



Geotourism MapGuide



A program of the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations and National Geographic Maps

Geo•tour•ism (n): *tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.*

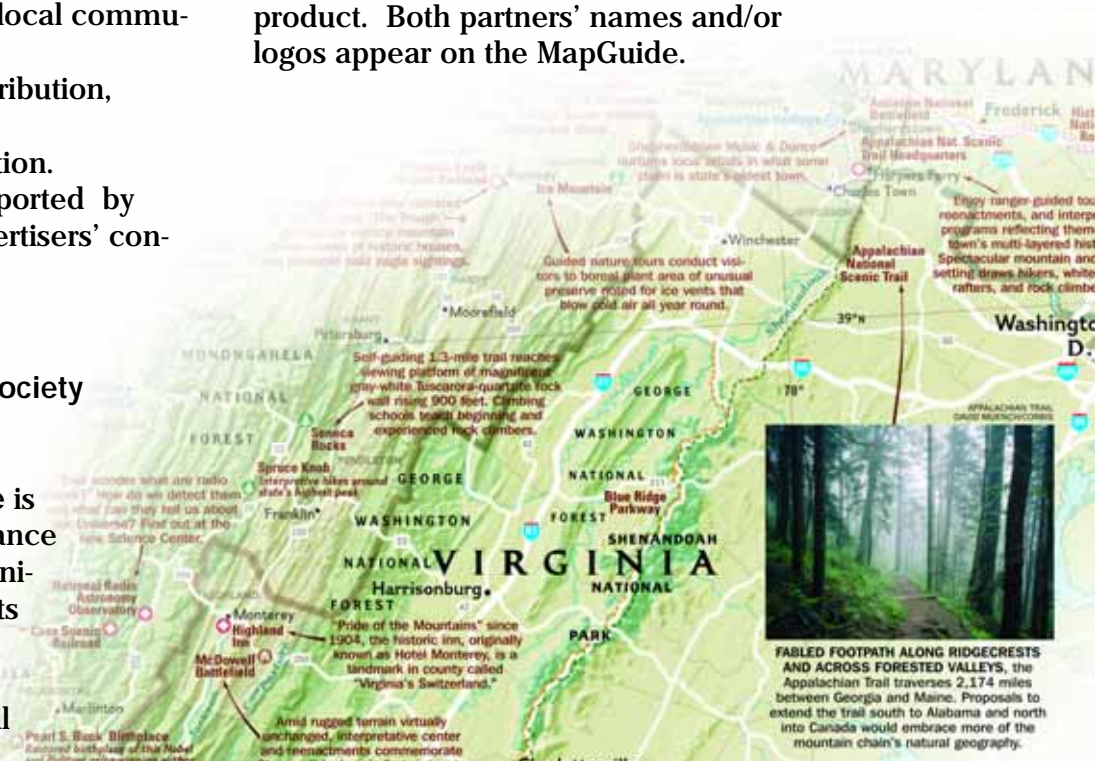
What is a Geotourism MapGuide?

- It is a two-sided map-brochure of superior quality, conveying geotourism information in both map and accompanying text blocks.
- It is co-branded with the destination and requires contributions from local communities.
- It is intended for wide distribution, preferably free.
- It is funded by the destination.
- If necessary, it can be supported by advertising, but without advertisers' control of editorial content.

content in consultation with NGS, solicits advertising if needed, handles distribution and possibly production. The local alliance must take the initiative and so rightfully earn pride in knowing that this is their product. Both partners' names and/or logos appear on the MapGuide.

Partners:

The National Geographic Society (NGS) creates the map and provides editorial guidelines. A local geotourism alliance is the initiating partner. An alliance of local individuals and organizations representing all facets of geotourism—history, nature, culture, cuisine, arts, etc.—contributes local



FABLED FOOTPATH ALONG RIDGECRESTS AND ACROSS FORESTED VALLEYS, the Appalachian Trail traverses 2,174 miles between Georgia and Maine. Proposals to extend the trail south to Alabama and north into Canada would embrace more of the mountain chain's natural geography.

Purpose

MapGuide content should meet these goals:

- Promote the types of tourism that best sustain the natural and cultural attributes of a place, especially by benefiting the local communities.
- Better inform local residents about the character of their locales, including cultural, historic, and environmental assets and how protecting and enhancing them can provide tourism benefits.
- Similarly inform tourists, including the supportive roles they can play while visiting.
- Provide this information at National Geographic standards of editorial quality and credibility. A Geotourism MapGuide is not promotional advertising.
- Provide this information for free, in an attractive way, superior in editorial quality to the customary advertising-driven or directory-style brochures often available in tourist destinations. Provision for selling MapGuides can also be arranged, provided sales support geotourism goals.



