

Case Study in Sustainable Tourism



Billy Tea Safaris - Cairns

Billy Tea Safaris has been Advanced Ecotourism Certified for 11 years.

We provide opportunities to experience nature in ways that lead to greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the World Heritage areas our tours operate in.

We give customers the opportunity to interact with the natural environment and, in varying degrees, develop their knowledge, awareness and appreciation. Our aim is to provide an appropriate level of interpretation about the natural and cultural heritage of the areas visited without hitting that information overload level. We use local guides and National Park rangers on cave walks and boat cruises to reinforce our own guides information and interpretations.

ROLE OF CERTIFICATION

We began the certification process because we believed we were a leading tour operator within our region and wished to keep this strong position by gaining international recognition. We also foresaw that government agencies were leaning towards certification as a level of competency required to be a good tour operator and a level required to hold permits to operate in World Heritage and other government controlled areas. The eco branding also represented a good marketing tool.



The process of certification took longer than expected and it was an extremely long task for a small operator like us: we do not have other office staff and had to hire extra staff to compile the information, which was quite a time-consuming task.

Certification allowed us to gather information about our business, which helped us plan things we could do to improve our business as an ecotourism product. We can use the ecotourism branding to promote our business to the world. We have now achieved the

status of Green Leader, which demonstrates our long-term commitment to ecotourism and offers many benefits when it comes to promotion and marketing. Getting certified did not require us to change our business but it helped us focusing our tours more along environmental lines and helped guide training.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

As an operator, we try to spread the conservation message to travellers and visitors. We clean up rubbish left behind by others, repair damage to areas we visit and work closely with National Parks.

We also support local conservation groups with some financial contribution where possible. We also partake in studies of the areas we visit for James Cook University and Queensland National Parks, providing them with customer feedback and survey forms.

Well-trained and knowledgeable guides are the key to the successful delivery of interpretation. The level and type of interpretation is planned, designed and delivered to meet the interests, needs and expectations of the visitor and includes a broad range of interpretive opportunities. In addition to information regarding the region and its history, culture, flora and fauna, all interpretation carries an awareness of relevant conservation issues.



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