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NEW MAPGUIDE OFFERS INSIDER'S LOOK AT GREATER YELLOWSTONE REGION

WASHINGTON (March 27, 2009)—The wonders of Yellowstone National Park and neighboring Grand Teton are only the starting point of National Geographic's newest Geotourism MapGuide. The map moves well beyond the parks' borders to highlight the region's unsung treasures, celebrating the world-class natural and cultural heritage of the entire area.

Much more than a road map, the new Geotourism MapGuide to the Greater Yellowstone Region and its companion Web site, www.yellowstonegeotourism.org, share locals' knowledge on everything from where to find the best huckleberry milkshake and great community events to where to watch rescued grizzlies and wolves in their daily activities. Nearly 1,000 map point nominations were received from the region's residents, making the MapGuide a unique resource for the millions of annual visitors as well as locals seeking unspoiled outdoor places and authentic cultural experiences. The MapGuide will be unveiled in three events around the region: on March 27 in Cody, Wyo.; March 30 in Boise, Idaho; and March 31 in Helena, Mont.

The large-format, two-sided map straddles the states of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming and includes 20 million acres of rugged mountains, picturesque river valleys, high desert plains and distinctive small towns and historic districts. The lands and waters in this region of Greater Yellowstone are a refuge for hundreds of wildlife species, including rare trumpeter swans, bighorn sheep, herds of elk, roaming bison, wolves, grizzly bears and native fish.

"The MapGuide showcases what makes the Greater Yellowstone Region distinct from any other place on Earth, and underscores the importance of conserving its tremendous scenic and historical assets for future generations," said James Dion, associate director of National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations.

The MapGuide is a collaboration of National Geographic Maps, the Center for Sustainable Destinations, Wyoming Travel & Tourism, Idaho Division of Tourism Development, Travel Montana and its region and community tourism partners, Greater Yellowstone Coalition and Yellowstone Business Partnership, as well as numerous organizations and individuals serving as the Greater Yellowstone Geotourism Council. The MapGuide also received funding from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service.

The map's themes highlight the historical and contemporary activities of the region's Native Peoples, the magnificent wildlife, local living in the vibrant small towns, the forces of nature creating the area's monumental landscape, the contemporary challenges facing the region and traveler tips.

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Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer said the MapGuide “spreads the spotlight beyond the world’s first national park — Yellowstone — to the communities, the talented people, their products and lifestyles that create the distinctive character of this place and helps direct visitors to the authentic experiences they are looking for.”

Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal said the MapGuide captures the essence of the region. “The map embodies the wildness and vastness that is getting harder to find in the rapidly growing Rocky Mountain West. In Wyoming we’re committed to working with our local communities and visitors to conserve what makes this region like no other and to be in front of population growth.”

Idaho Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter said, “Idaho has some of the largest unspoiled natural areas in the United States, but our state’s population also is growing. The new MapGuide is a great tool for recognizing and helping to protect our incredible beauty and way of life.”

Praising the strong local participation, Brian Sybert, Wyoming director for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and coordinator of the community-based mapping process, noted the thoughtful, high-quality and often colorful nominations for the map. About 175 map points made the final product — from Wyoming’s Legend Rock Petroglyph Site, where one can see ancient carvings, to Idaho’s geothermally warm Portneuf River, where one can cruise downstream in an innertube or dip in a hot pool — with National Geographic making the difficult decision on what to include.

“A good percentage of the people identified as geotourists live in the Pacific Northwest, one of the primary visitor markets for Montana,” explained Betsy Baumgart, administrator of the Montana Department of Commerce’s Office of Tourism. “The Greater Yellowstone MapGuide and its Web site provide our visitors from the region and beyond a new way to connect with local products and foods, cultural activities and all the things that interest and motivate geotourists.”

Jan Brown, executive director of the Yellowstone Business Partnership, who coordinated the community-based mapping process in Idaho, praised the work of Kyle Babbitt, who cultivated the strong local participation and representation of the state’s features on the map. The effort also has sparked an initiative in Teton Valley to establish a Greater Yellowstone Geotourism Center in Driggs, Idaho, which will serve as a mecca for geotourists.

MapGuides can be ordered free on the Greater Yellowstone Region Geotourism Web site, www.yellowstonegeotourism.org, which also offers extensive information on this three-state region.

National Geographic defines geotourism as “tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.” A major 2002 Geotourism study by National Geographic Traveler magazine and the Travel Industry Association of America found that at least 55 million American adults can be classified as “geotourists” — a strong incentive for scenic regions to protect assets for future visitors.

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The National Geographic Society is one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Founded in 1888 to "increase and diffuse geographic knowledge," the Society works to inspire people to care about the planet. It reaches more than 325 million people worldwide each month through its official journal, National Geographic, and other magazines; National Geographic Channel; television documentaries; music; radio; films; books; DVDs; maps; exhibitions; school publishing programs; interactive media; and merchandise. National Geographic has funded more than 9,000 scientific research, conservation and exploration projects and supports an education program combating geographic illiteracy. For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.com.

Greater Yellowstone Region Geotourism MapGuide events:

- **Friday, March 27 Cody, Wyo., at 10 a.m., at the John Bunker Sands Photo Gallery at the Draper Museum of Natural History, Buffalo Bill Historical Center.**
- **Monday, March 30, Boise, Idaho, at 2 p.m., at the Boise Airport, 3201 Airport Way.**
- **Tuesday, March 31, Helena, Mont., at 1:30 p.m., during the final luncheon of the 2009 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel, 2301 Colonial Ave.**

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