

MONTANA TOURISM CHARTER

WHEREAS the travel and recreation industry of Montana recognizes our greatest asset in today's marketplace is Montana's great outdoors and pristine environment, including the headwaters of the continent, scenic vistas, wide open spaces, and abundant and charismatic wildlife;

AND WHEREAS our exceptional outdoor places are enhanced by equally distinctive communities, with a rich history of friendliness, authenticity, artistic traditions, and a people who derive their solid intellectual and creative capital from Montana's strong sense of place;

AND WHEREAS the people of the twelve tribal nations of Montana sustain an enduring cultural heritage and land ethic and provide opportunities for distinctive, enriching and educational experiences for visitors, particularly through culturally appropriate tourism businesses owned by American Indians;

AND WHEREAS we understand that Montana's collective authentic character represents values that are increasingly in demand by the economically and socially desirable "geotourist" market ¹ including many business travelers and most leisure travelers. These travelers share many common values with most Montanans, including a desire to maintain the unique and authentic character of places;

AND WHEREAS the greatest long-term economic advantage for Montana's travel and recreation industry, lies with the geotourism market and other visitors who share the respect that Montana residents and communities have for our natural and cultural assets;

AND WHEREAS we have observed that despite increasing market demand, there are ever fewer places in North America that have retained their authentic feel and sense of place as they are "discovered" and changed;

AND WHEREAS the Montana character won't be maintained through benign neglect but rather requires shared commitment and continuous attention.

THEREFORE, the State of Montana, the Montana State Tribal Economic Development Commission and Montana's travel and recreation industry adopt this charter of stewardship and commitment to individual community-based economic development, promotion and conservation of the unique and treasured Montana character.

From this point forward, we resolve to advocate, forge partnerships and take individual and collective actions to guarantee that the authentic and highly valued Montana experience is available for future generations of residents and visitors.

¹ *National Geographic Traveler Magazine* and the Travel Industry Association of America have identified 55-65 million Americans who are geotourists. Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents (Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan 2003-2007, page 31). Geotourism strategies provide products, services and visitor experiences that maintain a destination's sense of place and complement rather than compete with the needs of local residents.

MONTANA TOURISM CHARTER

WE ADOPT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES AND ASSOCIATED COURSES OF ACTION:

1. Maintain integrity of place and destination appeal
 - a. Encourage businesses to sustain and respect natural habitats, aesthetic appeal and local culture.
 - b. Enhance geographical character through developments and improvements that are distinctive to the locale, consistent with local tradition and reflective of its natural and cultural heritage.
 - c. Encourage tourism business strategies that emphasize long-term economic and social benefits to communities. Strive to use the local workforce, products, supplies, and services in travel businesses, thus benefiting residents economically.

2. Promote and highlight the businesses, services and opportunities that are unique to Montana
 - a. Base tourism on community resources, encouraging local small businesses and civic groups to build partnerships to promote and provide a distinctive, authentic visitor experience and market their locales effectively.
 - b. Encourage development of culturally appropriate businesses owned by American Indians.
 - c. Encourage small-to-medium-size enterprises and tourism business strategies that emphasize economic and social benefits to communities.
 - d. Create a linkage between locally grown agricultural products and tourism businesses.

3. Promote sustainable resource conservation, including conservation of energy, water and wildlife.
 - a. Environmentally aware travelers favor businesses that minimize pollution, waste, energy consumption, water usage, landscaping chemicals, visual blight, and unnecessary lighting. Encourage businesses to reduce pollution and energy consumption.
 - b. Showcase tourism businesses that practice resource conservation, earning Montana a reputation for environmental forward-thinking.
 - c. Sustainable tourism anticipates development pressures and applies management techniques and limits that ultimately sustain and respect natural habitats, scenic appeal, traditional use, and local quality of life.

4. Participate in and help lead community stewardship partnerships to maintain Montana assets
 - a. Work with partner organizations to coordinate with the private sector to fund the preservation of open space, important places, and features.
 - b. Encourage appropriate land use methods that are sensitive to the unique natural character of Montana.
 - c. Anticipate development pressures and take action, to guide growth, which will encompass a community's values and promote economic development that sustains the geographical character of a place.

MONTANA TOURISM CHARTER

5. Identify and appeal to markets that value and seek to help sustain Montana's distinct character
 - a. Create a Montana Brand that resonates with the highly desirable "geotourist".
 - b. Perform ongoing Research to identify appropriate markets.
 - c. Design marketing to reach, educate, and recruit geotourism markets identified through research.
 - d. Encourage growth in tourism market segments most likely to appreciate, respect, and disseminate information about the distinctive assets of the locale.

6. Foster a diversity of products and services that meet the demand of a demographic cross-section of the "geotourist" market
 - a. Encourage residents to boast of the natural and cultural heritage of their communities, so that tourists gain a richer experience and residents develop pride in their locales. All the elements of geographical character create a synergistic tourist experience that is richer than the sum of its parts, appealing to visitors with diverse interests.
 - b. Inform Montana communities and educate schools on how to use geotourism to nurture the natural history, culinary attractions, artisans, and performing arts of their area.
 - c. Promote the unique qualities of communities in order to appeal to the entire demographic spectrum of the geotourism market and maximize economic resiliency.

7. Ensure visitor satisfaction and an enduring market demand through education of Montana residents about the benefits of sustainable tourism.
 - a. Conduct media and other outreach to educate Montanans about the elements of this Charter.
 - b. Build partnerships with other Montana groups which share our commitment to sustaining the special character of Montana and promoting community-based economic development.
 - c. Coordinate with school systems to educate students about the tourism industry and its role in the Montana economy.
 - d. Work with diverse partners, private and public, to advocate strategies and policies that sustain Montana's special character.

8. Work with Institute for Tourism and Recreational research, Travel Montana and other tourism organizations throughout the state to evaluate effective implementation of the Tourism Charter.
 - a. Test marketing campaigns for effectiveness in reaching target geotourism markets.
 - b. Perform ongoing research to gauge attitudes and expectations of visitors to Montana.
 - c. Measure geotourism-related trends such as the number of locally-owned tourism businesses, investments in rehabilitation and preservation, and quality development that sustains and enhances the geographical character of downtowns. Also measure traveler spending on geotourist-oriented products, services and attractions among other trends.
 - d. Make adjustments to promotion and product development as necessary.