



WI-Ledge Rambler Online Mapguide: Eligibility for Participation Form for Tourism Businesses Along Wisconsin's Niagara Escarpment

The Niagara Escarpment Resource Network's (NERN's) "WI-Ledge Rambler" Geotourism Program focuses on promoting responsible visitation to the cultural and natural heritage sites and attractions along Wisconsin's Niagara Escarpment (aka "The Ledge).

NERN is working with **sustainable tourism businesses** (see list of definitions below) along the Niagara Escarpment that demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and connection to this unique geological landscape. Following is information about the program and a list of questions to be answered to determine eligibility to join us for the launch of our exciting new program.

THE WI-LEDGE RAMBLER GEOTOURISM PROGRAM

The Wisconsin Ledge (WI-Ledge) Geotourism Program is creating a unified visitor experience by connecting the seven counties¹ of the Niagara Escarpment across Wisconsin through a combined marketing effort, promoting and cultivating events, and providing education and awareness, while boosting local economies by attracting geotourists. The program will be primarily web-based with some printed marketing and promotional materials.

The program will work only with private-sector businesses in the tourism industry that are located in one of the seven counties of the Niagara Escarpment in Wisconsin and that qualify (called 'Initiatives'). They will be chosen based on their contributions to sustainability and 'Sense of Place.'²

The Geotourism program shares some similarities with **Travel Green Wisconsin** and the **Wisconsin Green Masters** program and some questions may overlap. If you are currently an active member of either/both programs, please show us proof and you will be exempted from filling out the following questionnaire. **Congratulations – you're automatically enrolled!**

It is anticipated that the interactive online mapguide will be used by visitors to plan their trips, getting off-the-beaten-path, and support rural economies.

¹ Waukesha, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Calumet, Kewaunee, Brown, Door

² NERN is not a government authorizing body, nor does it have stringent rules and regulations. However, measures will be put in place to ensure that initiatives are compliant and consistently working towards evolving best practices in sustainability.





DEFINITIONS:

Sustainability

Sustainability can be described as efforts that contribute to the triple bottom line, also known as the "3Ps" of People, Planet, and Profits.

Sustainable Tourism

The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as: "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities."

Geotourism

Geotourism falls under the umbrella of sustainable tourism and has two distinct, yet interrelated definitions. The original term was coined in the UK in the 1990s as tourism to destinations of geological significance such as the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, and the volcanoes of Hawaii.

The second meaning was defined in the USA by the director of National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations as "geographical" tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents."

Sense of Place

The essence of sustaining and enhancing the character of a destination is also known as "Sense of Place." This is the feeling held by communities about their homeland and generally coincides with visitors' perceptions of the destination. It is this combination of characteristics that make a place special or unique and can include such things as local cuisine, common ancestral heritage, religious traditions, locally produced handicrafts, and farming techniques among others.

Geotourists

According to a study conducted by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) and sponsored by National Geographic Traveler, geotourists were defined as travelers that are guided by a high awareness of the world around them. They have ceaseless expectations for unique and culturally authentic travel experiences that protect and preserve the ecological and cultural environment. They tend to have a higher level of education, higher than average disposable income, and are more discerning about where and how they spend their money.⁴

INSTRUCTIONS:

³ https://destinationcenter.org/geotourism/

⁴ Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), sponsored by National Geographic Traveler, "Geotourism: The New Trend in Travel," 2003, 70 pages.





To ensure that initiatives are eligible to participate in the Geotourism Program, the following criteria have been carefully developed. If approved, initiatives will be included on an interactive website and in promotional materials.

The following questions need to be answered honestly and accurately and will assess the initiative's sustainability level by labeling them green (highest level), yellow or red. If an initiative does not qualify (red level), assistance will be provided to help them in becoming more sustainable — and therefore, eligible to participate in the future. Initiatives that score at the 'yellow' level will be assisted to move to 'green' — and those that score at the 'green' level can get started right away. Beginning in 2023, there will likely be a reasonable fee to remain involved in the program, but during this pilot phase, they have been waived.

Please answer each question by placing an "X" in the appropriate box to the right of each question. The questions are in the first person "I" and can be generalized for the entire company or organization (the collective "We").





1) Environmental Sustainability

a) Commitment towards protecting the environment and efficient use of resources:

No.	Question				Yes	No	Year
	I am a member of Travel Green Wisconsin and/or WSBC Green Masters program. Please provide year.	Travel Green Wisconsin*					
1	* If yes, you are automatically enrolled in our program. Please fill out the contact information on the last page. Congratulations and Welcome!	Wisconsin Sustainable Business Council – Green Masters Program*					
		Never	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Always	N/A
2	I incorporate environmental best practices into my operating philosophy (use of renewables, motion sensors, energy-saving, or water-saving measures)						
3	I use solar energy, wind, and/or geothermal energy to reduce or eliminate fossil fuels and lower my carbon footprint						
4	I find ways to reduce consumption, recycle waste (paper, glass, plastics, metal) and ensure safe disposal of light bulbs, batteries, ink cartridges, oils, etc.						
5	I use sustainable and/or recyclable materials (e.g., ReStore) for construction						
6	I use green building/remodeling techniques						
7	I purchase recycled paper products (min. 30%) including paper towels, napkins, toilet paper, etc.						
8	I minimize waste in internal operations by using permanent kitchenware for staff and guests instead of disposable cups, plates, and utensils						
9	I use biodegradable "To-Go" containers, plates, utensils, straws and only provide them upon request. If not a restaurant, our product packaging is from recycled materials and is						





