

Interactive map features Sierra Nevada

The wonders of Yosemite National Park are just the starting point of National Geographic's newest online Geotourism MapGuide, the latest in digital mapping loaded with interactive features for fun and custom trip planning.

To be unveiled today, the map moves far beyond the famous park's borders to highlight the region's unsung treasures, celebrating the world-class natural and cultural heritage of the entire area.

The MapGuide to the Yosemite Gateway, at www.SierraNevadaGeotourism.org, is the first of four regions to be highlighted within the enormous Sierra Nevada. The Yosemite Gateway map shares locals' secrets of one-of-a-kind coffee houses in historic buildings, spectacular drives without the crowds, deserted mining towns, even details on the upcoming Mariposa Butterfly Festival. More than 800 map point nominations were received from the region's residents, making the MapGuide a unique resource for the millions of annual visitors as well as for locals seeking unspoiled outdoor places and authentic cultural experiences.

The MapGuide will be unveiled April 8 at the iconic Yosemite Lodge, following a meeting of the Yosemite Gateway partners. Sponsoring the map are the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Sierra Business Council in conjunction with National Geographic. The MapGuide also received funding from the Federal Highway Administration's Scenic Byways Program and the Morgan Family Foundation.

"The entire world has heard of Yosemite, and rightly so. However, the magic of this MapGuide is that it includes the surrounding Sierra Nevada, a region that deserves to become a

household name, too,” James Dion, associate director of National Geographic’s Center for Sustainable Destinations, said in a press release. “Our commitment is to preserving the enormous scenic and cultural assets of both.”

For the purpose of this project, the Sierra Nevada is sectioned into four phase areas. The MapGuide website reflects the completion of the first phase in the Yosemite Gateway area and the transition into sequential phase areas. This summer the project will solicit nominations from the Tahoe Emigrant Corridor, which includes the counties of Placer, Nevada, El Dorado, Washoe, Douglas and Carson. The final two MapGuides will guide visitors through the northern and southern Sierra regions.

“The breadth of the beauty in the Sierra Nevada is unique. Lassen Volcanic National Park, Lake Tahoe, Yosemite National Park, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks are incredible jewels in this 400-mile-long region,” Steven Frisch, president of the Sierra Business Council, said in a statement. “The Sierra Nevada Geotourism Project is the perfect synthesis of economic outreach to culturally rich communities and respect for the planet.”

National Geographic defines geotourism as “tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.”