

Mission Programs

Center for Sustainable Destinations

Geotourism (noun): *Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents.*

Tourism Based on Place: The Geotourism Strategy

Geotourism is a comprehensive approach to managing tourism. The goal is to take maximum advantage of a destination's distinctive assets while ensuring continued protection of those assets.

National Geographic encourages adoption of geotourism strategies around the world via its Center for Sustainable Destinations (CSD), a program under the Society's mission of promoting geographic knowledge.

The Society can provide basic information on how to adopt a geotourism strategy as a public service. In some cases, National Geographic will co-sign a Geotourism Charter at a public event with a major destination that presents a qualified program.

- A qualified **geotourism program** includes provisions for identifying, sustaining, developing, and marketing the distinctive natural, cultural, historic, and scenic assets of the place.
- It encourages **involvement** of both visitors and residents in the process.

Steps to implement the geotourism program can include:

- Establishing a public-private **Geotourism Stewardship Council**, whose members represent all aspects of the destination of potential tourist interest: scenery, culture, cuisine, nature and wildlife, outdoor recreation, folklore, artisanry, music, theatre, and history, as well as government and business.
- Launching the program with a **catalytic project** to bring stakeholders together, such as a Geotourism MapGuide, a participatory website, a festival, or any other informational vehicle. National Geographic can co-brand the project, if desired.
- **Planning** future geotourism steps, with provisions for **measuring results**.

Should a region or country want additional assistance, National Geographic can provide direct assistance or provide contacts with other organizations that can help.

—Jonathan B. Tourtellot, Director

Read about the 2008-2010 Geotourism Challenge at www.changemakers.net/competition/geotourism