

Sustainable Tourism Guide

GLADSTONE REGION



What is Eco Destination Certification?

GAPDL in partnership with Gladstone Regional Council and key stakeholders are on the journey to becoming ECO Destination Certified by 2024. The ECO Destination Certification Program was developed to identify genuine ecotourism and nature tourism experiences in Australia. The Program is now being exported to the rest of the world as the international Ecotourism Standard.

Achieving ECO Destination Certification will recognise Gladstone as a world-class destination that is strengthened by the region's commitment to ongoing improvement of sustainable practices, as well as providing high-quality nature-based tourism experiences.

The certification process considers six main themes:

1. Destination Management;
2. Nature & Scenery;
3. Environment & Climate;
4. Culture & Tradition;
5. Social Well-being; and
6. Business & Communication.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

ACHIEVING ECO DESTINATION CERTIFICATION BY 2024 MEANS:

1 We will attract more eco-conscious travellers interested in high-quality nature-based experiences and value the destination they are travelling in. Travel industry reports indicate that '90% of consumers are looking for sustainable options when travelling' There is growing demand for regenerative and sustainable travel experiences that respect local communities, culture, environment and biodiversity.

2 We will increase appeal to high value travellers, who are likely to spend more, stay longer and disperse more regionally. According to Tourism Australia, high value travellers are driven by aquatic, coastal, and nature and wildlife experiences when choosing a destination. Achieving certification with a reputable and recognisable brand such as Ecotourism Australia, will assist in boosting the region's appeal and reaching and attracting this market

3 We will gain greater market visibility. Achieving certification means we will gain exposure through Ecotourism Australia's initiatives such as the Green Travel Guide, the Australian Tourism Exchange, events leading publications and more.

4 We will build a sustainable tourism industry, ensuring our destination management practices are in line with international best-practice sustainability standards. This means using the accreditation framework to develop a long-term roadmap for sustainable tourism.

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

As a community and tourism industry we must work together and stay committed to the ongoing improvement of sustainable practices from now into the future. It's about actively implementing real, tangible environmental and sustainable practices that make a difference!

It is important to remember that 'sustainable tourism is a journey and not a destination' actions - no matter how small - can make a big difference.

We encourage all businesses to adopt sustainable business practices and make climate positive operational changes.

Take action by:

- Becoming Eco Certified
- Developing your own sustainability plan
- Understanding your carbon emissions and work to reduce them
- Reduce, reuse & recycle
- Saying no to straws and plastic bags
- Support & buy local
- Communicate your sustainability measures with customers & industry
- Contributing to local culture and [Conservation Programs and Initiatives](#).

CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND TOURISM OPERATORS OBTAIN ECO CERTIFICATION OR GET INVOLVED IN A SUSTAINABILITY FOCUSED PROGRAM SUCH AS:

QUEENSLAND ECOBIZ PROGRAM

ecobiz.businesschamberqld.com.au

A free program for small to medium businesses funded by the Queensland Government. The program provides personal coaching, site surveys, training, and tools to help improve resource efficiency, environmental sustainability and lower operating costs.

Hot Tip

This program is FREE and will help your business save money on energy, water and waste!

EARTHCHECK CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

earthcheck.org

EarthCheck provides sustainability and certification programs for businesses, governments and destinations. EarthCheck's programs operate in over 70 countries, they are science-backed, people-focused and are respected by travellers, brands and destinations globally.

Hot Tip

Earth Check provides a Carbon Footprint Calculator free for tourism businesses to access.

ECOTOURISM AUSTRALIA CERTIFICATION

ecotourism.org.au

Ecotourism Australia offers a variety of programs and has certified over 500 operators and 1,700 experiences in Australia. Tourism businesses and experiences are certified using international best practice standards. Certification assures visitors of their commitment to sustainable environmental practices, best business practice and high quality nature-based experiences.

Eco Tourism Certification Program includes three levels: Nature Tourism, Ecotourism and Advanced Ecotourism.

