode river banks, shores of lakes or coastal environments;
- the speed of boats is low enough to ensure that wash does not cause problems and that the enjoyment of others is not affected;
- boats are not anchored or grounded on sensitive environments such as seagrass and live coral;
- where tours use regular routes and make regular stops, mooring rather than anchoring is used;
- bilge water contaminated with oil, grease and fuel is not discharged;
- untreated ballast water is not discharged;
- where pump-out facilities for sewage/sullage exist, sewage and sullage are taken to shore and pumped out;
- where no pump-out facilities exist, sewage/sullage is only discharged where there will not be significant impacts on receiving environments (i.e. not in small lakes, near coral reefs or in land-locked coastal lagoons);
- to achieve the previous two objectives, boats are fitted with holding tanks.
- maintenance of boats (spray painting, abrasive-ballasting, application of anti-foulants, etc.) is only done in appropriately designed and managed facilities;
- anti-foulants that contain heavy metals or biocides are scrubbed and removed in an appropriate facility (where fouling organisms, paint scrapings and sludge are collected and appropriately disposed of);
- anti-foulants are not used in small freshwater bodies and only organotin-free anti-foulants are used in the marine environment;
- ***sewage/sullage and bilge water is not discharged into open water;***
- ***ballast water is not discharged unless treated to ensure that potential diseases and exotic organisms are destroyed;***
- ***anti-foulants that release heavy metals or biocides are not used, tar epoxies are used in preference;***
- ***if feasible, diesel, four-stroke or electric engines are used instead of two-stroke engines;***
- ***noise suppression equipment is used in situations where noise will disturb wildlife or lessen the other people's enjoyment.***

#### **C.2.5 NON-POWERED BOAT USE CODE**

The following measures are implemented:

- portage of craft follows routes advised by natural area managers to minimise long-term environmental damage;
- portaging of canoes and rafts around whitewater or low water areas is along routes managed for such use and/or involves minimal damage to the bank and/or vegetation;

- mooring of vessels is conducted so that there is minimum impact on vegetation (i.e., when tying to trees a soft wrap is used to prevent rub; when the same location is used repeatedly the area is hardened with use of mooring rings, pylons etc.);
- portage routes and/or regularly used mooring locations are actively rehabilitated or maintained (e.g., banks revegetated, areas closed for rehabilitation);
- regular monitoring of portage routes and/or regularly used mooring locations is carried out (e.g. by way of photographs, log books), and this information is provided to the protected area manager;
- the practices of minimal impact boating are actively promoted to all customers before and during the tour (e.g. interpretive commentary, group discussions, brochures and pre-tour information address this issue);
- a “carry in – carry out” policy is in place for all litter and waste (including food scraps, but excluding human waste);
- **human waste is carried out;**
- **group size is limited to 5 vessels or less, or the maximum number recommended by the relevant government nature conservation agency.**

#### C.2.6 MINIMISING IMPACTS OF SNORKELING AND SCUBA DIVING CODE

The following measures are implemented:

- when snorkeling or diving, care is taken not to stand on or damage fragile organisms (e.g. coral);
- free swimming animals are not chased, ridden or herded;
- living or dead items that are picked up are returned to their exact position;
- collecting of seashells etc. is discouraged, and only undertaken in accordance with local laws and guidelines;
- souvenirs are not taken from historic wrecks or historical sites;
- spearfishing and other collecting is not undertaken;
- **pre-planned routes or underwater “trails” that are designed to minimise environmental impacts are provided for snorkelers/divers;**
- **resting stations or sites are provided for snorkelers.**

#### C.2.7 ANIMAL RIDING AND ANIMAL TOURS CODE

The following measures are implemented for horse, donkey, mule, camel, alpaca, elephant, and other animal riding:

- animals are in excellent condition before embarking and the animals welfare is paramount (there is no cruelty to the animals);
- travel routes in natural areas are those preferred by the natural area manager;
- animals’ hooves, coat and tails are clean (i.e., free of seeds and plant material) before entering areas of high conservation significance.
- **weeds are not introduced to, or spread within, natural areas through ensuring that animal feed is clean (free of weeds), approved by the natural area manager, and given using a nose bag whilst on tour. Consideration should be given to ensuring animals are fed weed free feed prior to entering natural areas to ensure weeds are not introduced in droppings.**

