



## Mission Programs

Center for Sustainable Destinations

### Geotourism Principles

Defined as “*tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents,*” Geotourism is founded on a set of principles that foster enhancement of sustainable destinations. These principles are:

**Principle 1: Foster Integrity of Place.** Sustain and enhance geographical character.

**Principle 2: Adhere to International Codes.**

Follow the World Tourism Organization’s Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Principles of the Cultural Tourism Charter established by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS.)

**Principle 3. Market Selectively.**

Plan not for “tourism,” but for *which* tourists. Seek tourist segments with best cost/benefit ratio. Measure success by benefit, NOT headcount!

**Principle 4. Foster Product Diversity.**

Encourage a full range of cuisine, lodging and retail facilities to appeal to the entire spectrum of the geotourism market. Offer affordable housing and commercial

**Principle 5: Ensure Tourist Satisfaction.**

Identify quality experiences that tourists want to share with others, thus providing continuing demand for the destination.

**Principle 6: Involve Community.**

Base tourism on community resources, encouraging local businesses and civic groups to promote and provide distinctive, honest visitor experiences.

**Principle 7: Determine Community Benefit.**

Ensure specific economic and social benefits from tourism that help local residents, resources, and businesses.

**Principle 8: Protect and Enhance Destination Appeal.**

Encourage businesses to balance usage with protection of resources. Manage tourism by understanding and limiting capacity.

**Principle 9: Use Land Wisely.**

Apply pro-active techniques to prevent overdevelopment and degradation. Locate manufactured attractions in areas with minimal ecological, scenic, historic, or cultural assets.

**Principle 10: Conserve Resources.**

Encourage and promote environmentally friendly business practices.

**Principle 11: Plan.**

Recognize and respect immediate economic needs without sacrificing long-term character and geotourism potential of the destination.

**Principle 12. Encourage Interactive Interpretation.**

Engage both visitors and hosts in the learning process.

**Principle 13: Evaluate Efforts.**

Measure development and marketing practices, along with the stewardship and conservation efforts to understand the full value of sustainable destinations. Each place must determine the appropriate community benefit and desired return on investment from tourism.

Often a local entity represented by various organizations and interests – such as a newly formed Geotourism Stewardship Council – will use these principles in creating and administering a comprehensive geotourism approach. These practices traditionally include activities to identify, sustain, develop and market the geotourism assets of a place.

*For more information, contact the Center for Sustainable Destinations at (202) 828-8044 or [sustourism@ngs.org](mailto:sustourism@ngs.org)*