Application for Geotourism Charter

Thank you for the interest in geotourism as a long-term strategy to foster wisely managed tourism and enlightened destination stewardship. National Geographic’s Center for Sustainable Destinations applauds your desire to help protect the world’s distinctive places.

The Geotourism Charter is available to any destination that demonstrates a proven track record or credible commitment to pursue development in keeping with the Geotourism Principles (see Appendix I), and defines specific, credible programs to continue destination stewardship and wisely managed tourism. Signing a Geotourism Charter does not require collaboration or partnership with National Geographic Society, unless Society services and recognition are desired.

To assist in determining eligibility for a Geotourism Charter, the Center for Sustainable Destinations (CSD) developed this questionnaire. The exercise is useful for any destination seeking to map out an economically beneficial tourism program focused on sustaining and enhancing unique endemic assets.

I. Define the geographic boundary of the area represented in this Charter application:

The geographic boundary of the Douro Valley Tourism area is defined by the Douro Valley Tourism Plan, which integrates 24 municipalities. The highlights of the many tourist attractions in the region are those classified by UNESCO as World Heritage sites, namely, the “Alto Douro Wine Region” (classified in 2001 by UNESCO as a “living and evolving cultural landscape”), where one of the most significant wines in human history – Port Wine - was born) and “the rock paintings at Foz Côa Valley” (recognized by UNESCO in 1998).

In the Douro Valley basin there are also more 2 sites classified as World Heritage by UNESCO: the historical old section of the city of Porto, delineated by the medieval market town (in 1996) and the historical section of Guimarães city. This 4 places (Alto Douro Wine Region, Côa Valley, Guimarães and Porto) classified as World Heritage by UNESCO are now developing a project called “the World Heritage Route of the Douro Valley Basin”.

II. Please tell why you want to sign the Geotourism Charter, and one desired outcome from the signing process.
Signing the Charter will help to mobilize public action in the Destination of Douro in order to reinforce the promotion of a sustainable tourism in the region and to contribute to the internationalization of the Destination in the international markets, namely through the possibility to create a Geotourism Sustainability Council / World Heritage Alliance and the opportunity to develop in the future a Geotourism Website and MapGuide project (the Geotourism MapGuide could contribute to the internationalization of the destination – for example, through the National Geographic channels, such as, National Geographic Magazine).

The outcomes of the recently completed SMED identified governance and marketing as two of the Douro Valley’s biggest challenges to sustainable tourism growth. The Geotourism Charter and the affiliated process will be catalytic activities that will engage local stakeholders in a manner to rectify these issues.

III. Describe specific ways the destination has demonstrated or plans to pursue the guiding principles outlined in the Geotourism Charter. A complete description of each principle is appended for reference.

1. Maintain integrity of place.

The process involved with developing a Geotourism MapGuide helps to foster local knowledge, excitement, and support for the distinctive characteristics and tourism attractions of the Douro Valley. All participating actors will come to know the value of the region’s cultural and natural resources and work to develop those which will help grow the Douro Valley into a premier European destination. In order to maintain the integrity of the place several projects were developed in the Destination and others are now being developed, namely, in the following areas:

- Projects of qualification of the Wine historic villages (recovering and qualifying Wine Villages in Douro);
- Projects of valorization of the Historic centres of the cities and villages of Douro
- Actions of maintenance and valorization of the Landscape
- Projects to improve the conditions of fluvial navigation in Douro River (including the qualification of harbours)

2. Adhere to International Codes.

Signing the charter will lead to greater stakeholder awareness and engagement among all of northern Portugal’s World Heritage sites, allowing for a forum for increased learning on proper site management and protection.

Discerning and informed visitors will help attract appropriate and sustainable business development to the region and ensure the maximization of sustainable tourism growth for generations to come. Douro Tourism (DMO of the Destination) is now designing and developing a tourism marketing strategy.

4. Foster Product Diversity.

Douro Valley boasts an attractive cultural history that spans thousands of years. The Geotourism Charter will provide a catalyst for dialogue and rediscovery of the many assets in the Douro Valley that can be marketed and enhanced to provide a comprehensive and unique experience to travelers.

5. Ensure Tourist Satisfaction.

The Douro Valley will provide a quality experience to travelers that showcase the region’s superior hospitality and pride in the cultural and natural resources. Cooperation among tourism businesses will yield new and continuing efforts to support the tourist experience from arrival to departure. CCDR-N is presently developing a study to evaluate the level of satisfaction of the tourists in the North of Portugal (where Douro is naturally included). This study will constitute an important tool to evaluate and ensure the tourist satisfaction.