- wherever feasible, animals are kept on designated tracks and roads provided, keeping to the centre of the track to avoid widening the route;
- where no tracks are available the following procedures are adhered to:
- fanning out on erosion-prone areas such as grass, loose soils or soft/boggy areas.
- fording creeks only at designated crossings, preferably at a 90 degree angle to bank;
- feedback is provided to the natural area manager on track conditions and advise heeded regarding current appropriate routes and levels of use;
- oncoming riders are advised of sensitive or impacted road or track conditions;
- **remedial works, e.g. assisting water runoff from roads or re-vegetating closed tracks, are undertaken;**
- **designated tie up facilities for animals are used or a portable fence is carried;**
- **animals are penned overnight (rather than tied to a tree) at least 30 metres from the nearest water body and in an area at least 15 square metres per animal.**

#### C.2.8 AIRCRAFT USE CODE

The following measures are implemented:

- private airstrips and helipads are located as far as possible from public areas;
- flights over protected areas maintain a minimum height of at least 1000 feet or other specified height required by natural area manager;
- flight paths and altitudes are selected to ensure minimal impacts on wildlife watching (i.e. whale watching, whale shark viewing, penguin or bird rookeries);
- aircraft use does not negatively affect the ability of others to appreciate and enjoy the environment;
- bunding, drip trays, ground liners or hardstands are used to reduce the impacts of fuel and oil spillage;
- refuelling of aircraft does not occur in areas of high conservation value;
- relatively undisturbed ecosystems, where native fauna and people on the ground are likely to be prone to noise disturbance, are avoided;
- aircraft are not operated at low levels over culturally significant sites without prior consultation with the traditional custodians;
- **flights over protected areas maintain a minimum height of at least 2000 feet or other specified height required by the protected area manager;**
- **aircraft use is actively discouraged in scenic or culturally sensitive areas;**
- **other than at designated airports, aircraft do not land within audible distance of a local community.**

#### C.2.9 SPOTLIGHTING CODE

The following measures are implemented:

- low wattage lights or small torches (maximum of 60 watts or 30 watts in a closed forest) are used to detect eye-shine;
- low wattage lights are used for observations (30 watts recommended).
- a maximum of two spotlights per group is used;
- red filters are placed in front of spotlights once an animal has been located;



- spotlights are not shone on animals for such a length of time that is likely to leave them dazed and susceptible to predation;
- group size is limited to 25;
- smoking is actively discouraged;
- visitor behaviour is managed through advise prior to commencing the tour:
  - to keep noise to a minimum;
  - to stay behind leaders holding spotlights;
  - to keep to designated trails;
  - on the correct use of equipment (e.g. torches, red filters, binoculars).
- tours are led on well-made trails;
- tours routes for mammal spotlighting are regularly rotated;
- the playing of taped animal or bird calls is kept to a minimum;
- **infra-red binoculars are used;**
- **group size is limited to 10 or less;**
- **familiarisation of the tour route is conducted by surveying the route in daylight prior to the tour;**
- **flash photography is prohibited.**
  
- When observing turtles laying eggs, the following measures are undertaken:
  - lights are no more than three volts, or two-cell torch;
  - lights are not shone directly on the turtle's face at any time;
  - turtles leaving the water or moving up the beach are not approached, but are avoided until after the body pit has been dug and the turtle begins laying eggs;
  - animals are not touched at any time;
  - campfires are not lit on turtle-laying beaches; and
  - flash photography is prohibited.

When observing glow worms, all of the following measures are undertaken:

- lighting is kept to the minimum level necessary for safety;
- lights are no more than three volts, or two-cell torch;
- lights are not shone directly on the glow worms at any time;
- animals are not touched at any time;
- campfires are not lit near glow worm sites; and
- flash photography is prohibited.

### **C.2.10 MARINE MAMMAL AND MEGAFUNA VIEWING CODE**

The following measures are implemented when whale, dolphin, shark, whale shark, dugong, manatee viewing:

- where they are in place, codes of ethics produced by management agencies are adopted;
- animals are not chased or herded;
- animals have unrestricted movement;
- particular caution is exercised around any group of animals that includes mothers and young;
- at least one staff member monitors the animal's behaviour while the activity is occurring;
- where vessels are used ensure that:

- they are not positioned directly in the path of animals nor used to “leap frog” in a way that repeatedly places the vessel ahead of the animals;
- engines are not started and vessels not moved off until animals have departed;
- where several vessels are operating at the same location, radio communication between the vessels is maintained to assist orderly management and safety.
- all machinery, engines, etc. are soundproofed;
  
