

About Geotourism

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.

Geotourism incorporates the concept of sustainable tourism—that destinations should remain unspoiled for future generations—while allowing for enhancement that protects the character of the locale. Geotourism also adopts a principle from its cousin, ecotourism—that tourism revenue can promote conservation—and extends that principle beyond nature travel to encompass culture and history as well: all distinctive assets of a place.

The Geotourism Charter: Governments and allied organizations can sign this statement of principles as a first step in adopting a geotourism strategy. After thus committing to a geotourism strategy, signatories should then work with local communities to determine their geotourism goals.

What is Sustainable Tourism?

Sustainable tourism, like a doctor's code of ethics, means "First, do no harm." It is basic to good destination stewardship.

Sustainable tourism does not abuse its product—the destination. It seeks to avoid the "loved to death" syndrome. Businesses and other stakeholders anticipate development pressures and apply limits and management techniques that sustain natural habitats, heritage sites, scenic appeal, and local culture.

It conserves resources. Environmentally aware travelers favor businesses that minimize pollution, waste, energy consumption, water usage, landscaping chemicals, and excessive nighttime lighting.

It respects local culture and tradition. Foreign visitors learn about and observe local etiquette, including using at least a few courtesy words in the local language. Residents learn how to deal with foreign expectations that may differ from their own.

It aims for quality, not quantity. Communities measure tourism success not by sheer numbers of visitors, but by length of stay, distribution of money spent, and quality of experience.

What is Geotourism?

Geotourism adds to sustainability principles by building on geographical character—"sense of place"—to create a type of tourism that emphasizes the distinctiveness of its locale, and that benefits visitor and resident alike.

Geotourism is synergistic. All the elements of geographical character together create a tourist experience that is richer than the sum of its parts, appealing to visitors with diverse interests.

It involves the community. Local businesses and civic groups work together to promote and provide a distinctive, authentic visitor experience.

It informs both visitors and hosts. Residents discover their own heritage and how the ordinary and familiar may be of interest to outsiders. As local people develop pride and skill in showing off their locale, tourists get more out of their visit.

It benefits residents economically. Travel businesses do their best to use the local workforce, services, and products and supplies. When the community understands the beneficial role of geotourism, it becomes an incentive for wise destination stewardship.

It supports integrity of place. Destination-savvy travelers seek out businesses that emphasize the character of the locale. Tourism revenues in turn raise local perceived value of those assets.

It means great trips. Enthusiastic visitors bring new knowledge home, telling stories that send friends and relatives off to experience the same thing—a continuing business for the destination.