

# Guiding principles in developing nature-based tourism experiences

Nature-based tourism (or ecotourism) is a form of tourism involving visits to pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural and cultural areas, that is intended to have a low impact. It is most often characterised as a responsible travel option that supports conservation and biodiversity and improves the wellbeing of local communities.

Best practice in nature-based tourism is achieved by developing a unique visitor experience that is integrated into the natural area in consideration of the following:

## Compatibility with the natural and cultural values

Nature-based tourism relies on knowing the natural and cultural values of the site and highlighting its unique elements.

Development and/or activities on sensitive and vulnerable areas are identified and avoided. Any constraints or stressors on the system are identified and, where they cannot be avoided, mitigated.

## Sustainable design and operation of facilities

The design of any facilities in a nature-based tourism experience is in harmony with the site's natural features and does not significantly change the land's natural condition or adversely affect its cultural resources and values.

Impacts on the site from construction and operation are minimised and mitigation strategies are put in place.

Sustainability practises and visitor comfort are maximised by considering factors such as aspect and orientation, waste and pollution management and energy and water conservation.

The site is landscaped with local native species.

A 'leave no trace' and 'do no harm' philosophy is applied in relation to visitor activity.

Where possible, consideration should be given to the adaptive re-use of redundant or under-utilised buildings (such as heritage buildings, old homesteads, workers quarters and lighthouses) to provide memorable and unique experiences with a point of difference.

**Note:** Examples of infrastructure that are consistent in supporting these types of visitor experiences range from relatively small, simple structures, such as safari tents or walkers' huts to larger campgrounds or eco-accommodation.

Examples of infrastructure that are inconsistent in supporting these types of visitor experiences are golf courses, amusement parks, casinos and high-rise resorts.

## Stakeholders and community benefit

Nature-based tourism projects pursue long-term community partnerships, cultural awareness and shared economic benefits.

The importance of the site to the cultural and economic priorities of local communities is identified, and Aboriginal people, community groups, volunteer groups such as 'Friends of Parks' and local communities are involved and benefit.

**Note:** Refer to the South Australian Friends of Parks Engagement Charter on the [Nature-based Tourism Co-investment Fund website](#) for more information. The interpretation and experience of Aboriginal cultural resources is developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

## Education and advocacy

The natural and cultural values of the site are appropriately interpreted and visitor activities and experiences raise awareness of the critical importance of the site and its values.

The experience encourages visitors and the broader community to appreciate and want to protect and conserve the site.

## Conservation dividend

The project contributes to protecting and positively enhancing the natural and cultural values of the site.

The long-term viability of the site is supported by working in partnership with site management and local groups on activities such as rehabilitating disturbed areas, protecting endangered species, and educating staff and visitors regarding intrinsic site values.