6. Involve Community.

CCDR-N, through Douro Mission Structure, supports local community economic development through tourism. The charter will help achieve our goals through supporting the formation of a coalition of local tourism stakeholders to assure cooperation, networking and effective communications.

In order to promote an integrated and coordinated process development in Douro Region, the Portuguese Government has created the “Douro Mission Structure” (Council Ministers Resolution - 31st of August 2006), which is integrated in CCDRN - Commission of Co-Ordination and Regional Development of the North of Portugal. According with that Government Resolution the goals of the Douro Mission Structure are:

- Stimulate actions of development in an integrated way;
- Promote the articulation between the central and local administration (with competences in the Region) and
- Encourage the participation and initiative of civil society.

The Douro Mission Structure includes a Consultive Council, which includes more than 50 entities of the public and private sector (from different areas: regional development, transports, tourism, environment, rural development, culture and patrimony, wine industry, etc.).
7. Provide Community Benefit.

The National Tourism Development Plan identifies Douro as a tourism priority area of development. On the other hand, the Douro Valley Tourism Plan includes as objectives: incentive to the SME’s (Small-Medium Enterprises) in order to qualify the tourism offer (e.g. accommodation – rural, nature tourism), improvement in local infrastructure, affirmation of tourism promotion, and the reinforcement of institutional capacity among all tourism businesses.

8. Protect and Enhance Destination Appeal.

The Charter will build on efforts to include local partners dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism practices around world heritage sites, marketing these sites as tourism destinations, and protecting them for generations to come. Besides the World Heritage Sites (“Alto Douro Wine Region” & “Prehistoric Rock-Art Sites in the Côa Valley”), it is also important to mention that:

- **Douro is the first demarcated and regulated Wine Region in the World.** It was the first institutional model for organizing and controlling a winemaking region. Comparing with the major mountain wine making regions in the World, Alto Douro is the most extensive, the most historical and the one with the greatest continuity and the greatest biological variety in terms of the vines that have been perfected there; Of all the historic mountain vineyards in Europe, the Alto Douro (with its 36,000ha of steeply sloping vineyards) is the most significant example of this type of viticulture (representing circa of 18% of all European mountain vineyards – registered with CERVIM)

- **Douro Destination includes a Natural Park –** Natural Park of the Douro International (Parque Natural Douro Internacional), classified as a protected area that has a huge and rich natural patrimony.

- **Douro has a huge historical and archaeological patrimony:** Monuments, Castles, Churches and monasteries and other classified places


Douro Valley stakeholders realize the importance of the natural landscape in the region’s unique product offering. Fourteen percent of Douro Valley’s land area has been designated as a natural protected area and conservation of the local flora and fauna are guaranteed. Municipalities have been steadfast in ensuring that proper waste management techniques are employed and that residents follow the rules and regulations concerning sustainable land development set by local governments. The Douro Valley is a rural destination where green areas play a key role. The Environmental Dissonances Project has been developed in order to recover and conserve natural patrimony and eliminate environmental intrusion on the landscape. There were also environmental awareness campaigns.
There are several plans of territorial planning, such as,

- **To manage the landscape use and protection (at local level) there are the Municipal Master Plans:** for regulating the local supervision and management of the landscape. These Plans are the instruments to manage the landscape use and protection in Douro Region at the municipality level. These Plans consist of three essential sections: (i) The general cartographic map; (ii) the updated map of restrictions and (iii) the regulations.

- **To manage the landscape use and protection in an integrated perspective (at regional level) there is Intermunicipal Land-Use Plan:** The Intermunicipal Land-Use Plan for Alto Douro Wine Region integrates the various Plans and is directed at conserving and improving the living, evolutive and cultural landscape, classified as World Heritage.

- **To manage and protect specific places in Douro** there are also the Plans of Carrapatelo Reservoir, the Régua/Bagaúste Reservoir and the River Douro Basin

10. **Conserve Resources.**

The Regional Plan of Territory Administration for the North of Portugal and the Intermunicipal Land-Use Plan for Alto Douro Wine Region include specific orientations and regulations to conserve resources and promote a sustainable tourism in the region. There is also the National Strategic Reference Framework for the EU Structural Funds (2007-2013) and the Operation Regional Programme for the North of Portugal 2007-2013, with specific objectives and incentives to conserve resources and to support tourism businesses.

11. **Conduct Planning.**

Tourism strategies – including Douro Valley Tourism Plan and Geotourism – are being coordinated by Commission of Coordination and Regional Development of the North of Portugal, through the Douro Mission Structure, an entity created in August 2006 with a commitment to:

- Stimulate actions of development in an integrated way;
- Promote the articulation between the central and local administration (with competences in the Region) and
- Encourage the participation and initiative of civil society.

