

MEDIA RELEASE

PORT DOUGLAS DAINTREE LEADS THE WAY IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Port Douglas, 4th December, 2019 – The Port Douglas Daintree region has become the world’s first destination to be awarded Ecotourism Australia’s ECO Destination Certification today.

The announcement was made at the 27th Annual Global Eco Asia-Pacific Tourism Conference in Cairns.

Julia Leu, Mayor of Douglas Shire, said receiving a big green tick demonstrated to visitors that as a destination, the region was committed to strong, well-managed sustainable practices and providing high quality nature-based experiences.

“The Port Douglas Daintree region sits at the very heart of two significant World Heritage natural sites – the Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree Rainforest.

“The ECO Destination certification, through its rigorous auditing process, sets the Douglas Shire and its unique natural experiences apart from everywhere else.”

To become an ECO Certified Nature Destination a minimum 80 of 100 criteria, based on the internationally accredited and recognised Green Destinations Standards, must be met.

These standards encompass six main themes, including destination management, nature and scenery, environment and climate, culture and tradition, social well-being, and business and hospitality.

Tara Bennett, Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Port Douglas Daintree, said recognising and encouraging responsible travel to natural areas made the choice much simpler for visitors.

“More travellers than ever are seeking to minimise the carbon footprint of their holiday, travelling with climate in mind by planning wisely and choosing consciously a destination that supports culture, community and environment.”

Ms Bennet said achieving certification was a “wonderful example of the private and public sector working together” with Ecotourism Australia.

“The Douglas Shire Council, Tourism Port Douglas Daintree along with local businesses, community groups, and the area's 12,000 residents have introduced environmental, economic and social sustainability practices unseen in many places.

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“We will continue this process of continuous improvement to ensure best practice, looking at future opportunities such as reducing carbon consumption, implementing sustainable energy solutions and enhanced community participation to support sustainable tourism growth.”

Ms Bennett said the Port Douglas Daintree region had over 80% of its land protected under World Heritage Listing with 80% of economic activity derived from tourism.

“This proves nature and tourism can co-exist while also achieving positive social, environmental and financial outcomes.”

She added that while the Port Douglas Daintree region may be the first to achieve Ecotourism Australia certification, she hoped other destinations would follow suit.

“We want to inspire destinations around the world to implement sustainable tourism practices and in so doing see their tourism industry, environment and community flourish.”

Rod Hillman, Chief Executive Officer for Ecotourism Australia, congratulated the destination on achieving certification.

“An onsite audit conducted last week by an international team of independent auditors assessed every aspect of the Shire’s application in detail.

“This included reviewing documentation, visiting key tourism sites and conducting interviews with council employees, community group representatives and service providers.”

He said destination certification was the next step for the organisation, which oversees the widely recognised ECO Certification program for tourism operators.

There are currently 24 tour operators in the Douglas Shire that are certified under this program.

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