Sustainable Tourism Certification Program includes two levels: Sustainable Tourism and Advanced Sustainable Tourism.

Hot Tip

Tourism operators holding ECO Certification are eligible to add specialty certification programs including: Respecting Our Culture (ROC) Certification and Climate Action Certification (CAC).

STRIVE 4 SUSTAINABILITY SCORECARD

ecotourism.org.au/strive-4-sustainability

The Ecotourism Australia Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard measures where a business is up to in their sustainability journey. The scorecard is a quick, affordable, personalised and practical business development tool designed to assist businesses in developing a genuinely sustainable business.

Hot Tip

A score of five can be listed on your Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listing.

CLIMATE ACTION TOOLS

des.qld.gov.au/climateaction/take-action/business-industry

The Queensland Government has provided a number of tools and simple actions that can assist your business to increase profitability, capitalise on future opportunities, and become more resilient and sustainable.



ACHIEVEMENTS

WHAT THE REGION
HAS ACHIEVED SO
FAR...

Certified Reef Guardian Council

Celebrating 20 years of the Reef Guardian School Program with more than 350,00 students attending.

Litter Education and Awareness Program (LEAP) 12,315 pieces of litter captured

Conservation Programs and initiatives:

- Clean Up Australia Day
- Great Spring Clean
- Cleaner Road Runoff research project
- National Tree Day and Schools Tree Day
- Friends of Conservation
- Reef Guardian Council Program
- Tigalee Creek Riparian Vegetation Restoration
- Ecofest Event
- Collaborative conservation projects

Gladstone Marina - Plastic free pledge by 2025

Curtis Island

Protection of nesting turtles and hatchlings for 25 years

Fitzroy Basin Association & CQUniversity

132 volunteers collected over 400,000 seagrass seeds

Gladstone Ports Corporation

Reducing GHG emissions, 3 electric vehicles and two charging stations installed and trialed and rooftop solar and battery project

Broadwater Haven | Nature Tourism certified

Heron Island Resort | Advanced Ecotourism certified

- 2022 Master Electricians Australia State Excellence Awards Winner – Climatecare Energy Efficiency Project of the Year (QLD North)
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1770 Reef | Advanced Ecotourism certified

1770 LARC! Tours | Ecotourism certified

- 2022 Queensland Tourism Awards Bronze Winner
- Tourism Champion and Best Visitor Attraction

Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort | Advanced Ecotourism certified, Climate Action Leader, Green Travel Leader certified

- 2019 Australian Tourism Awards Silver Winner – Ecotourism
- 2019 Queensland Tourism Awards Gold Winner – The Steve Irwin Award for Ecotourism
- 2018 Queensland Tourism Awards Bronze Winner – The Steve Irwin Award for Ecotourism
- 2017 Australian Tourism Awards Bronze Winner – Ecotourism
- 2017 Queensland Tourism Awards Gold Winner – The Steve Irwin Award for Ecotourism
- 2016 Premiers Award For Sustainability Highly Commended – The Minister's Award for Leadership in Sustainability



SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN GAPDL

- ✓ Completing the ecoBiz program to improve GAPDL's business footprint and improve environmental sustainability and operation costs
- ✓ Sustainability focused web pages and communication for visitors and the regional tourism industry
- ✓ Development of the Sustainability Marketing Plan and leveraging of opportunities for certified tourism operators.
- ✓ Commitment to inclusion of sustainability and eco themes within destination plans and destination marketing campaigns
- ✓ Attendance to the ECO Think Destination Forum in March 2023
- ✓ GAPDL aims to increase GAPDL members that hold eco certification by 20% by 2030

QUEENSLAND TOURISM CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Queensland Government is committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 30% on 2005 levels by 2030. GAPDL in partnership with the Queensland Government is participating in the Tourism Climate Action Project. This is a Queensland Government funded statewide project which examines the carbon footprint across the tourism sector with the intent of developing pathways to net zero emissions for the tourism industry before 2050. The final plan is due for completion in 2024.