

Mission Programs

Center for Sustainable Destinations

FACT SHEET GEOTOURISM PRINCIPLES

Geotourism is defined as “tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.” Given the tremendous scale of urban tourism worldwide, the National Geographic’s Center for Sustainable Destinations wanted to include urban centers in its geotourism approach.

By co-signing the Geotourism Charter with Montréal, the National Geographic Society endorses Montréal’s vision for applying the 13 principles of the Charter to a major city, a world first.

1. Integrity of a place

Enhance geographical character by developing and improving it in ways distinctive to the locale, reflective of its natural and cultural heritage, so as to encourage market differentiation and cultural pride.

2. International codes

Adhere to the principles embodied in the World Tourism Organization’s Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Principles of the Cultural Tourism Charter established by the International Council on Monument and Sites (ICOMOS).

3. Market selectivity

Encourage growth in tourism market segments most likely to appreciate, respect and disseminate information about the distinctive assets of the locale.

4. Market diversity

Encourage a full range of appropriate food and lodging facilities, so as to appeal to the entire demographic spectrum of the geotourism market and to maximize economic resiliency over both the short and long term.

5. Tourist enthusiasm

Ensure that satisfied, excited geotourists bring new vacation stories home and send friends off to experience the same thing, thus continuing demand for the destination.

6. Community involvement

Base tourism on community resources to the extent possible, encouraging local small businesses and civic groups to build partnerships to promote and provide a distinctive, honest visitor experience and market their locales effectively. Help businesses develop approaches to tourism that build on the area’s nature, history and culture, including food and drink, artisanry, performance arts, etc.

7. Community benefit

Encourage micro- to medium-size enterprises and tourism business strategies that emphasize economic and social benefits to involved communities, especially poverty alleviation, with clear communication of the destination stewardship policies required to maintain those benefits.

8. Protection and enhancement of destination appeal

Encourage destinations to sustain natural habitats, heritage sites, aesthetic appeal and local culture. Prevent degradation by keeping volume of tourists within maximum acceptable limits. Seek business models that can operate profitably within those limits. Use persuasion, incentives and legal enforcement as needed.

9. Land use

Anticipate development pressures and apply techniques to prevent undesired overdevelopment and degradation. Contain resort and vacation-home sprawl, especially on coasts and islands, so as to retain a diversity of natural and scenic environments and ensure continued resident access to waterfronts. Encourage major self-contained tourism attractions, such as large-scale theme parks and convention centers unrelated to character of place, to be sited in needier locations with no significant ecological, scenic or cultural assets.

10. Conservation of resources

Encourage businesses to minimize water pollution, solid waste, energy consumption, water usage, landscaping chemicals and overly bright nighttime lighting. Address these measures in a way that attracts the large, environmentally sympathetic tourist market.

11. Planning

Recognize and respect immediate economic need without sacrificing long-term character and the geotourism potential of the destination. Where tourism attracts in-migration of workers, develop new communities that themselves constitute a destination enhancement. Strive to diversify the economy and limit population influx to sustainable levels. Adopt public strategies mitigating practices that are incompatible with geotourism and damaging to the image of the destination.

12. Interactive interpretation

Engage both visitors and hosts in learning about the place. Encourage residents to show off the natural and cultural heritage of their communities, so that tourists gain a richer experience and residents develop pride in their locales.

13. Evaluation

Establish an evaluation process to be conducted on a regular basis by an independent panel representing all stakeholder interests, and publicize evaluation results.

ABOUT THE MONTREAL GEOTOURISM PARTNERSHIP

The Montreal Geotourism Partnership responsible for the city's signature to the Geotourism Charter includes three organizations that compose its executive board: Héritage Montréal, Tourisme Montréal and The World Centre of Excellence for Destinations (CED).

Héritage Montréal is an independent foundation established in 1975 to encourage the protection, appreciation and appropriate use of the historical, architectural, natural and cultural heritage of Montréal's communities. It achieves its goals through education, expertise and the promotion of sound practices and principles in heritage conservation, urban development and community participation.

Tourisme Montréal is a private, non-profit organization, founded in 1919 and incorporated in 1924, comprising 700 members of the tourism industry and partners that share a common objective of promoting Montréal as an incomparable travel destination.

The World Centre of Excellence for Destinations contributes to bringing destinations worldwide toward excellence. The CED concretely extends the action of the Destination Council and departments of the United Nations World Tourism Organization by bringing added value and expertise to innovative policies and practices on tourist destination management.

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