



Australian Government  
Director of National Parks



## Parks Australia Commercial tourism operator permit guidelines





# Commercial tourism operator permit guidelines

## Introduction

These guidelines provide information on permit requirements for conducting commercial tour operations in the terrestrial Commonwealth reserves established and managed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (known as the EPBC Act).

These reserves include six national parks (three jointly managed with their traditional owners) and the Australian National Botanic Gardens and Norfolk Island Botanic Gardens.

The national parks are Booderee, Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Christmas Island, Pulu Keeling and Norfolk Island.

The guidelines should be read in conjunction with the current management plan and other strategic directions for each reserve.

Where the management plan for a reserve has expired it will continue to guide the management of activities in the reserve until a new plan comes into effect.<sup>1</sup>

Please see separate guidance on commercial licences and leases, and conducting events in these reserves.

Information about requirements for commercial tours in marine Commonwealth reserves can be obtained at <http://www.environment.gov.au/marinereserves/activities.html#tourism>.

For the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park at <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/zoning-permits-and-plans/permits/when-do-you-need-a-marine-parks-permit>

## Background

The Director of National Parks (Parks Australia) is keen to provide opportunities for new high quality tourism experiences.

Tour operators play an important role in facilitating visitor access, encouraging positive behaviour and in promoting the values of the reserves.

The majority of tour operators conducting commercial activities in the reserves operate under annual permits.

Where appropriate we may issue:

- longer term permits (for suitably accredited operators)
- [commercial licences](#) for limited or exclusive tour opportunities (eg. to conduct tours in a particular area of a reserve)
- occupation licences and leases for tour operations that require longer term security to provide a return on capital investment, eg. for fixed infrastructure.

## Management of commercial tourism activities

Commercial tourism activities in Commonwealth reserves are managed to ensure minimal environmental impact and the delivery of high-quality visitor services.

The tourism industry plays an important role in providing experiences in parks that allow visitors to safely enjoy and learn about these special places.

<sup>1</sup>The form of authorisation to be issued for commercial tours will vary depending on the reserve in which tour activities are to be carried on. For the three jointly managed national parks – Kakadu, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Booderee – permits can continue to be issued. For the other reserves approval will be given under section 359B of the EPBC Act.





Permits and permit conditions enable us to:

- maximise the safety of park visitors
- encourage appropriate behaviour in the park
- ensure that commercial and other park users are accountable for their actions
- separate potentially conflicting activities
- manage impacts on high-use and sensitive areas
- monitor activities that could degrade biodiversity, heritage and other park values
- collect data for planning and management.

In addition to general conditions that apply to all permits, commercial tour permits include activity specific and site specific conditions (eg certain equipment standards or tour guide qualifications to conduct certain activities).

A commercial tourism activity will require a permit if it is a routine or standard activity in/to areas of reserves that are generally open to the public without a limit on numbers.

If a tourism activity is limited by type, location, number of operators or involves exclusive use of a site then the activity will operate under a tourism licence. Licences are issued with a minimum five year term.

If long-term use of a building or area of land is required then you will most likely need a licence to occupy or lease.

Please contact the relevant reserve to discuss the management arrangements for your proposed activity.

## Do I need a permit?

Under the EPBC Act (sections 354 and 354A) certain actions, including actions for commercial purposes, can only be done in a Commonwealth reserve if they are authorised in accordance with a management plan for the reserve.<sup>2</sup> Management plans generally provide for commercial tourism operations to be conducted under a Director of National Parks permit.<sup>3</sup>

## Is my activity for a commercial purpose?

An activity is regarded as commercial if it is done as part of a business or trade with the intention of making a profit. This includes activities that are carried out under contract, consignment for another person, with a view to being sold or hired out, or for the promotion or advertising of a product or service.

Examples of commercial activities in a Commonwealth reserve include:

- undertaking a guided tour, safari, scenic flight, cruise or excursion
- the hire or sale of goods or services
- supplying services or facilities
- commercial photography and filming
- advertising or promoting the reserve as part of a tour, safari, cruise or excursion
- advertising or promoting the use of a reserve as a feature associated with a resort or tourist facility.

<sup>2</sup> This includes commercial activities up to 3,000 metres above sea level over a reserve.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 1 about authorising commercial tour operations when a management plan is not in effect.



## Is the activity appropriate in the reserve?

In managing commercial activities in Commonwealth reserves Parks Australia and commercial tourism operators need to follow:

- requirements of the EPBC Act and Regulations
- the relevant reserve Management Plan
- strategic documents such as Tourism Visions for the reserve
- Work, Health and Safety and other requirements.

## What does getting a permit mean for me?

### Duration of permits

Commercial tourism permits are available for a duration of one or three years. One-year permits are issued to tour operators who meet requirements to conduct standard land-based activities. Accreditation requirements do not apply to one-year permits, however accreditation may be required in the future.

Tour operators now also have the option to apply for a three-year permit, for standard tourism operations.

To be eligible for a three year permit, operators must hold tourism accreditation.

Longer term authorisation for certain tourism operators may be provided by commercial activity licences issued in accordance with the Parks Australia commercial tourism licence policy and associated guidelines.

### Accreditation

Tour operators accredited under Tourism Accreditation Australia Limited (TAAL) programs can apply for three-year permits.

A copy of the renewed accreditation certificate must be supplied annually.

The following accreditation programs currently meet the Director of National Parks requirements under TAAL:

- Ecotourism EcoCertification Program (Ecotourism Australia)
- Advanced EcoCertification Program (Ecotourism Australia)
- Nature Tourism EcoCertification Program (Ecotourism Australia)
- Respecting Our Culture (Ecotourism Australia)
- ATAP (Australian Tourism Accreditation Program).

