

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.***³

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”).

18	I buy or consign local art/crafts/products and make them available for purchase by my guests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	I promote intercultural exchange with people from outside the area or with those coming from foreign countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please provide any comments or explanations (referencing question number) and particularly if the N/A box is checked:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 80px; width: 100%;"></div>							

3) Cultural Sustainability

a) Commitment towards protecting and promoting the invaluable cultural heritage and ‘Sense of Place’ of your area:

No.	Question	Yes	No	Comments/Explanations
1	My company or its efforts contribute to the appreciation, revival, or continuation of an art form (music, dance, art, performing arts, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>
2	My company contributes to the appreciation, revival or continuation of crafts or skills (wood carving, quilting, farming traditions, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>
3	As part of my company, I am an active member of local cultural organization(s) such as a museum, historical society, historic preservation initiative, main street program, music, dance, arts or performing arts association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>Please provide any additional information regarding your business/organization’s contributions towards cultural sustainability:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div>				

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.

Name(s):

Title/Position(s):

Name of Business/Organization:

Address:

Email: **Website:**

Business Phone and/or Mobile:

Signature: **Date:**
(via email)

FOR NERN USE ONLY:

NERN Representative: _____

Signature: _____ *Date:* _____