Greetings!

Benefits of being eco-certified

Certification programs in the tourism industry serve as important tools for distinguishing genuinely responsible companies, products, or services from those that are merely using "eco-" or "sustainable" as a marketing tool to attract consumers (The International Ecotourism Society). Eco-tourism Kenya’s eco-rating scheme is a sustainable tourism certification program that aims to promote responsible tourism by recognizing tourism best practices by accommodation facilities. The accommodation facilities that apply and meet the criteria set are awarded Bronze, Silver or Gold certification based on their performance. Bronze is an entry level, Silver is the mid-level of the rating and Gold is the highest level in the rating.

This week’s eco-byte gives an insight on the benefits of eco-certification to accommodation facilities. Eco-certification aids in the promotion of sustainable business practices, conservation, community engagement in tourism activities and enhancement of cultural performance by accommodation facilities. Below are the benefits of eco-certification;

Improved marketing strategy

Eco-rating creates a marketing edge for all the eco-rated facilities as it enhances a facility’s image. Eco-rated facilities get the guarantee to use the eco-rating emblems i.e. gold, silver or bronze, to market their business therefore this can be used as a tool to boost sales.

Sharing best practice and continuous improvement

As an eco-rated facility you demonstrate a commitment to tourism best practices such as in energy, waste and water management. Eco-rated facilities feature in the Ecotourism Kenya’s
weekly eco-bytes as case studies and also provides a benchmark to other operators in the tourism industry.

**Credibility and recognition**

The eco-rating scheme provides you with an opportunity of being recognized as an accommodation facility that practices quality standards in responsible tourism. This acts as a success avenue especially when applying for awards, grants, licenses or permits.

**Assist in minimizing the ecological footprint**

Eco certification promotes the enhancement and conservation and protection of the natural tourism attractions. The eco-rated facilities demonstrate outstanding practices in the preservation and conservation of the natural and man-made tourist attractions and therefore contribute to their protection.

**Enhanced relationship between a facility and the local community**

Eco-certification help to improve relations between you and the local community. This is mainly by providing solutions for engaging the community to not only diversify your tourism product but to also provide benefits that go beyond charity to the local community. As an eco-certified facility you are also able to showcase outstanding efforts towards community well-being and support to the local economy.

**Improved product value**

As the world “goes green” most of the tourists are becoming more eco-conscious and they prefer spending nights at eco-certified facilities. Eco-certification puts you at a niche in the market due to the increased value of the products you offer to consumers.

**Reduced operating costs**

Eco-rated facilities tend to run on reduced operating costs. This is attributed to reduced water and energy costs as effective strategies on water and energy conservation are implemented within the eco-rated facilities without compromising the quality of services they provide. Eco-certified facilities also incur minimal costs in handling of waste.

It is important to note that going through the process of eco-certification is educational in that one is able to learn of the elements of sustainability. The process also offers one an opportunity to know the changes that should be made in a facility in order to make a business operation more sustainable.

Here’s a link to the list of eco-rated facilities in Kenya; [http://www.ecotourismkenya.org/facility.php](http://www.ecotourismkenya.org/facility.php)

*It’s smart to be responsible!*

**Eco-rating Certification Program**
The Eco-rating Certification Scheme is a sustainable tourism certification program that aims to promote responsible tourism in Kenya. The program was launched in 2002 by Ecotourism Kenya in cooperation with tourism stakeholders in Kenya with a prime focus of recognizing best practices in business practices, conservation, community and cultural performance by tourism accommodation facilities. The accommodation facilities that apply and meet the criteria set are awarded Bronze, Silver or Gold certification based on their performance. Please see hyperlink ECO-RATING SCHEME

What’s latest on EK Eco-rating Certification?

In this month, the Eco-rating team will be in the Laikipia/Samburu and Amboseli regions while in August the team will head to Naivasha/Nakuru regions. If you would like to be featured in these set of audits, please contact the secretariat through ecorating@ecotourismkenya.org.