12. **Encourage Interactive Interpretation.**

Implementing the Geotourism strategy will provide an opportunity for local residents to see the Douro Valley as a complete destination and to begin considering the unique offerings of their business or communities within that context.
13. Evaluate.

Regional and local institutions – such as the Douro Valley DMO and tourism trade association – will be champions of geotourism and continue to engage in monitoring and evaluation of the region’s successes and challenges.

IV. Summarize your destination’s vision and at least three key goals for continuing/implementing a new geotourism strategy over the next five years.

VISION: **Make Douro Valley a World Heritage destination of excellence through a dynamic public and private sustainable geotourism process.**

GOALS:

1. Create and improve the infrastructure conditions, public networks and systems to support the tourism industry in Douro.
2. Promote responsible private investment in tourism and hospitality in order to develop and enhance the regional tourism supply chain
3. Provide tourism education and training in order to create and upgrade skills in the Douro Valley tourism industry as well as increase awareness of the principles of geotourism and the value of Douro Valley’s World Heritage Sites
4. Affirm and protect the Douro Valley as a tourism destination of excellence, with a selective marketing and promotion strategy that will attract discerning travelers
5. Reinforce the institutional capacity and promote cooperation in order to achieve geotourism goals.

V. What existing and planned programs are going to help your destination achieve these goals, with what sources of funding?

EXISTING PROGRAMS, with FUNDING SOURCE(S):

1. The Center of Excellence for Destinations (CED) has completed a System of Measures for Excellence (SMED) for the Douro Valley, and recommended that the CCDR-N and local stakeholders initiate steps toward establishing a World Heritage Alliance Affiliation linked to geotourism initiatives.

2. National Strategic Reference Framework for the EU Structural Funds (2007-2013) and more specifically, the European Union-funded Operation Regional Programme for the North of Portugal, 2007-2013

3. Douro Valley Tourism Plan 2007-2013

Planned Programs with Funding Source(s).
1. National Strategic Reference Framework for the EU Structural Funds (2007-2013) and more specifically, the European Union-funded Operation Regional Programme for the North of Portugal, 2007-2013

2. Douro Valley Tourism Plan 2007-2013

VI. How will you define future successes in geotourism? Please list at least three objectively verifiable benchmarks for evaluating the implementation of your geotourism strategy.

Objectively Verifiable Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate commitment to sustainable tourism principles with the completion of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria self-assessment tool completed by 50% of key stakeholders by 2011.
2. Increase the income generated by tourism by 2 percentage points a year through a process of encouraging additional revenue expenditures by tourism and decreasing the effects of seasonality.
3. Increase the worldwide visibility of the Douro Valley brand through targeted private sector and media outreach.
4. Create new partnerships to encourage the implementation of geotourism principles and practice.

VII. Geotourism Sustainability Council

Our approach proposes formation of a Geotourism Sustainability Council to advise and oversee geotourism activities and destination quality. We recommend that Geotourism Sustainability Councils comprise pertinent government, business, and civic leaders and experts. Sectors to be represented include, but are not limited to, historic preservation, conservation, transportation, wine associations, tourism marketing, rural development and other stakeholders. The council can also serve as a local chapter of the World Heritage Alliance.

NOTE: Prior to a Charter Signing, please submit a list of the proposed Geotourism Sustainability Council’s participants for review. Please list name, title, affiliation, and one- or two-sentence description of each participant’s credentials.

Potential participants:
- CCDRN – Paulo Gomes - Vice President
- Douro Mission Structure – Ricardo Magalhães – Encharge
- Douro Tourism – António Martinho - President
- Porto Wine Route Association – António José Teixeira - President
- Porto and Douro Wine Institute – Paulo Osório – Vice-President
- North Regional Direction of Culture – Paula Silva – Regional Director
- Friends of Alto Douro Wine Region – World Heritage – President - Armando Moreira
- Tourism of Portugal – Alberto Marques – Director
VIII. Desired date (month/year) to sign Geotourism Charter: December 14th, 2009
Desired location to sign the Geotourism Charter: Vila Real, Portugal

IX. NOTE: Your Geotourism Charter must be posted online for public information. The URL will be listed in the joint press release approved by National Geographic. URL for the posted Geotourism Charter: www.ccdr-n.pt/emd

X. Charter application submitted by:

Name: CCDRN/ Douro Mission Structure
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: Respect 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.

**Principle 5: Ensure Tourist Enthusiasm.**
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: Provide 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.