

Tour Operator licensing frequently asked questions

Licence application process

How is an application processed?

How long does it take to process a licence application?

What supporting documentation do I need to submit with my application?

Fees

What fees are applicable to a Tour Operators Licence?

How are annual licence fees calculated?

Why do the annual fee and the capped use fee continue to rise annually?

When are annual licence fees due?

How long is a licence valid for?

Trip Return reporting

What is a Trip Return?

What is a Use Fee?

How do I calculate the Use Fee component of the trip return?

Do I have to submit a trip return?

When do I have to submit a trip return?

How do I complete a trip return? Double up?

What do I report in a trip return?

Why am I required to submit a trip return?

I use sub-contractors to deliver some of my advertised activities, am I required to report on the activities delivered by the sub-contractor?

Can I pay my use fee by direct debit or BPay?

Accreditation

What are the recognised accredited programs?

What supporting documentation do I need to submit with my application?

Do I need accreditation to apply for a one year tour operator licence?

What is the maximum duration licence I can apply for?

Tour Schedules

Where can Parks Victoria licence me for?

What information is needed on a tour schedule?

What activity should I list on my application?

Once my Licence has been approved can I add on more locations?

Public Liability Insurance

What is a Certificate of Currency?

Where can I go to ensure my insurer is registered with the Australian Government?

What insurance agency do you recommend for public liability insurance?

Can you process my application without a current Certificate of Currency?

What can I do to ensure that my Certificate of Currency meets Parks Victoria needs?

Licence application processing Life-cycle

The applications process involves a number of different phases, each phase correlates to a licence status on the Tour Operator Management System (TOMS).

In progress (Phase 1)

- Application or Tour Variation received
- Sent out to regions for approval

Ready for execution (Phase 2)

- Application approved
- Final checks completed

Executed (Phase 3)

- Licence and invoice generated and sent to the operator for review and processing
- Operator to submit signed licence and processed invoice to LTOlicensing@parks.vic.gov.au

Active (Phase 4)

- Licence has been co-signed by the Director, Tourism and Commercial
- Finalised licence pack sent to operator

How long does it take to process a licence application?

Depending on the complexity of the licence application the process usually takes between six and eight weeks. All prospective operators need to ensure that they provide enough time to become licensed prior to operating to avoid disappointment.

The licence processing time can be reduced by ensuring a comprehensive application is submitted in the first instance. This includes ensuring correct Certificate of Currency and trip return information (if an existing licensee).

Please note: During peak fire season applications may take longer to process as many staff are deployed during this period.

What supporting documentation do I need to submit with my application?

As a rule of thumb the more supporting documents you can provide about your proposed tours or activities the better. The documentation assists local park management in making an informed decision about the application and reduces the amount of time it takes to process a licence application. Supporting documentation includes maps, brochures, accreditation documentation, interpretive plans etc.

Parks Victoria will not be able to finalise any application without a valid public liability insurance Certificate of Currency.

Fees

What fees are applicable to a Tour Operators Licence?

Fees payable by a licensed tour operator consist of a fixed component and a variable use component (based on visitor numbers). The fixed component is the 'annual licence fee' and the variable use component the 'use fee'. Use fees are explained in more detail in the Trip Return Reporting section below.

How are annual licence fees calculated?

To understand how the licence fee is calculated it is beneficial to understand the related terminology.

Annual Rate - is the annually adjusted (indexed) fee (Monetary Units Act 2004).

Fee Unit - is the fixed fee unit as prescribed in the regulation tour operator licensing fees 2011.

The annual licence fee is calculated using the following formula:

The annual rate (\$13.94) x fee unit (20.78) = annual licence fee

Multiple year licence fee use a similar formula:

The annual rate (\$13.94) x fee unit (16.3) x duration (3 or 10 yr) = licence fee payable

Why do the annual fee and the capped use fee continue to rise annually?

Some tour operator licensing fees, such as annual and capped fee are indexed annually. The fees are set in accordance with the relevant fee unit as set out in the regulation and will not change over time.

The annual rate is gazetted (announced) by the state government each May. The annual rate is increased in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and on average increases between 2.5 and 3.5 per cent each year. The rate for 2016/17 has been fixed at \$13.94.

When are annual licence fees due?

The annual licence fee is due once a licence application has been approved and a licence has been generated. Once a licence has been generated the Tourism Branch will send the licence for signing and an invoice for the yearly amount electronically. The operator will then have seven days in which to process the payment.

How long is a licence valid for?

Parks Victoria licence operators each financial year from July 1 to June 30. Multiple year licences are available for operators with acceptable accreditation (please see the accreditation section).

Trip Return reporting

What is a Trip Return?

