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Ecotourism Kenya

Sector: Tourism and Hospitality

Region: Based in Kenya, operates in Kenya

[Ecotourism Kenya](#) promotes responsible practices within the tourism industry in Kenya. This involves encouraging the adoption of best practices in the use of tourism resources, working with local communities and managing waste and emissions.

Ecotourism Kenya's sustainability claim is the Eco-rating Certification Scheme that aims to promote responsible tourism in Kenya.

Through the Eco-rating Certification Scheme, Ecotourism Kenya aims to promote environmental, economic and social best practices by accommodation facilities within the tourism industry through:

- Promoting and increasing awareness of environmentally and socially sound business practices
- Promoting the increased contribution of tourism to social-economic development
- Promoting the increased contribution of tourism to conservation of the natural resources upon which tourism is dependent
- Improved destination image, thus potentially attracting more tourists



Mindset

Life Cycle Thinking: This certification assesses four criteria of the tourism accommodation sector to determine their sustainability credentials, which are: conservation, community, culture and business practice. In all these criteria, life cycle aspects are considered.

Hotspots Analysis: Each criterion under the certification standard has a set of indicators identified through a collaborative process, which corresponded to the hotspots for the sustainability of the tourism accommodation sector. For example, resource efficiency, management of pollution and waste and biodiversity conservation.

Mainstreaming sustainability: Ecotourism Kenya actively encourages its certified (eco-rated) facilities to promote and possibly influence sustainability practices through their value chains. In most instances, the certified facilities also use the certification as a management and decision-making tool. Beyond the mandatory indicators, a tourism accommodation facility is also encouraged to report on other relevant initiatives, although they are not assessed against those. Once certified, they have the choice of using the certification credentials for marketing and promotion, based on guidance provided by Ecotourism Kenya.

Principle 1: Reliability

The Eco-rating Certification Standard is benchmarked under global sustainability organizations such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. The certification criteria are developed based on scientific background and the indicators under each criterion have measurable impacts. The certification has been endorsed by the Kenya National Environmental Management Authority.



There is an independent Eco-rating Committee comprised of industry experts who conduct the third-party verification. A team of auditors provides technical expertise in assessing facilities. This team includes environmental audit experts, conservationists and researchers. Eco-rating certification status is valid for two years from the date indicated on the cover letter accompanying the certificate.



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Principle 2: Relevance

The certification is centered on taking a life cycle approach. The eco-rating certification criteria are hinged on sustainable business practices, biodiversity conservation, community engagement and cultural performance.



The criteria place emphasis on sustainable use of natural resources, protection of the environment, community empowerment, promotion and preservation of local culture, compliance with legal requirements and support to local economies.

Principle 3: Clarity

The performance of all facilities is measured against a set of indicators and information on all the criteria and how each is measured is available online. A list of [all eco-rated](#) facilities is available on the website. A member who is not certified under the Eco-rating certification program cannot use the certification emblems in any way.



Each level of certification has a specific logo that is distinct from the others, which makes it clear for consumers to understand the levels of performance of each hotel. Accommodation providers display the certificate on their website and frequently on online promotional materials.

Principle 4: Transparency

The methodology is clearly available on the organization's website and the certification level is decided upon through third-party verification. However, specific information relating to the detail of the eco-rated facilities is normally confidential, such as levels of water and energy usage.



Through clear guidance materials and information on the website, the certification provides good levels of transparency for consumers wanting to know further information on the process and requirements for certification.

Principle 5: Accessibility

Ecotourism Kenya develops a website profile for each Eco-rated facility detailing their certification credentials. Consumers can find background information on both Ecotourism website and on the Eco-rated facility website.



Certification guidebooks, website, social media, brochures, and other promotional material are easily accessible.



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Principle 6: Three Dimensions of Sustainability



Environmental: The standard communicates on the following environmental issues: evidence of addressing resource (water and energy) use, a vision of conserving biodiversity within the facility, effort in mitigating negative effects including sources of pollution and protecting the natural environment, environmental consideration in building and renovation processes (materials used), and proper solid waste and wastewater management.

Social: The facility must be in compliance with health and safety regulations concerning the hotel and workers, and staff welfare including labour and human rights issues as well as education and awareness should be promoted.

Economic: The facility should demonstrate sensitivity to the local community through evidence of contribution to local development.