- swimming with megafauna (e.g., dolphins, seals) occurs only with the authorisation of the statutory authority responsible for the animal; and where swimming with megafauna does occur:
  - customers are prepared for their reaction to being at close quarters with the animals;
  - customers are advised not to touch or swim at animals;
  - lines are used in open water, and wherever suitable at reefs;
  - where in use, customers are advised not to leave the line;
  - visitors are advised to avoid rapid movements;
  - instructions on correct use of equipment (e.g., snorkeling gear) is given.
  - at least one staff member enters the water before visitors;
  - visitors displaying unsuitable behaviour are removed from the water;
  - snorkeling gear is used in preference to SCUBA;
  - flash photography is prohibited;
  - a maximum of six customers are in the water at any one time.

#### **C.2.11 ROCK CLIMBING AND ABSEILING CODE**

The following measures are implemented:

- indiscriminate or excessive use is avoided of fixed equipment and chalk;
- chipping of rock, wire brushing to remove mosses and “gardening” in cracks and gullies is avoided;
- use of bolts is minimised and the use of galvanised bolts is avoided;
- sites of geological, cultural or other scientific interest are avoided;
- access to cliffs is only achieved via existing tracks;
- a “carry in – carry out” policy is in place for all equipment and rubbish;
- vegetation, nesting birds or other wildlife are not disturbed.

#### **C.2.12 CAVING CODE**

In developed show caves the following measures are implemented:

- all of the following construction and operation measures have been undertaken:
- where an entrance has been created or enlarged for customer access, a chamber has been installed between the cave entrance and the rest of the cave to minimise air and temperature flow;
- pathways or fill that block natural water courses within the cave have been avoided;
- all lighting is powered by electricity and is switched off when customers are outside the cave.
- prior to entering the cave, visitor behaviour is managed through advice to:

- not touch or remove any cave decorations, speleothems, bone and fossil remains, cave dwelling life forms, sediment or watercourse within the cave;
- carry out all litter;
- that eating and smoking is prohibited;
- of the legal ramifications if they are found willfully damaging or removing a cave feature.
- **Visitors are supplied with coats or slip-on covers for their shoes to minimise lint and dust loss.**

**ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE is when all of the following construction measures have been undertaken:**

- **the cave route has been designed to minimise ascents and maximise descents;**
- **all lights are positioned at least 30 centimetres from the nearest formation;**
- **all lighting uses the lowest possible wattage;**
- **coloured lights are not used to light features;**
- **any algae or other biota created by lighting is removed from the cave system.**

During caving in wild caves the following measures are implemented:

- wild caving is not conducted on routes that contains any of the following:
- crossing of clean flow stone floors in boots;
- venturing within five metres of high value stalagmite clusters;
- venturing within five metres of cave-dwelling life forms; and
- pointing lights directly on cave biota.

The following equipment is used in all wild cave tours:

- battery operated lights, rather than fuel-based systems;
- soft material between ropes and natural anchors such as trees (e.g., carpet or cloth);
- small tackle bags and packs, tightly fitted to the guide's back; and
- cave-marking materials so that missing markers can be replaced and poorly defined routes can be clarified.

All of the following measures are taken to manage customer behaviour:

- helmets are never removed;
- any food eaten is consumed over plastic bags so that no crumbs or waste is left behind;
- visitors are advised of the legal ramifications if they are found willfully damaging or removing a cave feature and
- camping is prohibited.
- the maximum group size is limited to 10 (including the guide);
- information about the location of cave entrances and routes within caves is not provided.
- **no flow stone is walked on by guides or customers.**
- **customers are not left in the dark to find their own way through a section of cave that contains any cave decorations, speleothems, bone and fossil remains, cave dwelling life forms, sediment or watercourse;**

- *maximum group size is limited to five (including the guide);*
- *wild caving in sensitive caves and extensions does not use: tackle bags and packs, bolting, rigging and construction equipment;*
- *overalls and boots are washed clean of dirt, lint, bacteria and fungi before taking them into the cave;*
- *litter patrols are conducted by the operator to remove any litter left after tours.*

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

# QUESTIONNAIRE

Please review the International Ecotourism Standard in light of ecotourism product you know well. If you are completing a pilot or case study please answer in light of your ecotourism product/s performance.

