



ECOTOURISM CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

Trial period September, 2005 –September, 2006

Set of criteria for tour operators, accommodation providers and destinations

This set of criteria has been developed through the project: “*Ecotourism Certification - an instrument for nature conservation and sustainable development*”, financed by the **Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation**. This programme is supported also by the **United States Agency for International Development** and it is developed in partnership with the **Romanian National Tourism Authority** and with the **Ministry of Environment and Water Management**.



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A1. What is ecotourism?

Ecotourism is a form of travel in which the tourist experiences nature and local culture, and insures the following:

- a minim impact on nature and local culture
- the active conservation of nature and cultural heritage
- using local services
- a special understanding by the visitor of elements of nature and local culture
- direct contact with the tour operator and local inhabitants (especially important due to the reduced size of groups)
- a real image of ecotourism through a responsible marketing.

A.2 What is the purpose of the certification system?

The ecotourism certification system is a mechanism for the evaluation and directing of tourism activities to achieve concrete results in nature conservation, long term development of local communities and to value natural resources and local culture.

The system's purpose is to certify eco-tourism products developed by travel agents and tour-operators, the certification of local destinations and accommodation providers, as an assurance of quality in ecotourism.

Bearing in mind that ecotourism is a new domain for Romanian tourism; the system will be implemented for one year trial period (September, 2005 – September, 2006) in order to evaluate it impact on the beneficiaries.

It should be mentioned that the system is not compulsory. On the contrary it is based on voluntary participation of those to whom it is addressed.

B. Set of criteria for certification

This set of criteria is the product of a wide cooperation among AER members (tour-operators, experts in tourism, and non-governmental organizations) as well as the representatives of: the Ministry of Environment and Water Management; the Romanian National Tourism Authority; the Institute of Research and Development in Tourism, and the University of Geography in Bucharest. Being in a trial period of implementation this document is open to continual improvement.

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The criteria for certification were developed on the bases of the principles that underline ecotourism. Thus, in the following tables you can identify three categories of beneficiary to be certified:

- Products of tourism agencies, tour-operators or guides;
- Eco-tourism destinations (a potential eco-destination can be a locality or a set of localities adjacent to natural protected areas);
- Accommodation providers, generally small pensions with a limited number of rooms (max. 25)

In the tables, the products of tourism agencies, tour-operators or guides will found under letter “**T**”, eco-destinations under “**D**” and accommodation providers under “**C**”.

B.1. Preliminary conditions for certification

Preliminary conditions valid for all applicants:

- Applicants must have all the legal documents and licenses necessary for each activity offered.
- Applicants who offer tourism product which include hunting or motor sports with a negative impact on the environment (off-road motorbikes, powerful motor boats, motor sledge, off-road competitions) will be excluded from certification.

1. PRINCIPLE OF NATURAL AREA FOCUS

It occurs in nature and relies on the use of natural environment, which is on the geo-morphological, biological, physical and cultural features. The focus on the natural area is therefore essential to the planning, development and management of ecotourism.

Ecotourism focuses on direct and personal experience in nature.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	over 50% of the active time of the programme occurs in nature.	T	D	
b	the operation is based on activities that help the tourist to personally experience nature, providing the opportunity to use at least three senses (observation of natural features, bird listening, smelling, tasting wild berries, touching the tree bark).	T	D	
c	the maximum number of tourists per guide for a tour is 15; it also depends on the category of activity.	T		
d	the operation offers a large range of recreational opportunities that are also found in the visitor management plan, plan that has to include all categories of tourists visiting the destination.		D	
e	accommodation is within or adjacent to a natural area. If in an urban area, the applicant shall explain, in the comments, how the operation is focused on nature.	T		C
f	over 50% of marketing images for the operation incorporate nature as a feature or background.	T	D	C

2. PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION OF ECOTOURISM OPERATIONS

Ecotourism provides opportunities to experience nature in ways that lead to greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of discovering and caring for nature and traditional local culture – both for visitors as well as for the local community. Ecotourism products attract those tourists who wish to interact with the natural environment and, in varying degrees, wish to expand their knowledge, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of it. Those who develop or co-ordinate ecotourism activities must provide an appropriate level of understanding of the natural and cultural values of the areas visited, usually through the use of appropriately qualified guides, and the provision of accurate information both prior to and during the experience.

The level and type of interpretation is planned, designed and delivered to meet the interests, needs and expectations of the client, with the inclusion of a broad range of interpretative opportunities, both personal and non-personal.

At the same time, at the level of Destinations and Ecotourism Products, it is important to create opportunities for members of the local community to have access to the information and interpretation provided through the ecotourism programme developed in the area.

