How to Start an Eco-Tourism Business in Ontario

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1. BASICS TO GETTING STARTED

Starting a business can be a rewarding undertaking, but it comes with its challenges. Before starting a business in Ontario, it is wise to do your research. There are several issues to consider such as regulations, financing, and taxation, managing your business, advertising and much more.

For further information:
see the documents:

- Business Start-Up Info-Guide
- Financing for Starting a Business Info-Guide
- Taxation Info-Guide
- Employment Regulations Info-Guide
- Business Regulations Info-Guide

For regulatory or legal questions, it may be useful to contact a lawyer that deals with business regulations through the Law Society of Upper Canada's Lawyer Referral Service.

For further information:
call 1-800-268-8326
visit the website: Law Society of Upper Canada's Lawyer Referral Service

2. INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Ecotourism, sometimes referred to as ecological tourism or sustainable tourism, is ecologically and socially conscious and often focuses on local culture, nature, wilderness, animals, plants and cultural heritage.

As there is no specific certification for ecotourism operations in Ontario, the term ecotourism is often mistakenly applied to tourism businesses that simply exist in natural areas or are only related to nature, but may actually harm the surrounding environment.
Ideally, a business that is involved in ecotourism should increase environmental knowledge, promote biodiversity, showcase local plants and/or animals and minimize a tourist's environmental footprint or impact.

While environmental concerns and impacts are often associated with ecotourism, ecotourism should also deal with cultural and social issues. Minimizing impacts on local populations, creating local employment, and offering an authentic tourist experience that is integrated with local culture should also be concerns of ecotourism operations. For instance, an ecotourism business would provide accommodations that are integrated into the community through guest houses, instead of building a large hotel.

**Tourism Business Info-Guide**

The Tourism Business Info-Guide is designed to help you navigate through the federal and provincial government programs, services and regulations that may apply to individuals and businesses starting a business in the tourism sector in Ontario.

**For further information:**
see the document: [Tourism Business Info-Guide](#)

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### 3. REGULATIONS

This document will assist you in navigating federal, provincial and municipal regulations that apply to a number of industries and businesses.

**For further information:**
see the document [Business Regulations Info-Guide](#)

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### Travel Industry Act

The Ontario [Travel Industry Act](#) requires that travel retailers, travel wholesalers or anyone involved in these activities, such as tour operators, be registered by the Travel Industry Council of Ontario.

**For further information:**
- call [1-888-451-8426](tel:1-888-451-8426)
- visit the web site: [Travel Industry Council of Ontario - (TICO)](http://www.tico.ca)

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### Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch

As part of the Ontario Ministry of Environment, the Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch provides 'one-window' service for regulatory environmental approvals for the province.

**For further information:**
- call [1-800-461-6290](tel:1-800-461-6290)
- visit the website: [Environmental Approvals for Business](http://www.oem.mlr.gov.on.ca/)

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### 4. FINANCING

**Financing for Starting a Business Info-Guide**

This document is designed to help you navigate through the federal and provincial government programs available to individuals starting a business in Ontario.

**For further information:**
see the document: [Financing for Starting a Business Info-Guide](#)
5. ASSOCIATIONS

- The Ontario Ecotourism Society
- CITAP - Canadian Inbound Tourism Association (Asia Pacific)
- Tourism Industry Association of Canada
- The International Ecotourism Society

6. OTHER RESOURCES

- Ecotourism: the Way to Travel
- Green Key Eco-Rating Program
- Communication and Sustainable Tourism
- Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association

Related Reading

- Tourism Business Info-Guide
- Business Guides

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Click: Canada Business
Call: The Business Info Line, a collaboration between ServiceOntario and Industry Canada, at 1-888-745-8888
Visit: Find a Community Partner Location near you

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Information contained in this document is of a general nature only and is not intended to constitute advice for any specific situation. Users concerned about the reliability of the information should consult directly with the source, or seek legal counsel.

Some of the organizations listed above are not subject to the federal Official Languages Act or the French Language Services Act of Ontario. Their services may not be available in both official languages.