Accreditation aims to assist every tourism business to improve the way it operates.

It provides consumers and the industry with an assurance that a tourism operator is committed to quality business practices, sustainability and professionalism in all aspects of the enterprise.

For assistance with and further information on tourism accreditation please refer to the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program <http://www.tourismaccreditation.org.au/> or Ecotourism Australia <http://www.ecotourism.org.au/>.

For operators in the Northern Territory (NT), information on programs licensed by TAAL, can be found on Tourism NT's website: <http://www.tourismnt.com.au/industry-resources/tourism-accreditation.aspx>

Additionally, Tourism NT's Business Development team can help you identify the most suitable accreditation program for your business and help you achieve and maintain your tourism accreditation.

Tourism NT also allows accredited businesses to access their marketing and promotion services. This has resulted in a high level of accreditation uptake in the Northern Territory.





## Tour guide training

It is compulsory for all tour guides working in Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu national parks to have successfully completed the [Knowledge for Tour Guides](#) program.

This program provides entry-level training covering all the things a tour guide should know when working in each park - including key areas of visitor safety, understanding the park's natural and cultural values and history, minimising environmental impact and legal compliance.

## Permit fees

Permit fees are set by the EPBC Regulations (Part 18 and Schedule 11). Permit fees currently range from \$50 to \$500 per year depending on the type and number of tours conducted, and the reserve in which they are conducted.

The fees are modest and do not reflect the administrative costs involved, and have not increased since the EPBC Act commenced in July 2000. There are currently no permit fees for Norfolk Island.

You will need to be prepared to pay the permit fees upfront. This requirement is specified in the EPBC Regulations. The fees contribute to the cost of processing applications and are not refundable.

For operators conducting <b>up to</b> four tours per year:		
Park	One year permit	Three year permit
Uluru-Kata Tjuta	\$100	\$300
Kakadu	\$100	\$300
Booderee	\$50	n/a
Norfolk Island	\$0	n/a
Christmas Island	\$50	n/a
Pulu Keeling	\$50	n/a

For operators conducting <b>more than</b> four tours per year:		
Park	One year permit	Three year permit
Uluru-Kata Tjuta	\$500	\$1,500
Kakadu	\$500	\$1,500
Booderee	\$50	n/a
Norfolk Island	\$0	n/a
Christmas Island	\$50	n/a
Pulu Keeling	\$50	n/a

## Public liability insurance

If you wish to carry out a commercial activity in a Commonwealth reserve you generally must have public liability insurance cover for an amount of at least \$20 million per incident/event.

This requirement ensures that tour operator clients and other park users can be compensated for personal injury or loss/damage to property due to incidents for which a tour operator is legally responsible.

It also protects operators against the financial risk of these type of incidents.

## Application process

Please allow 28 business days for a permit application to be processed.

Applications for standard commercial tour operator permits are accepted at any time.

A permit application form can be downloaded on the reserve website. See page six of this guide for links to our website.



# Your step-by-step guide

- 1 Visit our website at [www.environment.gov.au/parks](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks) for information about Director of National Parks permit requirements.
- 2 Download a permit application form from our website. Contact the permit officer in the relevant reserve to discuss your application if required.
- 3 Prepare documentation including proof of accreditation, public liability insurance in accordance with the requirements outlined in the application kit.
- 4 Complete and submit your application including:
  1. Brochures
  2. Tour schedules
  3. Operations
  4. Public liability insurance
  5. Accreditation certificates etc
  6. Permit fee
- 5 It will take up to 28 days to process your permit if all information is provided complete and correct.
- 6 Issuing of permit and vehicle stickers.



## Contacts

### **Booderee**

Permits administrator  
Ph: 02 4442 1006 /02 4429 7227  
Fax: 02 4443 8302  
[booderee.mail@environment.gov.au](mailto:booderee.mail@environment.gov.au)

[www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/booderee-tours.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/booderee-tours.html)

### **Kakadu**

Tourism Services Officer  
Ph: 08 8938 1170  
Fax: 08 8938 1117  
[kakadu.permits@environment.gov.au](mailto:kakadu.permits@environment.gov.au)

[www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/kakadu-tours.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/kakadu-tours.html)

### **Uluru – Kata Tjuta**

Permits officer  
Ph: 08 8956 2252  
Fax: 08 8956 2657  
[Uluru.permits@environment.gov.au](mailto:Uluru.permits@environment.gov.au)

[www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/uluru-tours.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/uluru-tours.html)

### **Australian National Botanic Gardens**

Permits administrator  
Ph: 02 6250 9404  
Fax: 02 6250 9539  
[vc@anbg.gov.au](mailto:vc@anbg.gov.au)  
[www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/anbg-commercial.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/anbg-commercial.html)

### **Christmas Island**

Park Manager  
Ph: 08 9164 8700  
Fax 08 9164 8755  
[christmasislandNP@environment.gov.au](mailto:christmasislandNP@environment.gov.au)

[www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/christmas-tours.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/christmas-tours.html)

### **Norfolk Island**

Park Manager  
Ph: +6723 22695  
Fax: +6723 23397  
[coral.rowston@environment.gov.au](mailto:coral.rowston@environment.gov.au)

[www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/norfolk-tours.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/norfolk-tours.html)

### **Pulu Keeling**

Park Manager  
Ph: 08 9162 6678  
Fax 08 9162 6680  
[christmasislandNP@environment.gov.au](mailto:christmasislandNP@environment.gov.au)  
[www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/cocos-tours.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/permits/cocos-tours.html)

© Director of National Parks 2013

This publication is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Director of National Parks. Inquiries regarding reproduction should be addressed to:

Director of National Parks  
Department of the Environment  
GPO Box 787  
CANBERRA ACT 2601