Interpretative opportunities:

Personal interpretation

- Informative interaction with a guide (including specialist activities/tours such as bird watching, snorkelling, wildlife tracking – wolf/lynx/bear, etc.).
- Talks or lectures by specialists.
- Theatre performances.
- Other interpretation activities (games, treasure hunts, puppet shows, quizzes, role-plays, practical and craft activities, etc.).

Non-personal interpretation

- Pre-tour materials (brochures, information sheets, reading lists, website).
- Information boards and signs in areas of interest.
- Audio-visuals (video, slide shows, CD's)
- Specialist reference materials (library of books, magazines and other specialist publications).
- Marked nature trails; thematic and educational.

2.1. Access to interpretation

The customers of ecotourism operations are given access to interpretation opportunities through different techniques.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	the tourists are given the opportunity to learn about the natural and cultural heritage of the environment they are visiting. The operator should provide at least three interpretation opportunities in the list above, of which at least one must be personal interpretation. <i>Note: It may be necessary to prove the availability of the material/activities for those tourists that intend to participate: opportunities for guided tours are provided, proper number of interpretive brochures, well marked self-guiding paths</i> For accommodation: 2 interpretive opportunities, personal interpretation is optional.	T	D	C
b	the operation offers the opportunity to spend the active time in the company of a specialised guide of specialised staff (i.e. botanist, ornithologist, forest operator, forest ranger, protected area manager, etc.)		D	
c	more than 50% of the active time of the tourist programme is spent in the company of a specialised guide or specialised staff (i.e. botanist, ornithologist, forest operator, forest ranger, protected area manager, etc.).	T		
d	information on the area of the target group is available (at least one informational means: web page, telephone, interpretive brochures, newsletter, email)	T	D	C
e	each accommodation has a system to explain and practically show the traditional food and the source of the food (underlining the local natural operations)			C
f	each accommodation shall provide at least one personal interpretation to promote the own image linked to ecotourism.			C
g	at least 50% of the accommodations are ecotourism certified or compliant to the certification criteria.		T	
h	in case there are no ecotourism certified accommodation in eco-destination areas, proof must be provided of a development plan for the ecotourism accommodation	T	D	C

2.2. Accuracy of information

Information used as a basis for interpretation is checked for accuracy from credible sources.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>the accuracy of the information provided to tourists is checked by reference to one of the following sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference books or publications; • specialised personnel (botanists, ornithologists, forest operators, natural area managers, sociologists, anthropologists, etc.); • museums or zoos; • documentaries; • recognised bodies or interest groups; • recognised training courses/materials; • management plans. 	T	D	C

2.3. Planning of the interpretation

Interpretation has been planned to meet specifically defined objectives

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>interpretation is planned and designed to clearly show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the target group; • the objective; • themes or messages; • structure and logical sequence; • concept of ecotourism; • the importance of the area conservation. 	T	D	C
b	<p>the inside design should reflect the ecotourism principles(no hunting trophies or weapons, wild animal furs are displayed, etc.)</p>			C
c	<p>the quality of the interpretations has been monitored the past year through the tourist feedback (participation rate in the interpretive activities, comments, compliments or complaints). The accommodation and tour operators– if new in this activity must define how the monitoring is going to happen.</p>	T	D	C

2.4 Staff awareness and understanding

Guides and other key staff in contact with tourists are able to provide accurate information and interpretation.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>all operational staff in contact with the ecotourists have a basic knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the natural and conservation values of the area; the core principles of ecotourism and the way they are achieved through the programme; the behaviour they should have as part of their duties that help decrease the impact of the operation (i.e. proper disposal of the cleaning materials, minimising water or energy consumption, etc.) and adequate behaviour that they and the tourist must take to reduce the environmental impact (correct disposal of cigarettes butts, of waste, no collection of flora, fauna or other nature samples, no feeding wildlife, etc.); management of waste disposal. <p><i>NOTE: This criterion applies to all staff, whether or not they carry out interpretive activities, i.e. receptionists, hostesses, bar staff, etc. and can be proved through evidence of briefing notes, staff workshops, induction material.</i></p>	T	D	C
b	guides and all staff that deliver any form of interpretation are competent in providing information on the natural values of the area they present.	T	D	C
c	guides and all staff that deliver any form of interpretation are competent in providing information on the conservation of the area they present.	T	D	C
d	guides and all staff that deliver any form of interpretation have knowledge on the measures taken to ensure the ecological sustainability of the programme and are capable to explain it to the tourists.	T	D	C

2.5. Staff training

Guides and all other key staff (local guide, guide, mountain guide, biologist, geologist etc.) in contact with the customers are adequately trained in ecotourism and interpretation techniques.