A trip return is a document completed by the Licensed Tour Operator declaring the number of adults and children who participated in tours on Parks Victoria managed land. The Tour Operator on the Trip Return documents lists the location (Park) and the activity involved in the tour as well as the number of adults and children. This document can be obtained from the Parks Victoria website.

It is a condition of licence that a Licensee maintains a daily record of the amount of people participating in activities on public land.

What is a Use Fee?

A use fee is the fee based on trip return reports and is calculated on a 'per person per day' fee who participated in an organized tour or recreational activity conducted on public land.

Use fee are a fixed amount as specified in Tour Operator Licence Fee Regulations 2011. The use fee is to be paid when quarterly or annual trip returns are submitted within 21 days of the end of the period.

How do I calculate the Use Fee component of the trip return?

The fixed use fee amount

Use Fee – General Visitor	\$2.40
Use Fee – School student and child (16 yrs or younger)	\$1.60

To calculate the use fee, you multiply the number of adults by the total number of days/trips for the location (park). Then multiply that number by the use fee adult cost \$2.40.

You follow the same process for children. To obtain the total cost you add the cost of adults and children together and this gives you your total use fee amount.

To get more information on how to calculate Use Fee and complete the Trip Return document see the 'How to enter your trip returns' document on the Parks Victoria website.

<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/park-management/applications,-licences-and-permits/licensed-tour-operators>

Do I have to submit a trip return?

Yes, all Licensed Tour Operators have to complete a Trip Return for each quarter of the whole year. If you did not complete any tours during the quarter or year you are still required to submit a Trip Return document stating 'Nil Return', this can be in the form of an email and should be accompanied with a reason.

Please be aware (existing operators) that Parks Victoria evaluates trip return reporting as part of the application process.

When do I have to submit a trip return?

Trip Return documents are to be completed and submitted to Parks Victoria quarterly or annually. If you decide to submit your Trip Returns quarterly they must be submitted by the 21st of the Month following the end of the quarter.

Quarter 1	July – September
Quarter 2	October – December
Quarter 3	January – March
Quarter 4	April – June

If you decide to submit your Trip Returns annually they must be submitted and payment made before your licence for the next licensing year can be approved.

How do I complete a trip return?

To complete a trip return you must complete the Trip Return document found on the Parks Victoria website. On the website you will also find a 'How to enter your trip returns' document that provides instructions on how to complete the form. If you have any further questions about completing the Trip Return document you can email LTOlicensing@parks.vic.gov.au or call the Tourism Branch.

Once you have completed the quarterly or annually trip return document you will need to post or scan and email the form and arrange payment either by cheque, BPay or credit card. For credit card payment please call our accounts department and provide your details over the phone. The accounts department phone number, which is on the invoice, is 8427 2743.

What do I report in a trip return?

In completing a trip return document the Tour Operator reports on;

- The number of adults and children participating in the tours (if you visit only one location you may report participants in bulk per quarter)
- The locations of the tours
- The activity
- The total use fee generated by that quarters tours

Why am I required to submit a trip return?

It is a condition of a Tour Operators licence that Trip Returns are provided quarterly or annually. It is required that Tour Operators keep a record of the number of persons participating in their tours on Parks Victoria land.

This data is collated by Parks Victoria for all Tour Operators and provides statistical information regarding the number of people visiting Victorian Parks each year.

I use sub-contractors to deliver some of my advertised activities, am I required to report on the activities delivered by the sub-contractor?

If a Licensed Tour Operator sub-contacts another Licensed Tour Operator to deliver advertised activities on their behalf, it is up to the sub-contractor to include these details on their Trip Returns. The Tour Operator physically conducting the tour is responsible to include these details in their trip returns.

Can I pay my use fee by direct debit or BPay?

Parks Victoria is able to accept Trip Return payment via cheque, BPay or credit card only. For credit card payment please call our accounts department and provide your details over the phone. The accounts department phone number, which is on the invoice, is 8427 2743.

Accreditation

What are the recognised accredited programs?

The recognised accreditation programs for 3 and 10 year licences are as follows:

Up to 3 year licence term

- Nature Tourism – EcoCertification IV
- Australian Tourism Accreditation Program
- Respecting Our Culture

Up to 10 year licence term

- Advanced Ecotourism – EcoCertification IV
- Ecotourism – EcoCertification IV
- EarthCheck Benchmarking and Certification

If you are a new applicant applying for a three or ten-year Tour Operator Licence you are required to submit, along with your application, documentation verifying that you are accredited through one of the above programs.

Do I need accreditation to apply for a one-year tour operator licence?

No, accreditation is only needed if you wish to apply for a multiple year licence.

What is the maximum duration licence I can apply for?

Ten years is the maximum duration that Parks Victoria can licence, but a suitable form of accreditation must accompany the application.

