

GOOD PRACTICES

H A N D B O O K

eco awards Namibia



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Terms used in this booklet

CBNRM—Community Based Natural Resource Management

FENATA—Federation of Namibian Tourism Associations

HAN – Hospitality Association of Namibia

HRDC—Habitat Research and Development Centre

MET - Ministry of Environment & Tourism

MC – Management Committee Namibian Eco-Awards

NBRI – National Botanical Research Institute

NACSO—Namibian Association of Community based Natural Resource Management Service Organisations

NATH—Namibian Academy for Tourism & Hospitality

NNF – Namibian Nature Foundation

NTB – Namibian Tourism Board

TASA – Tour and Safari Association of Namibia

WTO – World Tourism Organisation

INTRODUCTION



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Why eco awards?

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Forecasts suggest that during the next two decades the number of people seeking holiday destinations away from their home country is likely to triple.

In Namibia, tourism offers growth and employment opportunities to all sectors of society, in even the most remote parts of the country.

A survey conducted in 1997 showed that most visitors to Namibia expect a high quality, nature centred experience. Consequently, the tourism sector is largely dependent upon healthy wildlife and fish populations, panoramic scenery and litter-free, wide-open, natural spaces.

Like all other economic activities, tourism uses resources, produces waste and creates environmental and social costs and benefits in the process.

As these impacts accumulate they can result in the degeneration of tourist sites and natural settings, and are capable of destroying the very foundation upon which the tourism industry thrives.

eco award Namibia aims to encourage best practice and improve the environmental acceptability and sustainability of tourism projects in the face of growing tourism pressure. Best practice in tourism will benefit the following stakeholders:

- **The tourism sector**

Establishments that adopt best practice will acquire a good reputation and will continue to attract discerning visitors well into the future;

- **The environment**

Well planned tourism leads to improved land use, better protection of landscapes and species and more areas set aside for conservation;

- **Namibian society**

Namibians will benefit from a vibrant tourism industry that uses natural resources sustainably, promotes local empowerment, respects indigenous people and historical sites and that uses local services;

- **The country**

Namibia will acquire a good reputation for high environmental standards and as a world leader in sustainable tourism;

- **The government**

A sustainable tourism industry attracts investors, increases tax revenues, provides employment and stimulates secondary industries.



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Through the eco award system, the tourism industry is taking responsibility for protecting the attractions that make Namibia one of Africa's great tourism destinations © P.Tarr





International visitors are becoming increasingly discerning. They will consciously seek out companies and destinations that offer eco-friendly products
© Wilderness Safaris

The eco award initiative will help Namibia's tourism industry to attract increasingly discerning international travelers

International demand for responsible tourism

In order to advance sustainable tourism the World Commission on Sustainable Development urges Governments to:-

- take strong action against any kind of illegal, abusive or exploitative tourist activity, and
- collect and disseminate information on best practice that aim to minimize negative and promote the positive environmental, social and cultural impacts of tourism.

In response, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) recommends that every country should establish its own Programme for Environmentally Sustainable Tourism. They suggest that this programme be developed and implemented by the private sector, but conducted

with the approval of Government.

To date several of these programmes have been established throughout the world.

When **eco award Namibia** was drafted in 2005, scoring methods and criteria from Kenya, Australia, New Zealand and Scotland were evaluated to see which could be adapted to suit the Namibian situation.

Additional criteria, unique to Namibia, have also been identified.

Ultimately, demand for best practice is coming from the tourists themselves. Increasing numbers of visitors are selecting tour companies that have a responsible tourism policy and that

actively pursue ethical practices that neither harm the environment nor place unnecessary pressure on local communities.

These travellers feel they have a right to know what impacts their money and holidays may have on the people and environment of the countries they visit.

There can be no doubt that **eco award Namibia** will play a vital role in attracting this kind of discerning visitor to our country well into the future.



Operators that care about the environment will enhance their reputation and improve their ability to market their product

© Wilderness Safaris.

Who is in charge of eco award Namibia?

eco award Namibia falls under the auspices of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), a non-profit organisation that promotes sustainable development, the conservation of biological diversity and natural ecosystems, and the wise and ethical use of natural resources.

The programme is run by a broad-based Management Committee (MC) comprised of experts who are committed to the prin-

ciples of sustainable tourism.