BASIC CRITERION

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>all operational staff that have contact with the ecotourists receive induction or training material providing information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the natural and conservation values of the area; the ecotourism core principles and how to achieve them through the operation; the behaviour they should have as part of their duties to reduce the impact of the operation (i.e. proper disposal of the cleaning material, decrease of the water and energy consumption, etc.) and adequate behaviour that they and the tourist must take to reduce the environmental impact (correct disposal of cigarettes butts, of waste, no feeding wildlife, etc.); <p><i>NOTE: This criterion applies to all staff, whether or not they carry out interpretive activities, i.e. receptionists, hostesses, bar staff, etc.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>participating in the training courses organised by AER or any other institutions recognised by AER.</i> <p>The operator has developed, adapted or taken an in-house training programme with materials that cover core information on the visited area, the ecotourism principles and the behaviour of the staff in contact with the tourists.</p>	T	D	C

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Ecotourism activity and the planning of this should offer the best practices in tourism and planning from the point of view of the nature conservation and sustainable development. The tourism activity should be planned and managed to minimise the environmental impact. The ecotourism operation is carried out and managed to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural environment in which it operates, through the recognition and application of the practices of sustainable tourism.

3.1. Staff responsibility, knowledge and awareness

All staff of the ecotouristic operations understands the environmental sustainability aspects of the operation related to their duties.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>all key staff in contact with tourists understands and applies the measures taken within the operation to ensure that it is ecologically sustainable.</p> <p><i>NOTA: It is necessary the staff know all the aspects considered in planning and design and the strategies implemented during operation to ensure minimal environmental impact.</i></p>	T	D	C

3.2. Environmental impact contingency planning

All operators have considered the risks of their operations causing environmental harm

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>the environmental risks have been identified and measures have been taken in order to minimise or remove any risks.</p>	T	D	C
b	<p>a list with persons to be contacted in emergency cases includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Fire Brigade; • the natural area management; • mountain rescue team. 	T	D	C

3.3. Location

Operations are only undertaken in locations recommended for tourism and the impact is minimised.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	operations in protected areas are undertaken in locations designated by the area's management plan or by the protected area manager. as appropriate for this type of activity	T	D	C
b	the area used for tourism is identified in the approved territorial planning (PUG & PUZ), strategic plans, zoning plans, and internal designation of the protected areas etc. as preferred or allowed.		D	C
c	no venture off formed or designated/ marked roads/trails is allowed unless approved by the manager of the natural area.	T	D	

3.4. Environmental planning and impact assessment

Ecotourism operations have been established on the basis of the scientific understanding of the potential impact on the environment and are compliant to the legal provisions on the environmental protection legislation.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	Compliance with legal provisions		C	D

3.5. Site disturbance, landscaping and rehabilitation

The ecotourism operation involves minimal disturbance and the disturbed areas are rehabilitated to restore ecological processes.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	the development and use of the site has involved minimal clearing of the native vegetation	T	D	C
b	the development and use of the site involve a minimal disturbance to the cultural heritage.	T	D	C
c	landscaping of the site reflects the character of the surrounding natural environment or another natural system which is the focus of the operation		D	C
d	where clearing occurred, it has not affected the rare or threatened species of local flora and fauna.	T	D	C
e	an inventory of the natural values in the area has been undertaken prior to the site disturbance and after the rehabilitation.		D	
			D	C
f	no residual pesticides or herbicides are used.			
g	the tour operator has directly provided the infrastructure (toilets, boardwalks, etc.) in the area visited within a protected area.	T	D	C

3.6. Soil and water management

The site topography is followed and the ecotourism operation does not cause erosion, water, air or soil contamination, vegetation loss

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	the tourist development (buildings, trails) does not result in irreversible changes: land reshaping, changes of the watercourses, total clearing, etc.		D	C
b	no soil erosion occurs or measures for the consolidation and rehabilitation of the eroded areas are being taken.		D	C
c	fences, hedges, barriers or appropriate signalling are used to keep traffic in well designated areas according to categories.		D	C
d	disposal of the waste specific to the activities in the area is not allowed if there is any risk of water, air or soil pollution.	T	D	C

3.7. Building methods and materials

The building works have maximised the use of recycled or renewable materials and practices to minimise the environmental impact have been applied.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>minimum three of the following measures have been take to minimise the environmental impact during the building or refurbishment of the facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • works of excavation and any other disturbance to groundcover are minimised; • use of appropriate (traditional) building techniques within the heritage precincts); • use of locally sourced building materials (unless the local sources result in an impact increase); • use of recycled materials; • use of biodegradable materials; • use of renewable energy; • no residual pesticides are used; • use of materials that do not produce greenhouse gases. 		D	C
b	<p>in the case of building works in development or planned for the future, contractors and workers are informed on the natural and cultural values of the area and on the required measures for environmental protection.</p>		D	C
c	<p>measures of environmental management have been used in order to minimise the disturbance of the area during the development of the building.</p>	T	D	C

