



How can I have my ecotour business certified by Florida SEE?

Overview of the Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism:

Incorporated in 2001 the Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism (Florida SEE) is a non-profit educational organization incorporated to establish and maintain a professional code of ecotourism ethics in order to encourage an awareness and appreciation of Florida's natural and cultural history.

Overview of the Florida SEE Certification/Recognition Program:

The goal of the Florida SEE Certification/Recognition Program is to certify responsible Ecotour Providers who contribute to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Florida. Certified Florida SEE Associate Members will be recognized as preferred service providers who are committed to using best practices for ecological sustainability, natural area management, and quality ecotourism experiences. Tours and attractions can be certified by Florida SEE. The Florida SEE Certification/Recognition Program utilizes a "certification checklist" that is completed by the Ecotour Provider and submitted to Florida SEE for review. In order to be eligible for certification, at least 50% of the Ecotour Provider's tours must be nature based and have an interpretive aspect.

How do I participate in the Florida SEE Certification process?

- 1. Be an Associate Member in good standing.** Join online or via U.S. mail at: www.floridasee.org/membership.php
- 2. Perform a self-assessment of your ecotour business.** Associate Members can access the certification checklist by logging into the member area of the Florida SEE website at www.floridasee.org The certification checklist includes both core criteria and bonus criteria.
- 3. Improve your business practices.** After your self-assessment, Ecotour Providers may find that they need to work on core criteria, which must be 100% met or non-applicable before submitting their application for certification.
- 4. Need some advice or guidance?** We can help! Email your questions to certification@floridasee.org or participate in monthly professional webinars.
- 5. Submit your application for certification.** Ecotour Providers who are confident of meeting the core criteria can submit their completed self-assessment, application form, and non-refundable application fee of \$100. To find more information about submitting an application, go to: www.floridasee.org/certification.php
- 6. Meet with Florida SEE for preliminary interview.** Applicants are contacted by Florida SEE to set up a meeting to review their application and discuss any areas of concern.

How am I assessed by Florida SEE?

7. **Site Visit(s).** If the core criteria for your tour/attraction have been met, a trained Florida SEE assessor will be assigned to conduct site visits. During the initial site visit the assessor will remain anonymous. Additional site visits, if necessary, will be arranged with the Ecotour Provider. The assessor will submit their completed certification checklist to the Certification Committee, along with comments and recommendations for the BOD.

8. **Certification Committee follow-up.** A member of Florida SEE's Certification Committee will contact the Ecotour Provider with the results of the site visit, to ask questions and/or seek clarification if necessary. Finally, the Certification Committee member will calculate the Ecotour Provider's score based upon the applicable core criteria, bonus criteria and any points of excellence.

9. **Board of Directors review.** The completed application and certification checklist results are reviewed by Florida SEE's Board of Directors and approval of certification is voted upon.

10. **Enjoy the benefits.** Upon approval, Certified Ecotour Providers may begin to enjoy the marketing and educational benefits of having achieved certification with Florida SEE. For more on the benefits of certification, go to: www.floridasee.org/certification.php

Certified Ecotour Providers can achieve four possible levels of certification:

- Bronze Certification: meets all applicable CORE criteria on the Certification Checklist
- Silver Certification: meets all applicable CORE criteria and 50% - 74% of BONUS criteria on the Certification Checklist
- Gold Certification: meets all applicable CORE criteria and 75% - 89% of BONUS criteria on the Certification Checklist
- Platinum Certification: meets all applicable CORE criteria and 90% - 100% of BONUS criteria on the Certification Checklist

Interested in ecotour provider training?

Monthly professional webinars are FREE for Florida SEE members and their staff or \$10 each for non-members. For more information:

- 2012-2013 Ecotour Provider Webinar Series, go to: www.floridasee.org/programs.php
- Florida SEE Calendar of Events, go to: www.viethconsulting.com/members/calendar6.php?org_id=SFLA

More questions? We're here to help!

Email your questions to certification@floridasee.org
or contact: John Kiseda, Florida SEE Executive Director
Office: 239-432-2163, Email: johnkiseda@floridasee.org