Tour Schedules

Where can Parks Victoria licence me for?

Parks Victoria licence operators for all Parks Victoria estate. We also administer tour operator licensing on behalf of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning managed estate including all Victorian state waters and inland waterways.

What information is needed on a tour schedule?

A tour schedule needs to provide the necessary information for the Area Chief Ranger to make a decision in whether the activities can be permitted in each park. In general, the more detail that is provided the faster the application can be processed.

The schedule should provide the following information:

Where – Which park or parks do you wish to be licensed for? In case of back country adventure activities an application should include a detailed map and information about tracks and trails. If the tour involves visiting multiple locations, please specify each site located within parks.

What activities do you plan to offer within the park? Outline what activities you wish to be licensed for. If the activity is not listed, it does not mean the activity is not permitted. Additionally, you must specify group size and how often you wish to operate the activity.

How do you plan to access the site and undertake the activity?

When do you propose to undertake the activity?

Example: I wish to conduct a daily Great Ocean Road day tour visiting key sites along the way. The sites I seek permission to enter are: Point Addis, Urquhart's Bluff and Maits Rest within the Great Otway National Park and Twelve Apostles visitor site, Loch Ards Gorge within the Port Campbell National Park. The tour will cater for up to 52 people using a coach.

What activity should I list on my application?

All the activities that you wish to be licensed for. Please note: only list the activities that your business is operating, where you wish to be licensed for activities that you subcontract out the subcontractor must be listed.

Once my Licence has been approved can I add on more locations?

Yes, Parks Victoria is able to add more locations and activities to a licence upon application. There is no cost in submitting a tour variation.

To add locations to your licence you are required to submit a Tour Operator Licence application and tick the box stating 'Tour Variation'. You will be required to complete the first two pages of the application stating your business details and then complete a 'Tour Schedule' for the locations you wish to have added to your licence. Once you have completed this submit to LTOLicensing@parks.vic.gov.au for approval.

Public Liability Insurance

What is a Certificate of Currency?

A Certificate of Currency is a document confirming a Public Liability Insurance policy is current and valid as of the date and time of the certificate. It usually specifies the amount or conditions being insured for.

Where can I go to ensure my insurer is registered with the Australian Government?

To ensure your insurer is registered with in the Australian Government visit the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) website. This lists all insurers registered and authorised by the Australian Government. Parks Victoria requires Tour Operators to be insured by an authorised Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) recognised insurer. It is recommended you visit the APRA website which provides a list of authorised insurers.

www.apra.gov.au/gi/pages/new-or-renewal.aspx

What insurance agency do you recommend for public liability insurance?

Parks Victoria is unable to recommend one insurer over another.

For assistance with finding an insurer that suits your requirements we recommend that you use an insurance broker. Alternately, the Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) www.vtic.com.au/ will be able to assist.

Can you process my application without a current Certificate of Currency?

Yes, an application can be accepted without a Certificate of Currency and the processing of that application can begin. However, an application will not be approved until a Certificate of Currency is provided meeting all of Parks Victoria's requirements.

What can I do to ensure that my Certificate of Currency meets Parks Victoria needs?

For a Certificate of Currency to meet Parks Victoria's needs the following must be adhered to:

- The insurer is an approved APRA Insurance provider
- Certificate of Currency provided is the full certificate not a tax invoice or adjustment notice
- The insured listed on the Certificate of Currency is the same as the Entity Name.
- Business activities are listed on the Certificate i.e. rock climbing, coach tours, kayaking
- Minimum coverage of \$20 million public and products liability
- Interested Parties is stated in full. The below statement must appear on the Certificate:

'The Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Planning, the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, the Director of National Parks, the Minister for Ports, Melbourne Water Corporation, the Yarra Bend Park Trust and any other body delegating its powers to Parks Victoria.'

HELPFUL LINKS

Eco Tourism (Accreditation)
www.ecotourism.org.au

Australian Tourism Accreditation Program
www.atapvic.net.au/

EarthCheck (Accreditation)
www.earthcheck.org/

Google Maps
www.maps.google.com.au

Municipal Association of Victoria
www.mav.asn.au/Pages/default.aspx

Outdoor Victoria
www.outdoorsvictoria.org.au

Parks Victoria (PV)
www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Phillip Island Nature Parks
www.penguins.org.au

Regional Development Victoria
www.rdv.vic.gov.au

Destination Melbourne
www.destinationmelbourne.com.au/

Tourism Victoria
www.tourism.vic.gov.au

Tourism Australia
www.tourism.australia.com

Victoria Online
www.vic.gov.au/

Victorian Multicultural Commission
www.multicultural.vic.gov.au

Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC)
www.vtic.com.au

Transport Safety Victoria
www.transportsafety.vic.gov.au/