Name: (optional information)

Country:

Product/s:

## Layout, text and structure of document

1. Is the language used throughout the Standard (and particularly the criteria) easy to understand? Please feel free to indicate where criteria or explanations are unclear so that we can improve clarity.
2. The completed structure of the document will contain:
  - Introductory text;
  - A succinct Standard;
  - A comprehensive Users Guide with:
    - explanatory text;
    - proformas and best practice examples/ templates;
    - a self-assessment checklist;
    - Case study examples;
    - bibliography, and
    - resource list.

Is this format user-friendly or confusing? Are there sections that you feel might need expansion, contraction, merging or even deleting? Please suggest materials that you think would aid the resource section of the Users Guide.

3. Is the indication for different types of criteria – i.e. standard text for Ecotourism Certification elements, bold italics for ***ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE*** for Advanced Ecotourism Certification, standard italics for *BENCHMARKING* (criteria that need quantification), and NEW PRODUCTS – sufficient to distinguish the different elements of the Standard?

## Format of the International Ecotourism Standard

4. Is it clear that the International Ecotourism Standard addresses certification of specified product NOT the operating entity?
5. The structure of the International Ecotourism Standard is:
  - PART A (i.e. pre-requisite section);
  - PART B: specific criteria or performance areas that address the eight ecotourism principles (in brief; natural area focus, provision of interpretation, environmental sustainability, returns to local communities and conservation, cultural respect and sensitivity, customer satisfaction and responsible marketing); followed by
  - PART C minimal impact codes with schedules of specific codes;
  - Users Guide with detailed explanations and case study examples.

Is this format appropriate?

6. Are you comfortable with the “rules” for micro-businesses or do you feel that there should be a completely separate Standard for micro-businesses?
7. Are you comfortable with the two levels of ecotourism certification – one relating to meeting a baseline standard against all eight performance areas, and an Advanced Certification level for product meeting significant (75%) of the **ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICE** standards?
8. Do you feel that the baseline standard for Ecotourism Certification and Advanced Certification are set at the appropriate level for an international standard?
9. Are there sufficient opportunities for a country with relatively low levels of technology that meet the principles of ecotourism and exceed in some performance areas (i.e. returns to local community, interpretation and cultural respect) to obtain Advanced certification?
10. Is it clear how you obtain Advanced Ecotourism certification?

#### **Criteria**

11. Do you feel that the criteria are applicable to an international setting?
12. Are there any criteria that are overly onerous? (E.g. in terms of technical expertise necessary to meet the criteria, or costs involved). Please provide specific examples of why you think this criteria is inapplicable or unachievable (e.g. lack of infrastructure such as pump-ashore facilities for boat sewage disposal, or scarcity of available CFC-free units in country X).
13. Should any criteria be amended, deleted or added?
14. Can you indicate where you felt there was overlap or repetition in the criteria between the eight Performance Areas?
15. Do you feel the criteria deliver a suitable performance based system that will generate the desired outcomes of continuous improvement in ecological sustainability?

#### **General**

16. Do you think this Standard meets its intended use as a Standard for a global ecotourism certification scheme well, poorly or otherwise?
17. Can you suggest any changes or improvements?
18. Any other comments, criticism, concerns or observations?

# CASE STUDIES

Managers of ecotourism product that wish to benchmark against the draft International Ecotourism Standard and provide into the development of the final Standard should:

1. Complete and submit the draft Standard document and accompanying questionnaire.
2. Provide a brief background description of the product/locale etc. (Include collection of appropriate / relevant photographs)
3. Provide a written overview that answers (two pages maximum) how your product:
  - meets the principles of ecotourism;
  - where the product meets the draft Standard;
  - where the product cannot meet the draft Standard (please explain if this is because the criteria are inappropriate, not relevant to your product, or infrastructure or technological expertise is not available);
  - **ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICES** your product meets or exceeds (feel free to provide extra materials that may be used later – i.e. spend some time collecting details on this – e.g. sample interpretive plan or staff induction documentation as this may form more detailed case study/ examples for insertion in the final standard document);
  - opportunities for improvement – both for your product and for the Standard.

We would request that completed questionnaires, other feedback and case studies be sent no later than August 1st 2002 to:

International Ecotourism Standard Working Group  
GPO Box 268  
BRISBANE  
Queensland 4001  
Australia.

For further information and additional copies of the draft International Ecotourism Standard document, go to the Ecotourism Association of Australia's website at <http://www.ecotourism.org.au> or Green Globe 21 (Asia Pacific): <http://www.ggasiapacific.com.au>.

