

“The National Geotourism Strategy - Diversifying Nature Based Tourism for the Benefit of both Domestic and International Travellers” - 21 June 2021



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Today's Agenda

- Ecotourism and Geotourism
- National Geotourism Strategy
- Establishing a framework for creating **high quality, sustainable geotrails**
- Developing and enhancing **geoscience interpretation and communication skills** for geoscientists and other natural heritage professionals engaged in geotourism
- Take-Aways

Geotourism incorporating all types of 'nature-based' tourism



Geotourism
i.e. 'experiential
tourism'

Ecotourism & Geotourism Concepts

- Ecotourism is practised predominantly in protected areas such as national parks whereas geotourism is undertaken also in all areas where primary industry activities are being carried out.
- Geotourism is increasingly seen globally as an instrument of regional economic development.

Geotourism

- comprises the following features of **both natural and cultural heritage**:
 - **Abiotic** - non-living aspects such as the sky, climate & geology, landscape and landforms: celebrating **GEODIVERSITY**.
 - **Biotic** - the living parts eg. fauna (animals) and flora (plants): celebrating **BIODIVERSITY**.
 - **Cultural** - past & present, indigenous and post European settlement, non-living and built: celebrating **HUMAN DIVERSITY**.
- **Holistic in scope**, geotourism is booming globally and a key driver for tourism, particularly in Europe and Asia.

Fundamentals of Geotourism

Geotourism is not 'geological tourism'

Geotourism is rather 'place based'

Why a National Geotourism Strategy?

- Unique opportunity for **engaging the broader community with geoscience.**
- With COVID-19, domestic tourism is now looking for **new product development.**
- Major opportunity for **rural and regional development**, focusing on both natural and cultural heritage, **both mining and Aboriginal.**
- **Emerging grass-roots community support evident** - however this requires implementation to be effective.
- Need this national strategy to **complement** what the Aust. Govt. delivered for **ecotourism in 1994.**

AGC National Geotourism Strategy Principles

- **United national voice** for geotourism development.
- Working with a large **specialist reference group**.
- **Working closely with government agencies** at all levels to gain their support and endorsement.
- Reaching out to other **natural and cultural heritage specialists**.
- Engaging with **local communities**.



National Geotourism Strategic Goals

1. Consideration of new digital technologies e.g. 3D visualisation, AR & VR etc.
2. To define an approval pathway for major geotourism projects.
3. To establish a framework for creating high quality, sustainable geotrails.
4. To establish a national listing for geoheritage sites suitable for geotourism.
5. To develop geotourism as a key driver for celebrating mining heritage and sustaining mining communities.
6. To strengthen Australia's international geoscience standing through geotourism excellence.
7. To develop and enhance geoscience interpretation and communication skills for natural and cultural heritage professionals engaged in geotourism.

National Geotourism Strategic Goal #3

To establish a framework for creating high quality sustainable geotrails

- Individual geological surveys from the States and Territories be invited to engage, on an 'as needs' basis, and **in collaboration with natural/cultural interest groups e.g., WTA** as well as with state/territory divisions and branches of the interested professional societies.
- And to review the suitability of **existing roads, bushwalks, biking and rail trails** as potential geotrails.

Granite & Woodlands Self-Drive Discovery Trail, WA



"Take in the expansive views of **sandy heathland & spring wildflowers (B)** as you pass along the Holland Track, which gives way to **nickel & gold mining land (C)** around Forrestania Plots. Keep a look out for **bush turkeys, dingos or more elusive native animals such as honey and pigmy possums (B)**, which are sometimes seen around Grevillea Hill. From here the landscape changes **(A)** to **mallee woodland & eucalypts**. Explore the **rocky outcrops & cliffs of The Breakaways (A)** before rolling out your swag at for a **night under an amazing star-filled sky (A)**."

Exemplar: Port Macquarie Coastal Geotrail, NSW



"The collaborative geotrail project has been led by the **University of Newcastle (A)** & supported by **Port Macquarie-Hastings Council**, the **Geological Survey of NSW (A)**, **NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (B)** & **Birpai Local Aboriginal Land Council (C)**. Supported by a **brochure, website & smartphone app**, the Port Macquarie Coastal Geotrail is a four kilometre walk from Shelly Beach to Rocky Beach that **tells the story** of plate tectonics & how the Earth's crust was formed along the stretch of coastline over the past 460 million years".

Best Practice Geotrails

- Should be constructed around **routes currently used by tourists**; geotrails should form logical journeys linking accommodation destinations.
- Should meld the geological heritage features of a region with a **cohesive STORY**.
- Should **incorporate and package in the biodiversity and cultural components** of the region through which the geotrail traverses.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_V1oZeqdUg0

National Geotourism Strategic Goal #7

To develop and enhance the geoscience interpretation and communication skills of everyone actively involved in the presentation of geosites, enabling the provision of accurate information in an accessible manner.

National Geotourism Strategic Goal #7 Objectives

Establish a working group comprising representatives of experienced tour guides (e.g. Savannah Guides) and content interpretation specialists to:

- Improve the interpretation skills of geoscientists working at the frontline of geotourism.
- Improve the geoscientific accuracy of information prepared by interpretation specialists who may not have any geoscience background e.g., WTA

Key Issues

National Geotourism Strategic Goal #7

- **Geoheritage conservation** and protection of sensitive geosites from visitors.
 - Accurate '**scientific**' interpretation of geosites particularly by park rangers and tour guides.
 - Parallel '**cultural**' interpretation to complete the story. Examples – Mungo, Flinders Ranges.
 - Enhancement of **communication skills** for geoscientists.
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Take-Aways

- The National Geotourism Strategic Goals have **clear outcomes, targets** which are **measured** annually.
- It is hoped that the Strategy will emerge as the **default policy position** for Australian governments for national geotourism development.
- The emergence nationally of **geotrails** is a clear priority which will create opportunity for a wide range of people currently engaged in ecotourism/wildlife tourism.
- Opportunity for **wildlife specialists to engage!**



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<https://www.slideshare.net/leisuresolutions>

<http://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/index.php/geotourism-industry-groups/>
Information about Australian Geotourism

<http://www.agc.org.au/geoscience-in-australia/geotourism/>
Australian Geoscience Council