



National Geographic Sierra MapGuide Project Showcases Local, Authentic Attractions Throughout the Sierra Nevada

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Travelers and visitors to the Sierra Nevada who are looking for local knowledge to enhance their visit can now enjoy over 1,200 suggestions from residents and Sierra insiders for everything from iconic Sierra experiences, to funky cafes and off-the-beaten-path adventures... and it all starts with the click of a mouse.

The Sierra "MapGuide" Web-based project, sponsored by National Geographic, the Sierra Business Council (SBC), and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), is now live and packed with attractions from the Oregon border to south of Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks. Visitors can use the free interactive online service, which features write-ups and photos posted by local residents, as their vacation or traveler's guide through the 400 miles of breathtaking landscapes and historic towns of the Sierra.

More than 150 new points of interest were recently added to the MapGuide from Sierra, Yuba, Butte, Tehama, Shasta, Plumas, Lassen and Modoc counties.

The Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide highlights unique, authentic experiences recommended by local Sierra residents. It brings together the Sierra's little-known as well as famous sites, volunteer opportunities, small businesses, hiking trails and more. Highlights range from the Shasta Land Trust, an organization conserving natural areas and getting people "out on the land" in the Northern Sierra, to the Sentinel Dome in Yosemite National Park. The MapGuide not only helps travelers explore the Sierra, it links those experiences to the opportunity to have a deeper connection to the land and culture.

From August 2009 through September 2011, locals from all the counties representing the Sierra Nevada nominated unique and interesting stewardship opportunities, hiking trails, art, businesses, cultural sites and more on www.SierraNevadaGeotourism.org. The result is an interactive MapGuide highlighting the little known gems of the Sierra Nevada.

Examples of local attractions include:

- The [Honey Lake Wildlife area](#). A large, shallow lake which is a valuable wetland area supporting many migratory birds, including the beautiful arctic Tundra Swan. After bird watching, head over to the Indian Peaks Vinyard and Tasting Room in Graeagle, to sample some local Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc.
- [Nicholson Blown Glass Annual Holiday Open Studio](#). View first-hand the amazing art of glass-blowing by one of the best! A truly unique Sierra Nevada holiday experience.



"The Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide is a way to highlight more of the world-class Sierra Nevada - beyond its wonderful icons like Yosemite and Lake Tahoe, but also the lesser known scenic places and the small mom-and-pop businesses," said SBC Senior Program Director Nicole DeJonghe. "It is a way to direct visitors to local attractions that keep tourism dollars within the community. We've worked very hard to populate the map by inviting nominations from all across the region."

"People are always looking for historical perspective and fun things to do in the Sierra," said SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham. "Now they can plan their next visit here with the help of National Geographic and hundreds of local residents who have offered up some inside tips."

"National Geographic defines 'geotourism' as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place, including its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents," said National Geographic project manager Jim Dion. "Geotourism helps travelers to tread lightly and enjoy a locale's sense of place."

Dion noted that the online Sierra Nevada map is "living and breathing, constantly being updated." Site visitors can add comments, read what others have posted and connect to Facebook or Twitter accounts to share what they've found. Also, it's never too late to add unique attractions to the MapGuide; nominations are continually reviewed for possible inclusion.

National Geographic, Sierra Business Council, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and a geotourism council made up of Sierra locals will continue to steward the project into the future. Additional components of the Sierra MapGuide project will be revealed next year with the completion of a printed MapGuide and introduction of smart phone apps which can update information as travelers explore the Sierra.

[Click here for frequently asked questions.](#)

Objectives

The Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project seeks to promote tourism for the 21st century, tourism that can conserve the region's historic towns and heritage sites, restore and protect the landscape, and sustain local businesses and communities. The map achieves this objective because it is created by tapping into the knowledge of local people who live and prosper in Sierra communities. Because their well-being and quality of life depends greatly on tourism, this tool empowers communities to share information about a place that residents and visitors can care for.

Attractions, businesses, and events distinctive to the Sierra Nevada will be recognized, providing travelers with a richer and more complete experience spread throughout the Sierra Nevada. This project seeks to celebrate the Sierra Nevada as a world-class destination, while contributing to the economic health of the region by promoting sustainable tourism.

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