3.8. Visual Impact

The touristy facilities are not visually dominant.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>for the existing operations at least three of the following measures have been taken to reduce the visual impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the design has considered the visual analysis – mention of the analysis technique; • buildings forms are compatible with the landscape; • buildings forms are compatible with the local traditional architecture; • the height of building and structures are below the tree lines or screened by topographic features • roads are screened by vegetation or landscape elements or designed so that the visual impact be minimised (curved lines); • car parks are designed and landscaped to minimise the visual impacts or alternative solutions, other than asphalt are considered; • the colour and reflectivity of the surfaces are compatible with the landscape; • native vegetation has been maintained or included in the landscaping to screen facilities. 		D	C
b	vehicles, vessels, structures are painted in colours that minimise the visual impact.	T	D	C

3.9. Light

Where natural light is not appropriate, lighting has been minimised to the limit required for safety and visibility of signs and displays.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>at least three of the following measures have been take to reduce illumination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illuminated signage is only used for emergency exits; • spotlights point below the horizontal; • incandescent floodlights are not used in public places; • compact fluorescent light bulbs are used wherever possible; • natural light provides all necessary illumination to all areas of buildings in daytime. 		D	C

3.10. Water supply and conservation

The ecotourism operations involve economic use of water sources

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>the sustainability of the water source must be stated through an independent hydrological/hydro geological assessment or by a governmental agency</p>		D	
b	<p>at least five of the following measures for water conservation should be implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tap aerators; • low flow showerheads; • controlled flow of toilet water; • showers only, instead of baths; • low water gardens (local plants, drip water system); • rain water collection; • re-use of grey water; • limitation of the water consumption; • encouraging clients to use the towels several days; • written advice for tourists to minimise consumption; • automatic turn off taps. 			C

3.11. Wastewater

Sewage and effluent is minimised and has no significant impact on the environment

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	all tourism facilities should be connected to a drainage system or have a system of water collection, retention and treatment or effluent is directed to a treatment plant.		D	C
b	a system of wastewater management is in place or there are offers of viable solutions for wastewater treatment.		D	

3.12. Noise

The ecotourism operations offer the tourists the opportunity to experience the nature sounds.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	usual noise level from all activities on the site (including telephones, public address system, transports, concerts, music, equipments and machinery) does not significantly exceed the background noise in the area.	T	D	C
b	sound insulation minimises the noise from plant equipment and machinery.	T	D	C
c	vehicles are not left running idle for more than three minutes.	T	D	C
d	music sources (TV, radio sets) are only used in camping sites where other tourists are not disturbed.	T	D	C
e	campsites have special areas for large groups.		D	C
f	service and maintenance facilities are located away from the quiet areas or are provided with sound insulation.		D	C
g	tourists have the opportunity to enjoy “the quietness of the nature”.	T	D	C

3.13. The air quality

The ecotourism operations involve minimal air pollution.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	no vehicles are used for transportation if the air emission is obviously harmful (at least Euro 2).	T	D	C
b	the release of solvents (dry cleaning solvents, thinners) and hydrocarbon (essence, diesel) in the air is minimal.	T	D	C
c	no offensive odours are associated with air emissions.	T	D	C
d	waste incineration is controlled and does not produce a visible perturbation of the air.	T	D	C

3.14. Minimisation of waste and litter

The ecotourism operations involve minimal waste.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	at least five of the following measures have been taken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • materials are purchased to minimise packaging; • biodegradable packs are used; • only reusable or recyclable containers are displayed • disposable items are not used (utensils and containers) except under special circumstances and no often than once/person/stay; • both staff and customers are encouraged to take part in the programmes for collecting, recycling and minimisation of the waste; • the tourism facilities are included in a programme for waste recycling; • all litter found is collected and removed; • a system for composting the organic kitchen waste; • cleanup days are organised or supported (finance, labour, transport, refreshments etc.) (at least once a year). 	T	D	C
b	a system for the management of waste is in place, including the ecological disposal		D	

3.15 Energy use and consumption: buildings

Ecotourism involves minimum energy consumption

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	roof insulation and, in cold areas, wall insulation			C
b	<p>minimum five of the following measures have been implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • over 90% fluorescent instead of incandescent light; • natural ventilation is provided; • no air conditioning; • only natural light is used in daytime; • insulation of roofs and, in cold climate, in walls; • the aspect, colour, texture and design increase the solar heating during winter and reduce solar heating in summer (or in hot climates); • heat flow through windows and doors is minimised by using proper insulation, double glazed windows and insulating strips are used; • a trained member of the staff is in charge with minimising the energy use and cost; • heat is produced and distributed by central plants; • all electric equipment is class A energy "energy efficient". • the building is made of wood or other natural material in a proportion of at least 50% (both wood and retain the heat during winter and coolness in summer). 			C