Members of the MC include representatives of the following stakeholder groups:

- Hospitality Association of Namibia (HAN);
- Tour and Safari Association of Namibia (TASA);
- Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET);
- Namibia Tourism Board

(NTB);

- Community Based Tourism Associations;
- an architect, and
- two consultants with expertise in the Tourism Industry .

How the Eco awards system operates

Eco awards can be issued to accommodation establishments found in:

- Rural communal areas;
- Rural freehold areas;
- Towns.

The criteria for receiving an **eco award** have been designed so that the simplest campsite is able to score the same number of points as a large five star unit.

Depending on the number of points scored, an establishment can receive up to five 'desert flowers'. A five flower establishment is one that has the highest eco-rating based on its excellent community relations, conservation ethic, waste management, water conservation, use of renewable energy, and maintenance of 'sense of place'.

When an establishment wishes to apply for an award, the following 10-point procedure is followed:-

1. The campsite/lodge/hotel management decides which criteria are relevant to their circumstances and estimate an initial score based on these criteria.
2. At this stage any member of the **eco award** MC can be approached to provide advice on how this estimated score can be improved and, on the basis of these suggestions, relevant improvements to the operation can be made.
3. The establishment then estimates a final score. They submit this score, together with their completed criteria and all supporting documentation (such as conservancy agreements, management plans, waste water disposal certificates), to the **eco award** programme administrator.
4. Through the MC, the programme administrator arranges for an assessor to visit the establishment.
5. The assessor should stay at least one night at the establishment and be treated like any other guest.
6. Together with the manager/owner, the assessor will inspect all aspects of the establishment - from guest facilities, kitchens, sewerage disposal facilities, rubbish dumps and boreholes.
7. On completion of the assessment, a copy of the score sheet is left with the establishment's management together with all the comments of the assessor. The assessor should, at all times, be able to explain the rationale behind the criteria and scoring process.
8. The assessor then provides the MC with a written report.
9. The MC evaluates the score of the establishment and the score of the assessor, and may call for additional information to support, or dispute the score.
10. The MC makes a final decision on the number of **eco award** 'flowers' to be awarded.

In order to participate in the **eco award** programme, an establishment must pay a modest annual membership fee based on its size, plus a fee to cover the costs of the assessment by the **eco award** inspectors.

An award is valid for **two years** after which an automatic renewal assessment must take place.

Any award is open for review at the request of the establishment or the **eco award Namibia** MC.

Following the ideas and concepts included in this booklet will assist the establishment in obtaining a high score.



*Accommodation establishments in towns, as well as lodge's on farms, communal areas, conservancies and parks can apply for an **eco award** rating.*

© P.Tarr

By evaluating themselves against the set criteria, the managers of an establishment can monitor their progress to establish what they must do to improve their Eco Rating



By adopting the eco awards system, Namibia will likely attract growing numbers of environmentally conscious visitors. This will be good for the country. © P.Tarr



Many of Namibia's eco-systems and landscapes are fragile, and are easily scarred by inappropriate land use and actions

© A. Speiser

Who qualifies for an award?

Any hospitality establishment that is registered with the NTB can apply for an award.

Although this programme is currently limited to the hospitality industry, the criteria are structured in such a way that they can be adapted in the future for all sectors of the tourism industry - including tour operators, safari operators and car rental companies.



It is hoped that an increasing number of diverse tourism establishments will apply for eco award ratings © Wilderness Safaris

The link between eco awards and Vision 2030



Vision 2030 emphasizes the importance of conserving Namibia's valuable wildlife and other types of heritage

© P. Tarr

Namibia's Vision 2030 document provides a unifying strategic development plan – one that epitomises the concept of sustainable development and that looks well beyond the normal five-year development plans.

The **eco award** programme dovetails with the following statement in Vision 2030:-

"Namibia's tourism sector operates in extremely arid and ecologically sensitive areas. Thus, it is essential that attention be paid to all potential environmental and social impacts that can result from tourism activities.

These are summarised as follows:-

- scarring of landscapes and damage to wildlife habitats through off-road driving and careless behaviour;
- the unsustainable use of scarce resources (e.g. water and wood);
- pollutants from sewerage, domestic waste, chemical cleaners and litter;

- Intrusions on local cultures and values, and
- economic distortions".

An important conclusion of Vision 2030 is the fact that Namibia could avoid the negative impacts of development that many other nations have suffered in the past.

However, this does demand the development, understanding and commitment to **best practice** both from the government and the tourism industry itself.

eco award
Namibia supports
a number of the
objectives set out
in Vision 2030

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