

Montreal is first city to sign National Geographic Geotourism Charter

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Program Promotes Destination Stewardship

The National Geographic Society today recognizes Montreal's continued commitment to destination stewardship by joining with preservation, tourism and government officials in signing a Geotourism Charter for the city. Greater Montreal is the first urban center, and the seventh global destination, to sign the charter, joining Guatemala, Honduras, Norway, Romania and U.S. states of Arizona and Rhode Island.

"In signing the Geotourism Charter, Montreal can provide more appealing experiences for visitors and increased support for Montreal's significant heritage sites, urban cultural centers and green space conservation," said John Francis, National Geographic's vice president for research, conservation and exploration. "It also results in a positive economic and social impact for local residents living and working in this metropolitan city."

Geotourism Charters are a key program element of the National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations (CSD), which aims to protect the world's distinctive places through wisely managed tourism and enlightened destination stewardship. 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 CSD wanted to bring urban centers into its geotourism approach.

The CSD cited three reasons for awarding the Geotourism Charter to Greater Montreal: a history of destination stewardship, a commitment to future geotourism activities, and leadership in the global preservation and tourism industries.

The metropolitan city's long track record of collaboration among citizens, preservation and conservation associations, public authorities and the tourism industry has resulted in appropriate care for its unique historic, cultural and natural assets.

Secondly, in its application for the Geotourism Charter, Greater Montreal is committed to creating new sustainable tourism programs. Specifically, the proposed adoption and implementation of a work plan tied to the Geotourism Principles, including production of a geotourism map and an interpretive audio-guide for Greater Montreal, will help further the ideals of sustainable tourism.

CSD also applauded the involvement and leadership of Tourisme Montreal and Heritage Montreal on the world stage. "The active participation of Tourisme Montreal in the United Nations World Tourism Organization and Heritage Montreal's contributions to the International Council of Monuments and Sites was an important factor in our decision," said Francis. The Montreal-based World Centre of Excellence for Destinations, of which National Geographic is a founding member, is also the result of a Tourisme Montreal initiative.

"The preservation of Old Montreal, Mont-Royal and the Lachine Canal, and its good tourism and cultural relations, will serve as examples for other destinations," Francis added. "Montreal is also a geotourism model with its many green spaces and urban parks, demonstrating the importance placed by the city on preserving the environment."

Montreal's Geotourism Charter was signed at an event attended by the Honorable Charles Lapointe, president and CEO of Tourisme Montreal, Robert Turgeon, president of Heritage Montreal, Andre Vallerand, president, World Centre of Excellence for Destinations, and chairman, Destination Council, United Nations World Tourism Organization, Gerald Tremblay, mayor of Montreal, and National Geographic's John Francis.

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. For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/.

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