3.16. Energy use and consumption: transport

Ecotourism transport involves minimal energy consumption.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	over 50% of the distance within the local ecotouristic activities use ecological means of transport: horse carts/sleighs, bicycles, walking etc.	T	D	C
b	<p>energy consumption for transport is minimised through at least five of the following measures for accommodation and tour operator and at least three for destinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tours, routes and schedules are planned to reduce the travelling time and distances (including avoidance of crowdie areas and rush time); • tourists are encouraged to use fuel efficient transport (i.e. providing information on the public transport, providing bicycles for sightseeing); • staff are actively encouraged to walk, ride or use public transport to go to work (where applicable); • all vehicles are well maintained; • when choosing and/or purchasing vehicles the choices shall be fuel efficient; • use of electrically driven vehicles; • use of vehicles that do not require more than 10 l fuel/100km. 	T	D	C

3.17 Minimal disturbance to wildlife

The ecotourism operations involve a minimal disturbance to the wildlife.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	the operation does not include regular and deliberate intrusions that may cause significant disturbance to wildlife behaviour in their natural habitat.	T	D	C
b	activities that occur within the natural habitat of the wild animals are carried out according to the natural area management plan.	T	D	C
c	the activities do not cause significant changes of the habitats (destroying the vegetation, nests, drying of the wetlands, etc)	T	D	C
d	direct interaction with wild animals is only undertaken by staff with appropriate training and experience.	T	D	C
e	direct interaction with wild animals is conducted not to cause any stress to the animals (it is not removed from its natural habitat, it is returned to the position where it was found etc.)	T	D	C
f	wildlife feeding is only carried out by competent personnel.	T	D	C
g	flashlights and torches are not used in activities involving night watching (tree hollows of nocturnal fauna). Flashlights may only be used under direct surveillance for watching the amphibians with night activity.	T	D	C
h	rotation of routes is used to reduce the repeated impact on the wildlife in the same sector	T	D	

NOTE:

- minimal impact on wildlife criteria must be met in addition to these criteria;
- if the tour includes a walking component, the section relating to minimal impact walking must also be completed;
- if the tour includes a rest stop or camping the section relating to minimal impact camping must also be completed;
- if the tour includes a cave, (for bat watching, for example), the section relating to minimal impact caving must also be completed

3.18 Minimal impact spotlighting

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	the power of the light source does not exceed 30W.	T		

3.19 Minimal impact walking

Walking tours include all “tour” activities or individual walking.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	groups of the walking tour are kept on existing tracks.	T	D	
b	a “carry in – carry out” policy is in place for all waste and litter, including food scraps	T		
c	wherever possible public toilets are used. If there are no public toilets, a hole of minimum 15 cm deep shall be made at least 100 m away from the path and the nearest water body.	T		
d	tourists are encouraged to use fuel stoves; in case fires are lit, the following rules shall be strictly observed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fires are lit in existing fire places (if any); only fallen branches or trees are used as firewood, on condition the area management allows this; the guide ensures that the fire is fully extinguished with water (until no steam is visible) before removing camp; fire is not allowed in the forest. 	T		
e	rotation of routes to reduce impact on one single site	T		

3.20 Minimal impact camping

Camping has minimal impact on the environment

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	in the protected natural areas the camping regulation shall be strictly observed. In other areas, whenever possible, the existing camping sites shall be used. If this is not possible and a new camping site must be set, this shall never occur within an area with a high conservation value.	T		
b	wherever possible public toilets are used. If there are no public toilets, a hole of minimum 15 cm deep shall be made at least 100 m away from the path and the nearest water body.	T		
c	a “carry in – carry out” policy is in place for all waste and litter, including food scraps.	T		
d	tourists are encouraged to use fuel stoves; in case fires are lit, the following rules shall be strictly observed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fires are lit in existing fire places (if any); • only fallen branches or trees are used as firewood, on condition the area management allows this; • the guide ensures that the fire is fully extinguished with water (until no steam is visible) before removing camp; • fire is not allowed in the forest. 	T		
e	tourists have been informed on the practice codes to reduce the impact that are specific to the operation.	T		

NOTE:

This section must also be complete for short or day tours that regularly include a rest stop

3.21 Minimal impact of power boat use

to be completed only if applicable to the product

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>when operating vessels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> only the allowed routes for power boat are used. when tourists travel in sensitive areas (on secondary channels) within the wetland (Danube Delta) the maximum admitted power of the boat is 10 CP. 	T		
b	<p>when operating vessels, all of the following measures are practiced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vessel wash does not affect river banks, lake shores or natural area processes; the speed of the vessel is set so as not to affect the nature experience of the other tourists in the area; where regular stops occur in the same location, moorings are designed and used instead of anchoring, to minimise the long term environmental impact; oil or grease contaminated water or untreated water is not discharged; use of pumps. 	T		

NOTE:

- if the tour includes a walking component, the section relating to minimal impact walking must also be completed
- if the tour includes a rest stop or camping the section relating to minimal impact camping must also be completed

