

Romania signs Charter with National Geographic to adopt Geotourism Strategy

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The Minister of Transport, Construction and Tourism, Gheorge Dobre and John Francis, the Vice-President for Research, Conservation and Exploration, National Geographic Society, signed and launched National Geographic's Geotourism Charter today in a ceremony marking World Tourism Day. With the assistance from USAID and the USAID-funded Enterprise Development & Strengthening Program and Romania Agribusiness Development Project, the Romanian Government is adopting a geotourism strategy; a sustainable, market-driven approach that National Geographic defines 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 helps us leverage Romania’s competitive advantages in the global tourism marketplace,” explained Constantin Dascălu, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Transportation, Construction and Tourism. “It will help us put more emphasis on our country’s beautiful natural and cultural heritage – assets that truly help distinguish us from other destinations. We welcome this alliance with National Geographic and look forward to cooperating with them to help raise awareness and implement Geotourism throughout Romania.”

According to John Francis, Vice President for Research, Conservation and Exploration of the National Geographic Society, “geotourism focuses on those attributes that make a place worth visiting. It’s about *what* places are. It’s about what makes one place different from the next.”

Francis explained that “geotourism includes not only flora and fauna, which is the basis for nature-based tourism, but also historic structures and archaeological sites, scenic landscapes, traditional architecture, and local music, cuisine, crafts, dances, and other arts – all of which are in abundance in Romania”.

The NTA with USAID assistance and collaboration with organizations such as ANTREC (The National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism), ATRT (Association for Rural Tourism in Transylvania), the Ecotourism Association of Romania, and Junior Achievement have already begun to explore additional ways to inform and educate local people how they can sustain and enhance their destinations through tourism..

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