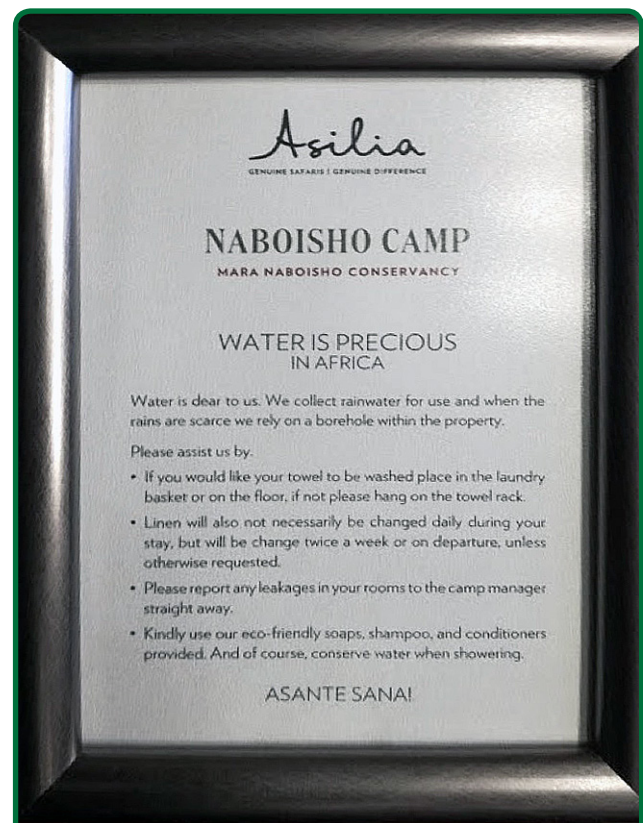
Ecotourism Kenya communicates to the eco-rated facilities on how they can align with all the sustainability dimensions: environmental, socio-cultural and socio-economic.

Principle 7: Behaviour Change and Longer Term Impact



Environmental footprint is a growing concern of many tourists and the criteria were developed based on this reality. This certification targets mainly the facility's impact rather than the consumers' behaviour. However, the facilities are encouraged to engage their guests in promoting sustainability. This can be achieved through inviting guests to participate in resource conservation, habitat rehabilitation, community projects and appropriate visitor education and information.

The organization plans to do research around whether consumers are likely to choose certified places for holidays (in comparison with non-certified places in the same region).



Example of a poster targeted at guests engagement at Naboisho Camp, one of the Gold Eco-rated facilities in the Masai Mara National Reserve, in Kenya.

Principle 8: Multi-Channel and Innovative Approach



Various communication channels are used: website, social media, annual forum, email and telephone. The facilities under the Certification scheme have access to weekly best practice articles from Ecotourism Kenya, known as "Ecobytes". This provides a platform for information sharing necessary for continuous learning and improvement.

Consumers can interact with Ecotourism Kenya team through online channels, and they are also invited to visit Ecotourism Kenya's office.



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Principle 9: Collaboration



The criteria have been developed in a multi-stakeholder process and designed to suit local requirements. They are aligned to the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) formed under the umbrella of the United Nations.

The Eco-rating certification standard is featured on the [ITC Standard Map](#), an online tool that congregates standards existing worldwide. It has also collaborated with other certifications such as Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and Fair Trade Tourism. Furthermore, it counts on institutional support from the Ministry of Tourism, Kenya Tourism Board and tourism practitioners.

Principle 10: Comparability



The comparison is based on evaluation of [best practices](#) in projects, conservation, community and cultural performance among accommodation facilities.

The objective is to help consumers compare between different hotels and award qualifying applicants with a Bronze, Silver or Gold Eco-rating Certification.

Bronze: This is the entry level to Eco-rating Certification, and it is awarded to facilities that demonstrate awareness of and commitment to environmental conservation, responsible resource use and socio-economic investment.

Silver: Silver Eco-rating is an intermediary level in Eco-rating Certification that is awarded to facilities that demonstrate innovation – progress towards achieving excellence in environmental conservation, responsible resource use and socio-economic investment.

Gold: Gold Eco-rating Certification is the highest level of Eco-rating certification that is awarded to facilities that demonstrate outstanding best practices i.e. they have achieved superior and replicable levels of excellence in responsible resource use, environmental conservation and socio-economic investment.