



Geotourism Charter

Agreement of Intent

Whereas, the geotourism approach is all-inclusive, focusing not only on the environment, but also on the diversity of the cultural, historic, and scenic assets of Rhode Island;

Whereas, the geotourism approach encourages Rhode Island citizens and visitors to get involved rather than remain tourism spectators; and

Whereas, the geotourism approach helps build a sense of national identity and pride, stressing what is authentic and unique to Rhode Island;

The undersigned parties of this Agreement of Intent commit to support the following geotourism principles, in an effort to sustain and enhance the geographical character of Rhode Island - its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well being of its residents:

Integrity of place: Enhance Rhode Island's geographical character by developing and improving it in ways distinctive to the locale, reflective of its natural and cultural heritage, so as to encourage market differentiation and cultural pride;

International codes: Adhere to the principles embodied in the World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the Principles of the Cultural Tourism Charter established by the International Council on Monuments and Sites;

Market selectivity: Encourage growth in Rhode Island tourism market segments most likely to appreciate, respect, and disseminate information about the distinctive assets of the locale;

Market diversity: Encourage a full range of appropriate food and lodging facilities in Rhode Island, so as to appeal to the entire demographic spectrum of the geotourism market and so maximize economic resiliency over both the short and long term;

Tourist satisfaction: Ensure that satisfied, excited geotourists bring home new vacation stories and send others off to have the same experiences in Rhode Island, thus providing continuing demand for the destination;

Community involvement: Base Rhode Island tourism on community resources to the greatest extent possible. Encourage local small businesses and civic groups to build partnerships to effectively promote and provide a distinctive, honest visitor experience. Help businesses develop approaches to tourism that build on the area's nature, history and culture, including food and drink, artistry, performing arts, etc;

Community benefit: Encourage micro to medium-size enterprises and tourism business strategies that emphasize economic and social benefits to Rhode Island communities. Articulate clearly the destination stewardship policies required to maintain those benefits;

Protection and enhancement of destination appeal: Encourage Rhode Island businesses to sustain natural habitats, heritage sites, aesthetic appeal, and local culture. Prevent degradation by keeping volumes of tourists with maximum acceptable limits. Seek business models that can operate profitably within those limits. Use persuasion, incentives, and legal enforcement as needed;

Land use: Anticipate development pressures and apply techniques to help prevent undesired overdevelopment and degradation. Promote approaches to new resort and vacation home development, especially on coasts and islands, which retain natural and scenic environments and allow local residents continued access to the sea. Encourage major manufactured tourism attractions, unrelated to character of place, to be sited in locations without notably significant ecological, scenic, or cultural assets;

Conservation of resources: Encourage Rhode Island businesses to minimize water pollution, solid waste, energy consumption, water usage, landscaping chemicals, and overly bright nighttime lighting. Advertise these measures in a way that attracts the large environmentally sympathetic tourist market;

Planning: Recognize and respect immediate economic needs without sacrificing long-term character and the geotourism potential of the destination. Promote public strategies for mitigating practices that are compatible with geotourism;

Interactive interpretation: Encourage learning opportunities of Rhode Island's unique sense of place for visitors and for their hosts. Engage residents in promoting the natural and cultural heritage of their communities, so that tourists gain a richer experience and residents develop pride in their locales.

Evaluation: Continue the ongoing process of evaluating destination stewardship and development as they relate to the definition of geotourism.

In recognition whereof, we have hereby set our hands on the 16th day of May, 2007

For and in the name of:

The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Donald L. Carcieri, Governor

For and in the name of:

The National Geographic Society

Jonathan B. Tourtellot, Director, Center for Sustainable Destinations

For and in the name of:

The Rhode Island Geotourism Collaborative

Jonathan Stevens, Executive Director, Preserve Rhode Island