

## The Certificate in Ecotourism Co-operative Learning Method 2010

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**Name of programme:** Certificate in Ecotourism

**Campus:** Greymouth and Work Based

### 2010 applications

Applications are accepted throughout the year but it is advisable to apply early as the programme is popular. You can apply for the whole programme or just the short award you are interested in.

### Who are we?

Tai Poutini Polytechnic is the country's foremost centre for ecotourism education and industry-based training. Based in the environmentally-renowned West Coast, the programme offers a range of learning options to support the growing ecotourism sector of national and international tourism. This is in conjunction with the services offered by EcotourismNZ, also based at the Greymouth campus, who also offer support for ecotourism operators.

### What is Ecotourism?

Tai Poutini Polytechnic's definition of ecotourism contains five features, which distinguish it from other forms of tourism such as nature-based, outdoor/adventure, sustainable and mass tourism. Mass tourism can be defined as the kind of tourism that focuses on large group tours, bus rides with photo stops, and so on.

Our definition of ecotourism includes the following principles:

- Interaction with the natural, physical, and heritage environment
- Leaving a 'light footprint' (i.e. low environmental impact)
- An educational and interpretative dimension
- Community ownership
- An awareness of local cultures.

## **What does the programme involve?**

The Certificate in Ecotourism is run as a cooperative work model, whereby students will study at Tai Poutini Polytechnic in Greymouth from Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> of April to Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October. For another 10 weeks after the programme, you will be required to work in a tourism based business to complete the programme and complete an assignment.

It is the goal of staff at Tai Poutini Polytechnic to offer you a fun and exciting learning experience. However, in return we have a high expectation of your commitment and application to the programme. This programme utilises a mix of both classroom and outdoor learning with 40 teaching locations an hours drive from the Polytechnic.

Day to day class work includes learning the skills of analysis, undertaking research and making conclusions based on your research. The core skills aim to develop your ability to interpret your research in a professional guiding situation.

## **Important points to think about**

- On completing the Certificate in Ecotourism students gain highly transferable skills to any sector of the tourism or hospitality industry. In most cases the advanced knowledge of New Zealand flora, fauna, Te Ao Maori and our heritage will give you a decisive edge over other people in the industry. These skills will give you the confidence to work competently with international tourists and travelers
- On completion of the programme students will understand and demonstrate the basic ethos of good environmental practice and display an appropriate awareness of the cultural and social history of New Zealand.
- In the teaching of this programme, industry experts are used to make the learning up to date and industry relevant. A certificate in ecotourism will give you industry ready skills that employers require to run their businesses
- The programme takes place around a number of the iconic tourist attractions on and off the West Coast. Some of the experiences you would expect to have are: whalewatching, sea kayaking, kiwi watching, staying on a marae, restoration of a local ecosystem, visit a historic gold mining town and visiting local businesses to see how they operate.
- A positive attitude with energy to learn will set you up to get the most out of the programme.

## **Range of subjects**

The Ecotourism certificate programme is delivered as a whole year programme or you can just complete one of the five short awards.

## The short awards offered

- Ecotourism Principles                      19 April – 30 May (6 weeks)

The frameworks of tourism and where ecotourism fits in to this is important and graduates will have a broad understanding of this concept. There are day to day challenges that ecotourism businesses face such as concession and resource management act process and students will gain this from this short award. Guides and frontline staff working in ecotourism businesses need to be able to discuss environmental issues with clients manage small scale environmental management projects and understand small business practice which are all outcomes of this short award.

- Cultural Heritage                              31 May – 2 July (4 weeks)

Aotearoa New Zealand has a rich Maori and European history and it is an area where guides are asked many questions. The Maori culture is also a source of interest for overseas visitors and a clear understanding of the Maori world view and protocol is necessary for guides in the ecotourism industry to be credible and this is an outcome of this short award. New Zealand's European history is also an area of interest for overseas clients and the interpretation of this subject is essential when providing a quality ecotourism product.