3.22 Minimal impact non-powered boat use

Boating has minimal environmental impact.

to be completed only if applicable to the product

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	when drawing near a bird colony, the boats are not allowed to reach the limit beyond which birds in the colony become stressed	T		
b	portage of crafts follows the routes advised /set by the natural area manager to minimise long-term environmental damage	T		
c	mooring of vessels is conducted so that there is minimum impact on vegetation (i.e. when tying to trees a soft fabric is used to prevent rub; when the same location is used repeatedly the area is hardened with use of mooring rings, pylons etc.)	T		
d	a “carry in – carry out” policy is in place for all waste and litter, including food scraps	T		

NOTE:

- if the tour includes a walking component, the section relating to minimal impact walking must also be completed
- if the tour includes a rest stop or camping the section relating to minimal impact camping must also be completed
- if the tour includes the use of a vehicle, the section relating to minimal impact of a vehicle use must also be completed

3.23 Minimal impact aircraft use

Aircraft use has minimal environmental impact.

to be completed only if applicable to the product

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>all the following measures are undertaken when operating aircrafts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private airstrips and helipads are located as far as possible from public areas; • flights over the protected areas maintain a minimum height of 300m or any other altitude set by the manager of the protected area; • wildlife watching regulations are observed ; • aircraft use does not have a negative effect on other tourists' experience in nature; • appropriate means to reduce the impact produced by fuel and oil spillage; • refuelling of aircraft does not occur in areas of high conservation value; • relatively undisturbed ecosystems, where native fauna and people on the ground may be disturbed by the noise are avoided. 	T		
b	aircrafts are powered and operated to minimise fuel for the necessary speed, capacity and type of operation.	T		

NOTE:

- if the tour includes a walking component, the section relating to minimal impact walking must also be completed
- if the tour includes a rest stop or camping the section relating to minimal impact camping must also be completed
- if the tour includes the use of a vehicle, the section relating to minimal impact of a vehicle use must also be completed

3.24 Minimal impact rock climbing and abseiling

Rock climbing and abseiling have minimal environmental impact.

to be completed only if applicable to the product

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>all of the following measures are taken when rock climbing and abseiling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only performed on certified trails and, when applicable, accepted by the area manager; • excessive use of fixed equipment is avoided; • excessive use of chalk is avoided; • chipping of rock is avoided; • sites of geological, cultural or other scientific interest are avoided; • access to rocks is only achieved by the existing tracks; • all necessary approvals have been obtained from the natural area management; • a “carry in – carry out” policy is in place for equipment and litter; • wildlife (vegetation, bird nests) are not disturbed; • during the nesting period it is not allowed to use tracks in close vicinity to nesting birds. 	T	D	
b	tourists are informed on the codes of practice to minimise the impacts that are specific to the product.	T	D	

NOTE:

- *if the tour includes a walking component, the section relating to minimal impact walking must also be completed*
- *if the tour includes a rest stop or camping the section relating to minimal impact camping must also be completed*
- *if the tour includes the use of a vehicle, the section relating to minimal impact of a vehicle use must also be completed*

3.25 Minimal impact caving (show caves)

Caving has minimal environmental impact.

to be completed only if applicable to the product

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	approval has been obtained from the relevant government agency or from the manager to enter the cave and in case the cave entrance is on a private property, the owner's approval has been obtained	T	D	
b	<p>all of the following measures are put in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if an entrance has been created or enlarged for tourists' access, a chamber has been installed between the cave entrance and the rest of the cave, to minimise air and temperature flow; • pathways do not block the natural water courses within the cave; • lighting is powered by electricity and is switched off when tourists are out of the cave. For long distances there is a modular lighting system, in sectors; • "cold lighting" replaces "warm lighting"; • access bridges must be so built as to be easily cleaned; • in case a gallery or cave is closed, when leaving the access gate in the cave must be locked. 		D	
c	<p>before entering the cave the following measures on the tourists' behaviour have been set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tourists are advised not to distribute bat colonies and not to touch or move the elements that are specific to the cave, fossils, life forms, sediments or water courses; • tourists are informed that they must apply the carry in – carry out policy and no waste should be left inside the cave, human waste or biodegradable litter; • tourists are informed that smoking is not allowed and eating inside the cave may only be allowed when tours are long and difficult. 		D	

d	<p>all the following building measures have been take:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building materials are used and chosen to have a minimal impact on the underground landscape and habitats. • the choice of the building technologies meet the management plan of the cave, if a protected area, and/or have a minimal impact on the landscape and habitats (an impact survey must be carried out prior to structures and developments) • changes within or at the entrance of a cave must be minimal and consider the long/term impact. • for any change the necessary approvals must be obtained. 		D	
			D	
e	the operator organises the activity of litter collection to remove possible garbage left by tourists.			
f	camping is not allowed within 100 m around the cave entrance. Camping and bivouac inside the cave are only allowed if absolutely necessary	T		
g	the manager is a member of or certified by the Romanian Federation of Speleologists (FRS) and has adopted its ethic code (Carta Speo).		D	
h	tourists are informed on the codes of practice to reduce the specific impact of the product.	T	D	

