



EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE JUNE 2, 2010

Tahoe, Truckee, Donner Summit, Reno, and Foothills Area Residents Can Now Nominate Unique Places for Visitors to View on National Geographic Web Site

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WHAT: Nomination kick off and insider's view on submitting successful nominations followed by networking reception (press and public invited)

WHERE: Granlibakken Conference Center & Lodge, Tahoe City, CA

WHEN: Wednesday, June 2, 2010, 3:30pm

Beginning today, residents of the Donner area of the Sierra Nevada can nominate their favorite destinations, restaurants, scenic views, lakes, hiking trails, and other special places of interest to be included in National Geographic Society's interactive map guide "geotourism" Web site.

The National Geographic Society has partnered with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the Sierra Business Council, and local Sierra residents to capture the history and heritage of the Sierra Nevada Region in order to create the Web site and WebMap featuring unique destinations. Geotourism is defined as places that sustain or enhance the region's environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents. Keep in mind that Geotourism helps travelers to tread lightly and enjoy a locale's sense of place.

The initial nomination period for the Tahoe Emigrant Corridor (counties of Placer, Nevada, El Dorado, Washoe, Douglas, and Carson City) opens today, June 2, through August 2010. Local residents can log on to www.SierraNevadaGeotourism.org to place a nomination of a destination to be included in the WebMap.

The project reached its first milestone for phase one of the project in April 2010, delivering an exciting array of nominations from the Yosemite Gateway area. The upcoming phase of the project is the Tahoe Emigrant Corridor area of the Sierra, which is open for nominations beginning June 2.

The Sierra Nevada Geotourism 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. History buffs and adventurers, backpackers and foodies, birders and sightseers can discover unique destinations based on recommendations from those who know best — residents of the Sierra Nevada.

Sierra residents and visitors, community organizations, tourism stakeholders and local businesses will nominate sites for potential inclusion in a print MapGuide and interactive Web site. Unlike any other mapping project, a favorite local restaurant, farm, winery, hiking or biking trail, swimming hole, museum or artist gallery are samples of the type of nominations National Geographic and its project partners will be seeking. The Web site will target a variety of growing travel niches — adventure and nature tourism, cultural

heritage travel and agritourism – and allow for residents to select the one-of-a-kind places integral to a distinctive character of place.

“The Tahoe Emigrant Corridor is such a magnificent part of the region. It is home to historic overland passages, from wagon trains to the Pony Express, and still today acts as the only transportation thoroughfare open in all four seasons,” said Sierra Business Council President Steven Frisch. “There is an entrepreneurial spirit embodied in the people who’ve settled here; you’re sure to find unique retail shops, restaurants and local farms working together, and local economies innovating to remain vibrant and strong.”

"Geotourism is smart, fun, beneficial to the local economy and provides the visitor an opportunity to explore special places recommended by the people who live there," said Sierra Nevada Conservancy Executive Officer Jim Branham. "Any visit to the Sierra is special, but through geotourism visitors gain a more in-depth understanding of their local destination, its residents and its heritage."

“An inherent benefit of geotourism is connecting diverse interests under a common goal,” said Jim Dion, Associate Director of National Geographic Society’s Center for Sustainable Destinations. “The design of the MapGuide process, specifically in forming a regional stewardship council, encourages and builds mutually beneficial partnerships.”

A Geocouncil will oversee the Sierra Nevada Geotourism Project. Working with the National Geographic Society, the Geocouncil will:

1. Encourage community participation in the collection of nominations for the geotourism Web site and MapGuide during the three-month nomination period.
2. Review the nominations and identify themes for the project; work with National Geographic on the writing, editing, fact-checking and design of the Web site and print MapGuide.
3. Develop a marketing plan for the site; oversee the MapGuide’s distribution and contribute fresh material to the Web site; and encourage long-term stewardship of the Sierra’s natural, historic and cultural assets.

The Sierra Nevada Geotourism project is being advanced with the support of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Morgan Family Foundation, National Park Service, the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

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