No.	Question	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Always	N/A
10	If disposables are required for an event, I purchase biodegradable products and recycle them						
11	I file the majority of documents electronically. Copiers and printers are automatically set to print double-sided and used only when necessary.						
12	I use soy-based ink and recycled paper (min. 50%) for promotional materials including brochures, rack cards, posters, mailings, etc.						
13	I use chemical-free cleaners						
14	I actively support local/state/national conservation organizations (land trusts, parks, nature preserves) as a member, donor and/or volunteer						
15	I am involved in or support eco- or agritourism efforts						
16	I plant native species (no exotics) and eradicate invasive species on my land						
17	I use organic fertilizers (no pesticides) and chemical-free products in landscaping						
18	I post signs, provide printed information, have on the website, include in promotional materials, and verbally communicate the steps we are taking to improve our environmental impacts both at the destination and throughout the community						
19	I educate staff regularly on sustainability and provide "Codes of Conduct"						
20	I actively educate my suppliers, customers, and community members on sustainability practices (energy saving tips, recycling, etc.)						
21	I donate items to local charities where possible or use "free-cycling" online rather than throwing them away (extra food, furniture, clothing, etc.)						
22	I minimize or have eliminated the use of plastic bags						





No.	Question	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Always	N/A
23	I encourage and offer incentives for employees to reduce their energy and water use at work and at home						
24	I encourage and offer incentives for employees to carpool, walk, bus and/or bicycle to work by offering preferred parking for carpoolers, hybrids and electric cars, electric charging stations, bike racks, indoor bike storage, free bus passes, etc.						
25	I purchase and use biodiesel trucks, hybrid or electric vehicles, walk or bike to work when possible						
26	I offer bicycles to visitors for free or for rent to decrease the use of their vehicle						
Please provide any comments or explanations (referencing question number) and particularly if the N/A box is checked:							

2) Social Sustainability

a) Commitment towards local employment, social & economic development:

No.	Question	Never	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Always	N/A
1	I employ locally whenever possible						
2	I employ and accommodate the disabled, veterans, and other special groups where possible						
3	More than 2/3 of products are sourced locally, either raw or fabricated						
4	I sponsor/host local events (conferences, workshops, training, etc.) related to sustainability or sustainable business practices within my industry						
5	I allow the use of my property or facility for community meetings and events for free or a nominal fee						
6	I contribute at least 5% of profits to a local/state/national non-profit, charity or other organization that supports the local community.						





7	I operate under the principles of 'fair trade' and select suppliers based on their responsible business practices						
8	I buy local art/crafts/products and/or services for use within my business/organization						
9	I contribute to the community's well-being by supporting and participating in community activities (e.g. money given to local organizations, events, and projects, scholarships, etc.)						
10	I provide services that encourage a healthy, active lifestyle (e.g. hikes, sports, nutrition, etc.)						
11	I encourage and incentivize employees to take part in volunteering and community service events						
12	I work with and support local schools, technical schools, and/or universities to spread knowledge of sustainability techniques and train potential employees						
	se provide any comments or explanations	(reference	ing ques	tion numb	per) and	particular	ly if the
N/A I	pox is checked:						
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b)	Commitment towards educating v	isitors:					
b)	Commitment towards educating v	risitors:	Rarely	Some- times	Often	Always	N/A
	Question I promote awareness and preservation of the Niagara Escarpment ("The Ledge") and its features as a unique geological formation of global significance				Often	Always	N/A
No.	Question I promote awareness and preservation of the Niagara Escarpment ("The Ledge") and its features as a unique geological				Often	Always	N/A
No. 13	Question I promote awareness and preservation of the Niagara Escarpment ("The Ledge") and its features as a unique geological formation of global significance I educate guests and provide information about the local area including nature, customs, and culture I provide sustainability information verbally, in the form of brochures, and/or on menus about surrounding businesses and encourage their visitation (e.g. names				Often	Always	N/A
No. 13	Question I promote awareness and preservation of the Niagara Escarpment ("The Ledge") and its features as a unique geological formation of global significance I educate guests and provide information about the local area including nature, customs, and culture I provide sustainability information verbally, in the form of brochures, and/or on menus about surrounding businesses				Often	Always	N/A





	I buy or consign local art/crafts/products						
18	and make them available for purchase by						
	my guests						
	I promote intercultural exchange with	T					1,
19	people from outside the area or with those						
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By answering the questions above honestly and expanding in writing where necessary, I certify that the signing of this "Eligibility for Participation" form reflects my business's commitment to increasing the local benefits of tourism along Wisconsin's Niagara Escarpment/Ledge through our support of community, culture, and the environment.

I further agree to work with NERN to evaluate and improve, where feasible, business practices which align with sustainable tourism. By agreeing to this commitment, I understand that my business will be included on the WI-Ledge Rambler Geotourism Mapguide for 2022 at no cost.

I further agree to provide an evaluation (interview or survey) of the impact and benefits of the program to my business. It is understood that there may be reasonable costs and fees incurred for future promotion on the WI-Ledge Rambler Geotourism Mapguide (2023 and beyond). This information will be provided, and subsequent participation will be agreed upon, separate from this program submittal.

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Name(s):			
Title/Position((s):		
Name of Busi	ness/Organization:		
Address:			
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Business Pho	one and/or Mobile:		
Signature: (via email)		Date:	
FOR NERN U	'SE ONLY:		
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