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For Immediate Release

GIANT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAP OF ASIA COMING TO THE MISSISSIPPI MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

Jackson, Miss. – Mississippi students will be exploring Asia in a big way next month — with the world’s largest map of the continent! The map measures 26 feet by 35 feet and is designed as a giant game board to introduce students to the diverse geography of Asia. It will be on display at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science on February 14-17 (9 am – Noon); February 19 (1-5) and on February 21-23 (9am – Noon), in partnership with the Mississippi Geographic Alliance at the University of Mississippi, as part of National Geographic’s Giant Traveling Maps program, organized by *National Geographic Live*, the public programming division of the National Geographic Society. To book a giant map session for your school or group, please call the museum at 601-576-6000.

The map’s brightly colored, smooth vinyl surface accurately illustrates Asia’s oceans, seas, rivers, mountains, countries and capitals. Designed for grades K-8, the map comes with a trunk full of accessories, including interactive activities and props and photo cards that teach students about the physical characteristics of the continent as well as its rich history, wildlife, and varied cultures. In “Cardinal Capture,” teams of students use cardinal directions to move student “pawns” around the map, capturing opponents. In “To What Degree?” teams compete against each other to find the most locations using latitude and longitude coordinates. Foam balls and hoops are used in “Geo-gym” games that each students the diverse geography of the Asian continent.

“These maps teach geography in a way that nothing else does. It is a physical as well as mental experience,” said Dan Beaupré, director of education partnerships for *National Geographic Live*. “The hands-and feet-on experience makes a lasting impression on students and sparks further interest.”

“We are excited for this natural connection of geography and science! This will be a great partnership with the Mississippi Geographic Alliance to engage children in their natural environment and promote science literacy,” said Angel Rohnke, Museum Education Coordinator.

“The giant maps are designed to teach students about the world in a fun and compelling way, and we are delighted to partner with the Museum of Natural Science to bring this experience to Mississippi,” added Carley Lovorn, Assistant Director of the Mississippi Geographic Alliance.

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“We hope this is the first of several giant maps we bring to the public in order to provide the building blocks for a deeper understanding about our world. Asia is a wonderful map to begin with since it is a critical continent for our future leaders to understand.”

National Geographic’s Giant Traveling Maps program was introduced in 2006 with a map of Africa, and has since expanded to include maps of Asia, North America, South America and the Pacific Ocean. Each map measures 26 feet by 35 feet and is loaned to schools and other hosts with an assortment of activities. In the 2011-2012 school year it is estimated more than 450,000 students will interact with one of these maps.

The maps also help showcase My Wonderful World, a multiyear National Geographic-led campaign to improve geographic literacy and to help students become more informed global citizens. The campaign (mywonderfulworld.org) is designed to improve the geographic literacy of young people ages 8-17 by motivating parents and educators to make geography more available and accessible in school, at home and in the community.

To learn more about the Giant Traveling Map project, for borrowing information or to download map activities, visit www.nationalgeographic.com/giantmaps.

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’s mission is to inspire people to care about the planet. It reaches more than 400 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 9,600 scientific research, conservation and exploration projects and supports an education program promoting geographic literacy. For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.com.

About the Museum: The museum is located at 2148 Riverside Drive in Jackson. Call 601.576.6000 or visit <http://www.msnaturalscience.org> for directions, parking and details about this event and other programs offered by the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, which is a part of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. The MMNS is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). **Museum Hours:** M-F: 8am - 5pm; SAT: 9am - 5pm; SUN: 1pm -5pm. **Admission:** \$6 adults; \$4 children ages 3-18; \$5 senior citizens (60+); free for children under 3; free for Museum Members; school teachers with classes: call for group information. **Prices and schedule subject to change.**

About the Mississippi Geographic Alliance: The Mississippi Geographic Alliance at the University of Mississippi works to strengthen geographic literacy in the state of Mississippi. A member of the nationwide network of state alliances sponsored by the National Geographic Society, MGA uses workshops, online resources, and other programs to help educators prepare students to embrace a diverse world, succeed in the global economy, and steward the planet’s resources. For more information visit www.mga.olemiss.edu, or contact Carley at mclovorn@olemiss.edu or 662-915-3776.

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