NOTE:

- if the tour includes a walking component, the section relating to minimal impact walking must also be completed
- if the tour includes a rest stop or camping the section relating to minimal impact camping must also be completed
- if the tour includes the use of a vehicle, the section relating to minimal impact of a vehicle use must also be completed

3.26 Minimal impact caving: wild caves

Caving has minimal environmental impact.

to be completed only if applicable to the product

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>no wild caving route contains /allows the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crossing of clean areas with clothes or footwear dirty with clay/mud(i.e. crossing the clean flow stone floors in boots); • venturing within three meters of high value cave elements; • venturing within three meters of cave-dwelling life forms; • pointing lights directly on cave life forms or disturbing any cave biota; • venturing on fragile underground areas (landscape or habitat); • collection or capture of the underground fauna. 	T	D	
b	<p>the following equipment is used in all wild cave tours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soft material between ropes and natural anchors such as trees (i.e. carpet or cloth); • small back sacks tightly fitted to the body; • cave-marking materials so that missing markers can be replaced and routes clarified; • any marking of an underground route is provisory; • electric lighting system instead of acetylene to avoid smoke in the narrow passages; 	T	D	

c	<p>all the following measures are taken to manage the tourists behaviour inside the visited wild cave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helmets are never removed; • on the helmet is set the basic light, with good range, and long lasting, and spare batteries or carbide, water. The light on the helmet must be operational during the whole visit in the cave; • in case of eating, plastic bags are used to avoid any litter or scrambles; • liquids for drinking (alcohol is totally forbidden) are carried in; • it is not allowed to throw the carried in liquids inside the cave; • camping inside the cave is not allowed except for long and difficult tours, when camp is set on sustainable surfaces, away from concretions, flood risk or habitats; • carrying out of all litter and waste, human waste included is mandatory; • tourists are advised that smoking is not allowed; • acetylene lamps are to be avoided (the guide recommendations for each cave should be strictly observed) and if lamps need cleaning, the operation is carried out on a plastic bag, and the dirt taken out of the cave at the end of the tour. 	T	D	
d	maximum size of a group is 10 people (guide included) unless otherwise specified in the management plan	T	D	
e	clothes, boots and back sacks are cleaned and bacteria or fungi removed prior to entering the cave	T	D	
f	no information shall be released on the cave entrance location or on the routes inside the cave	T	D	
g	tourists are informed on the codes of practice to reduce the impact specific to the product.	T	D	
h	in case a gallery/cave is closed for the public, when living the access gate is locked	T	D	

NOTE:

- if the tour includes a walking component, the section relating to minimal impact walking must also be completed
- if the tour includes a rest stop or camping the section relating to minimal impact camping must also be completed
- if the tour includes the use of a vehicle, the section relating to minimal impact of a vehicle use must also be completed

3.27 Minimal Impact diving

Diving has minimal impact.

to be completed only if applicable to the product

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>all of the following measures are undertaken when diving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginners who can not control floatability, only dive in areas where contact with the bottom of the water does not affect flora and fauna substratum; no creature is touched, chased or disturbed in their natural actions; underwater fishing is totally forbidden; it is not allowed to collect any animal. Object, plant without relevant approval; routes or trails are set to minimise impact. 	T	D	
b	tourists are informed on the codes of practice to reduce the impact specific to the product	T	D	

3.28 Minimal impact trail raiding and animal tours

Trail raiding and animal tours have minimal environmental impact.

to be completed only if applicable to the product

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>all of the following measures are undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> travel routes in natural areas are chosen to meet the recommendations of the area manager; animals are in good condition before embarking; animals' hooves, tails and coats are clean (free of 	T		

	<p>seeds and plant material) before entering areas of high conservation value;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • animal feed is cleaned, approved by a natural area manager and given using a nose bag; • where possible the animals are kept on designated tracks and existing roads, keeping to the centre of the track to avoid widening the route; • if there are no tracks, the following procedures are used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ riders fan out on grassy or soft areas, and ➤ riders ford water courses only at designated crossing, at a 90° angle to the bank; • regular contact with the natural area manager is maintained to inform on the road condition and be advised of appropriate routes and level of use; • tourists are informed on particular road conditions – sensitive or impacted tracks. 			
b	track remedial works, re-vegetating close tracks are performed	T		
c	designated tie up facilities for animals are used or a portable fence is carried	T		
d	animals are penned overnight (rather than tied to a tree) at least 30 m for the nearest water body and in an area at least 15 msq for each animal)	T		
e	tourists are informed on the codes of practice to reduce the impact specific to the product.	T		

NOTE:

- *This section applies to horse riding.*
- *if the tour includes a walking component, the section relating to minimal impact walking must also be completed*
- *if the tour includes a rest stop or camping the section relating to minimal impact camping must also be completed*
- *if the tour includes the use of a vehicle, the section relating to minimal impact of a vehicle use must also be completed*

4. PRINCIPLE OF CONTRIBUTION TO NATURAL AREAS CONSERVATION

Ecotourism has a positive contribution to the conservation of the natural areas visited, offering constructive opportunities for the good management and conservation of these natural areas (i.e. through financial help in actions for the rehabilitation of the natural areas, collection of the waste left by the tourists, or contributions to the conservation organisations).