Standard Content

Each MapGuide has a number of consistent features:

- Map notes, 5 to 30 words each, will be the hallmark feature, jointly produced by NGS and the local alliance.
- A “destination dynamics” text block, 100-250 words, describing the distinctive characteristics of the locale, including opportunities, threats, and the role of tourism, such as the impact of visitor spending.
- Other text blocks can address such matters as “Nature,” “History,” “Aesthetics,” or “Traditions” as appropriate, each providing an overview. Text jointly produced by NGS and local contributors. Topics will be chosen and written by the local alliance members or affiliates, with editorial review by NGS.
- Guide to information sources, including websites, other brochures, local publications, radio/TV, visitor centers, events, books and novels about the area, etc.
- Tips for visitor spending and behavior that supports the character of the place, such as patronizing locally-owned shops and local artisans. Additional tips on what not to do in terms of etiquette and responsible travel.
- Supporting advertisements only if needed and clearly separate from editorial content. Advertisers are not promised identification on the map itself.

Custom Content

MapGuide content is the responsibility of the local geotourism alliance. The content chosen should reflect and support the character of the place, while de-emphasizing destructive or unsustainable types of tourism. The content should guide visitor spending accordingly.

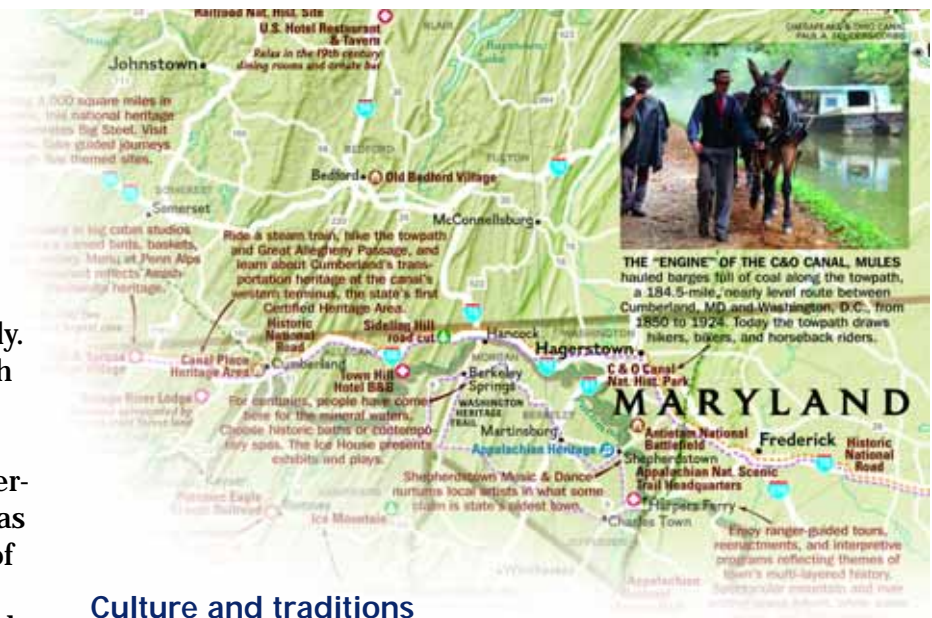
The alliance's task is to work with communities to identify those attributes most distinctive of, or unique to, the locale. It is a good idea to tap many different community sectors in this exercise, as it can raise awareness about the value of the area's unique assets. Civic organizations and local publications may be good sources to tap for suggestions. Center for Sustainable Destinations staff will answer queries and requests for advice from alliance members.

Everything is a candidate; often what seems normal and mundane to residents—a small family-owned restaurant that's been serving the local specialty for generations, an annual festival honoring cultural heritage—is fascinating to visitors from afar. For that reason, it's good, too, to talk to visitors and potential visitors.

Nominations for inclusion on the map might include a public park, museum, a historic site, as well as a private enterprise such as a craft coop, a music café or lodge with unique local attributes. Schools, civic groups, newspaper editors, librarians, naturalists, historians, community elders, can all suggest nominations.

In any locale, people and organizations may disagree on sites or descriptions for the map. National Geographic will therefore make the final determination on wording and selection.

A test for inclusion on the MapGuide is to ask, "Is this spot, attraction, business, or activity somehow distinctively ours? Could I find this same site in another region?" Here are some sample sites, topics, and aspects to consider:



Culture and traditions

- Food and drink, including local agricultural products and methods
- Performing arts: music, dance, theater, including street performances
- Arts and crafts, including non-franchise local shops
- Festivals, including distinctive ways of celebrating national holidays

Nature and environment

- Distinctive wildlife habitat, on land or in the water; great birding sites
- Notable trees and flowers
- Links between local nature and local culture – history, cuisine, events

Heritage sites

- Historic sites that provide some type of interpretation or experience
- Archaeological sites with interpretation, especially those with community involvement

Aesthetics

- Areas that have nice scenery, appropriate lighting, freedom from billboards.
- Areas that are most pleasing to be in
- Businesses there that deserve support

Visitor experiences

Tours or sites that combine any of the above, including short, marked itineraries or driving trail/routes that take in a variety of businesses and attractions

