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What Is Eco Tourism?

Definition:

"Ecologically sustainable tourism that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation"

- **Ecotourism Association of Australia.**

There have been many definitions proffered for *Ecotourism* in recent years, but all postulate that ecotourism operators should meet the following criteria:

Natural Area Focus

Kingfisher Bay Resort is situated on the western side of Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island. Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1992, the island has the longest and most complete age sequence of coastal dune systems in the world.

The array of freshwater dune lakes on the island is also exceptional in terms of number, diversity and age; as is the existence of rainforests on coastal sand-dunes on the scale and elevation found here.

Given these and other outstanding natural values and that the resort has been designed and built to integrate with this natural environment, not impose upon it, we can state with conviction that Kingfisher Bay has a strong natural area focus.

Ecologically and Culturally Sustainable

Ecotourism involves careful planning and implementation of conservation methods by operators, as well as encouraging active participation from visitors to ensure that significant natural, cultural and historical areas remain intact so that future generations enjoy them.

An estimated 57 person years of research and planning was carried out prior to the construction of Kingfisher Bay Resort to make certain that the project was not going to be ecologically detrimental to the site.

Facility design, energy saving and waste management techniques, impact minimisation mechanisms and scientific monitoring were all examined and addressed to ensure that the resort was at the cutting edge of environmental management and design when it opened in 1992.



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Provide Education and Interpretation

Interpretation of the natural environment is regarded as a critically important component of the total Environmental Program at Kingfisher Bay. The interpretive activities conducted by the Rangers aim to educate in an entertaining fashion and promote an environmental ethic.

Free Ranger-guided walks are offered covering a wide variety of subjects such as bird-watching, bush tucker, mangroves, Aboriginal culture, marine environment, night spotlighting and others. 4WD tours of the island, whale watching tours (August to October), the Junior Eco Rangers program - and guest presenters who are specialists in a range of different scientific disciplines - The only area in Australia that has a higher concentration of lakes than Fraser Island is Tasmania.

all combine to provide an effective and informative Interpretive Program.

Provide Local and Regional Benefits

As with all business an ecotourism operation must be economically viable. Additionally there must also be benefits for the local community and the region as a whole. Kingfisher Bay Resort sources all employment locally and only searches further afield if the skills required are not available. Provisions, operational supplies, spare parts and building materials are all purchased from local businesses where possible.

Kingfisher Bay Resort's considerable marketing effort brings an influx of visitors to the region and with them comes increased potential revenue for all local businesses.

Provides Guest Satisfaction

The ecotourism experience should match or exceed the realistic expectations of the consumer. Realistic expectations are achieved through responsible and accurate marketing of the ecotourism product.

Our commitment to guests is to provide a unique and memorable ecotourism experience and we ask for feedback so that we know if we are continuing to do that successfully. We believe it is the most accurate way of measuring our performance.

Ends.

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