



Ecotourism development toolkit

- Queensland has a natural competitive advantage in providing visitors with high quality ecotourism experiences.
- Queensland offers world class National Parks and marine parks, five World Heritage-listed areas, and a huge diversity of appealing landscapes and iconic wildlife.
- The Queensland Government is supportive of investment into potential ecotourism opportunities and is increasing access to national parks and other state-owned land, for the enjoyment of all visitors.
- The *Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016–2020* was released in September 2016 presenting a fresh approach to ecotourism.

The *Queensland Ecotourism Development Toolkit* has been designed to help navigate planning and environmental regulatory and native title processes when developing ecotourism products and experiences across a range of land tenures in Queensland.

Queensland has nine million hectares of terrestrial protected areas and over eight million hectares of marine park and fish habitat areas encompassing world-class

national and conservation parks, marine reserves and five World Heritage areas.

Queensland is one of the most naturally diverse places on earth. Its landscapes include extensive reefs, rainforests and remote deserts, which can showcase iconic wildlife and unique cultural heritage.

These unique characteristics form a valuable competitive advantage for the tourism industry—experiencing nature is a primary motivator for domestic and international visitors' travel to Queensland.

What is ecotourism?

Ecotourism encompasses **nature-based experiences** that increase visitor appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural values. These are experiences that are managed to ensure they are **ecologically, economically and socially sustainable**, contributing to the wellbeing of the natural areas and local communities where they operate.

The Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016–2020

The *Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2016–2020* (the Plan) provides the framework for building a thriving ecotourism industry and delivering new ecotourism experiences in Queensland's spectacular national and marine parks and other natural areas.

Queensland Ecotourism Development Toolkit

The Queensland Ecotourism Development Toolkit has been specifically designed to provide developers and investors, with the knowledge and guidelines to help make informed decisions regarding the development of ecotourism products on different land tenures. The toolkit will help answer the following questions:

- What are the key considerations for ecotourism developments in Queensland?
- What are the key steps in an ecotourism development process?
- What is the approval process for ecotourism facilities?
- When do you need a commercial activity permit?
- When do you need development approval?
- How should native title and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage be addressed?
- What other approvals may commonly be required?

Queensland Ecotourism investment opportunities

In order to further leverage our competitive advantage the Queensland Government is allowing low impact privately-owned ecotourism facilities to be established on national parks. The Queensland Government wants to engage with ecotourism partners, who will help in providing these 'special experiences in special places'.

The Queensland Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing has developed a range of policy and legislative measures to improve opportunities for sustainable ecotourism activities and visitor use in Queensland's protected area system and has published an implementation framework Ecotourism facilities on National Parks (www.npsr.qld.gov.au/tourism/pdf/ecofacilities-framework.pdf)

The framework informs potential investors and the broader community on how the government will assess ecotourism facility proposals, the matters that will be considered, and the approval and leasing arrangements for successful proposals.

Image above: Scenic Rim ©Tourism and Events Queensland. Photographer Mark Clinton



Case Study: Scenic Rim Trail

Under the Ecotourism Facilities on National Parks implementation framework, Spicers Group is developing the Scenic Rim Trail, a 50-kilometre trek comprising new and existing walking tracks, linked by eco-camps at overnight stops in Main Range National Park. Incorporating 23 km of existing trails, and 30km of new bushwalking track from Mt Mistake to Spicers Peak Nature Refuge the trail will run from Mt Mistake in the north to the Canopy Eco-Lodge in the south, linking the national park to Spicers' existing nature refuges.

Rivalling more temperate offerings in Tasmania and New Zealand, this will be a captivating experience for walkers following the escarpment of the caldera and through sub-tropical rainforests, tall eucalypt forests, mountain heathlands, waterfalls and offering spectacular views.

The trail will be used for small-group walking experiences but will also open up new tracks and two new remote bush camping sites to the public for the independent walker. The guided tour operations will deliver ongoing employment and economic benefits for the local community.

Spicers Group has been progressing through local, state and federal approval processes. This activity will ensure that the scope, design and footprint of the project is compatible with the nature and character of the site and complements the management of the national park in which it is located. Construction, maintenance and monitoring costs for all proposed infrastructure will be fully funded by Spicers Group.

More information



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