



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Barbara Moffet
(202) 857-7756
bmoffet@ngs.org

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC AND CITY OF MONTRÉAL LAUNCH
FIRST URBAN GEOTOURISM MAPGUIDE**

MONTRÉAL (June 15, 2009)—National Geographic Society’s Center for Sustainable Destinations and the Geotourism Council of Montréal unveiled a new MapGuide during a launch ceremony today at the Montréal City Hall. The Montréal MapGuide is National Geographic’s first urban MapGuide with the focus on geotourism, 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.”

The Montréal Geotourism Council managed the community-based process over the past year, including reviewing the nearly 400 local nominations to determine the places that best meet the geotourism definition and uphold the 13 principles of the Geotourism Charter. Montréal was the first city in the world to sign the charter, in 2007.

The MapGuide will be distributed locally by Tourisme Montréal at information centers and businesses featured on the MapGuide, and internationally through Tourisme Montréal’s overseas offices. One side of the MapGuide shows a satellite image of Montréal that makes clear that this international city is both an island and an area that has an incredible amount of green space mixed in with its urban landscape. The reverse side provides a street map of downtown Montréal and Old Montréal, full of insiders’ tips on the city’s best food, fashion, architecture, museums and walks.

“The Geotourism MapGuide highlights the reasons why Montréal is a must-see destination: lively urban life, myriad festivals and cultural and sports events, a museum network, as well as recreational and outdoor facilities. Montréal is also a unique city with its French flair and many cultural communities that call it home. By agreeing to the stringent criteria of the National Geographic Society’s Geotourism Charter, Montréal became a reference point in terms of an eco-responsible urban centre and a pioneering city as a sustainable destination,” said the mayor of Montréal, Gérald Tremblay.

Produced in both French and English on recycled paper, the MapGuide features descriptive listings and map points of attractions, hotels, businesses and interesting environmental and cultural assets and activities nominated by the residents of Montréal. Montréal’s parks are highlighted: The whole map has a “green” focus, including the city’s highest point — Mount Royal Park — designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, also famous for New York’s Central Park. A number of map points are food recommendations, from trendy French cafés and bakeries to the Taverne Normand, an old-fashioned tavern that the map deems “agreeably rowdy” on hockey nights.

(OVER)

MAPGUIDE (PAGE 2)

“Montréal has proactively embraced sustainability policies, so visitors are treated to an outstanding city that is culturally vibrant and environmentally aware,” said Jonathan B. Tourtellot, director of the Center for Sustainable Destinations. “It’s appropriate that our first urban Geotourism MapGuide is for Montréal. This city is a role model for other places around the world beginning to embrace geotourism.”

For the first time in a National Geographic MapGuide, quotes and drawings from local children are featured in a special “City for Kids” section. Two schools — École Saint-Bernardin and École Marguerite-Bourgeoys — participated in an essay and drawing contest to illustrate what Montréal means to them. The schools’ fourth-grade students attended the launch, and the Montréal Geotourism Council presented them with a plaque to recognize their contribution to this local project.

Additional features of the Montréal MapGuide include an introduction by Dr. Kathy Reichs, author and forensic anthropologist; theme text blocks; a timeline on the “History of Montréal”; and 10 “Geotraveler Tips” to help travelers immerse themselves in the locale. “Montréal is the leading lady of contradictions — flirting with her future while embracing her past, vigorously blending French and English, harmonizing the steel skyscrapers of downtown with the green gems of her parks,” writes Reichs about her adopted city.

One of six local experts to contribute text blocks, fashion designer Jean-Claude Poitras notes, “Montréal’s ties to France shape the city’s sophisticated tastes. They also give it early notice of European trends in arts and business, which helps explain Montréal’s creative edge in 21st-century industries.”

Project coordinator Marie-Claude Joly says the Council posed a simple question to local residents when creating the MapGuide — “What’s so special about your place?” — as the initial criterion for the geotourism nominations. Montréal embraced the geotourism concept in 2006, recognizing the importance of destination stewardship and wisely managed tourism to Montréal’s future growth and sustainability.

Partnering with National Geographic on the co-branded MapGuide project are the 12 members of the Geotourism Council: Héritage Montréal, The World Center for Excellence for Destinations Tourisme Montréal, Ville de Montréal, Destination Centre-Ville, Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine, Parks Canada, Old Port of Montréal Corporation, Société de développement de l’avenue du Mont-Royal, Les Amis de la montagne, Parc Jean-Drapeau and Université du Québec à Montréal. Substantial leadership and financial support is provided through the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec, Ville de Montréal and Tourisme Montréal under the Entente sur le développement culturel de Montréal.

(MORE)

MAPGUIDE (PAGE 3)

National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations provided overall project direction under Jonathan Tourtellot and Cheryl Hargrove; National Geographic Maps handled all design and cartography related to the production of the MapGuide. Andre Jean Lauzon served as destination editor; Canadian David Thomas wrote the text and map notes; Jay Walljasper served as overall project editor.

The National Geographic Society has worked with community-based alliances to develop similar Geotourism MapGuides in several other regions around the world. MapGuide projects have been completed in Greater Yellowstone, the Central Cascades (Oregon, Washington), the Crown of the Continent (Alberta, British Columbia, Montana), Guatemala, Sonoran Desert (Arizona, Sonora), Romania, Norway, Honduras, Peru, Baja California, Rhode Island, Vermont and Appalachia.

Additional information on geotourism in Montréal is available at www.montrealgeo.com (in French at www.geomontreal.com).

The National Geographic Society is one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Founded in 1888 to "increase and diffuse geographic knowledge," the Society works to inspire people to care about the planet. It reaches more than 360 million people worldwide each month through its official journal, National Geographic, and other magazines; National Geographic Channel; television documentaries; music; radio; films; books; DVDs; maps; exhibitions; live events; school publishing programs; interactive media; and merchandise. National Geographic has funded more than 9,000 scientific research, conservation and exploration projects and supports an education program promoting geographic literacy. For more information, visit nationalgeographic.com.

###