An active contribution has the ecotourism operation suppliers to the conservation and management of the natural areas.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	a co-operation agreement with the natural area manager (if any) states how the contribution to the conservation of the area is performed (sometimes it is difficult to identify the manager)	T	D	C
b	ensure a financial contribution to local nature conservation plans of at least 3% of the value paid by each tourist (once/tourist/stay). With the financial contribution supports nature conservation local projects or stimulates the beginning of such projects.	T		C
c	adheres to one of the measures below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inclusion, within the touristic operation, of one concrete action for nature conservation; • active participation in an action/project of nature conservation; • donation/funding for a project/action of nature conservation; • direct involvement in projects of environmental education, other than those under point c). 	T	D	C

5. PRINCIPLE OF CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Ecotourism provides sustainable contributions to the development of the local communities. The local community is integral to the ecotourism product in many situations. The benefits of ecotourism should be shared with the local communities. Local benefits may come from using the local guides, the purchase of provisions and local services and the use of the local facilities.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>six of the nine measures bellow are taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local guides are used to present the locally significant attractions and for regular training of other guides; • use of other people from the local community; • encouragement / purchase of local products; • use of other local services: guest houses, hire of bicycles, carts etc; • encouraging tourists to buy locally produced souvenirs; • financial contribution to the creation of the local infrastructure or local events; • development of a programme for advising and training the local people in tourism services. • free access of the local people to training in order to improve their professional level; • providing opportunities for work practice/experience to one or several students living in the area. 	T	D	C

6. PRINCIPLE OF SENSITIVITY TOWARDS THE LOCAL CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Although ecotourism deals mainly with the natural values of a region, many of them have a significant cultural value

Ecotourism operations and their planning should ensure a minimisation of the negative impact on the community in focus and on their life style, providing at the same time, constructive long lasting contributions to these communities. Therefore ecotourism should highlight the cultural component of the visited area and contribute to the conservation of this component.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	tourists are advised on the code of behaviour to be adhered to within the visited communities.	T	D	C
b	name three modalities you have adopted to stimulate the local traditions, customs and cuisine.	T	D	C
c	tourists are offered accurate information that helps to better understand and appreciate the cultural values and local traditions.	T	D	C

7. PRINCIPLE OF TOURIST SATISFACTION

Ecotourism meets tourist expectations. In developing ecotouristic operations one should consider the fact that generally the potential tourists have a high level of education and expectations. Therefore the level of the tourist satisfaction is essential, and the experience offered meets or surpasses the tourists' expectations

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	a mechanism for assessment of the tourist satisfactions is in place (i.e. questionnaire) and AER's access to the results of the assessment and monitoring. Providing access to these results for the protected area managers might be useful.	T	D	C
b	the obligation to offer each tourist the opportunity to contact AER (telephone number, e-mail, address) for comments and suggestions	T	D	C

8. PRINCIPLE OF RESPONSIBLE MARKETING

The aim is to obtain responsible marketing bringing about realistic expectations. Ecotourism marketing provides customers with full and responsible information that increases the respect for the natural and cultural environment of the destination areas and of the tourist satisfaction.

	CRITERION	TO WHOM IS ADDRESSED		
		Tour operator (T)	Eco-Destinations (D)	Accommodation (C)
a	<p>marketing is accurate and responsible creating clear expectations of the client with regard to the programmes offered the image is consistent with reality regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the particularities that describe the area being visited; • recognised values that make the area special (i.e. protected or endangered species, UNESCO heritage, etc.); • main activities permitted and performed by the tourists (i.e. skiing, camping, etc); • services and/or facilities; • the number of tourists in a group experiencing the product; • transport or accommodation capacity; • general ethics addressing minimal impact on the natural areas visited; • general ethics addressing minimal impact on the visited communities; • equipment, clothing suitable to the area visited. 	T	D	C
b	the name of each place shown in the marketing images is mentioned.	T	D	C
c	the name of the author or source of the photographs is mentioned.	T	D	C



For those interested in improving these criteria, please send your comments to the following address:

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This is our proposal for the new ECO CERTIFIED in ECOTOURISM logo.