- The Natural World                            19 July – 20 August (4 weeks)

The completion of this short award will provide the students the knowledge to make sense of the natural world around them. Classification of plants and animals and gaining an understanding of taxonomy will assist graduates in their interpretation of natural environments for ecotourism clients. An understanding of ecological principals will also assist graduates in their interpretation of the natural world and specific knowledge of New Zealand's plant and animal species including identification.

- Our Environment                              23 August- 17 September (4 weeks)

Graduates completing this short award will gain a better understanding of the broader processes shaping the landforms and ecosystems of New Zealand and species that reside there. Stories of New Zealand as an isolated island, the geological processes and the adaptations that the species have made are very important when interpreting the environment for ecotourism clients.

- Guiding & Certification                    4 October – 22 October (3 weeks)

There are many aspects to running guided trips covering New Zealand's natural, cultural and historical environment and interpretation and specific guiding techniques are very important skills in achieving a high quality experience for clients. There are other aspects which are essential to running trips in New Zealand's outdoor environment which a graduate of this short award will acquire are first aid and outdoor skills.

## Field Trips and Education Outside the Classroom

Much course time is spent outdoors visiting a range of unique attractions and businesses on the West Coast and further a field. A reasonable level of fitness is required. The programme is not overly physically demanding but you must be of average fitness and be prepared to be in the outdoors for a reasonable part of the day.

Field trips include sea kayaking, traveling by boat and walking in the rugged terrains of the West Coast. Visits to local tourism businesses will also be a large part of the programme to give students a real life view of the ecotourism sector.

### Will it get me a job in the industry?

Tutors have wide industry contacts to help you gain employment in ecotourism and because you need to complete a work placement to complete the programme so you will almost certainly gain longer term employment in this sector if you complete the programme and have a desire to work.

### Equipment for Outdoor and Field Trips

You will need some tramping and outdoor equipment to actively partake in the Outdoor Skills section of the programme.

#### *Our Suggested List*

- **Boots:** Most of our tramping is on well-maintained walking tracks. However good quality boots are essential because of the weather. Leather or waterproof material is best.
- **Backpack:** A 65-litre backpack is a minimum requirement for our overnight trips. Research different products from different retailers. If you do not do a lot of tramping outside of the Ecotourism programme a cheaper brand pack may well prove adequate.
- **Sleeping bag:** You will need a three-season sleeping bag. Note - we will be sleeping in huts during the winter.
- **Polypropylene:** Clothing made of this material can keep you warm when it gets wet and is invaluable for the outdoors. Merino is another good option however is a lot more expensive. Woollen clothing can also be worn but is usually heavy when wet. Discuss the pros and cons of clothing on offer with any outdoor clothing outlet.
- **Waterproof jacket:** Waterproof jackets are essential for any outdoor guide. There are a variety of fabrics that keep out the weather. Cheaper types include japara and plastic. If you buy one serious type of outdoor clothing item this year we recommend it be made of Gortex. Although Gortex is expensive it keeps you warm and makes your time in the outdoors so much more fun.
- **Fleece tops:** Are invaluable as they are lightweight, warm and quick-drying.
- **Cooking equipment:** Students are required to bring their own plates, cup and cutlery for outdoor trips. We supply the cookers and other gear.

There are two items that will improve your study, both for research and the completion of your assessments while at Tai Poutini Polytechnic.

- **Laptop computer:** There is wireless broadband capacity in the student canteen, some classrooms, the library and some of the student accommodation.
- **Digital camera:** On the Ecotourism programme we visit some of the most beautiful places on the planet up and down the West Coast you will not want to miss the wonderful photographic opportunities. Photographs can be useful for your assignments and it is great to be able to share your experiences with friends and family.

These items are not compulsory but discuss equipment with your tutor before you arrive to take part in the programme.

Should you have any queries regarding the course, course requirements, essential equipment, or any other questions please contact:

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