

Promoting UNESCO Global Geoparks as a sustainable tourism destinations!

The United Nations (UN) has declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The European Geoparks Network became partner of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism (IY2017) following the decision taken during its 38th EGN Coordination Meeting in September 2016. The European Geoparks Network aims to promote the UNESCO Global Geoparks - and especially those located in Europe - as sustainable tourism destinations among decision-makers and the public, to achieve a greater awareness and a better appreciation of the rich geological heritage of the European territories, to promote an holistic approach on natural and cultural heritage management, to raise the profile and visibility of the UNESCO Global Geoparks among the main players in tourism sector mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change in their territories.



Discover the UNESCO Global Geoparks in Europe:



Adamello Brenta UNESCO Global Geopark (Italy): Sustainable Tourism

During 2017 the Adamello Brenta Geopark will be revalidated for the third time to evaluate the continuation of its certification for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism that was first awarded in 2006. In order to achieve a successful outcome and retain this important designation, the Geopark is organizing a new participatory process with the aim of developing and creating new ideas for developing agri-tourism in the territory. The participatory process will involve local businesses thus greatly enhancing the second phase of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. Twenty two businesses within the Geopark became Charter partners in 2015.

Arouca UNESCO Global Geopark (Portugal): Training course for taxi drivers

The Arouca Geopark Association, in partnership with the Arouca Municipality and the National Institute for Tourism in Portugal, is promoting the "Welcome by Taxi" training course, which will be held from 24th February to 25th March, available to all taxi drivers within the Arouca Geopark. The main aim is to enhance the abilities and skills of the taxi drivers, in speaking English, politeness, safety/assistance procedures and experience in tourism provision. These are essential qualities for tourism providers, in particular to satisfy the expectations of tourists visiting the Geopark. The "Welcome by Taxi" quality label is already recognized by tourists and identifies "special" taxi drivers in Portugal capable of providing better services. The "Welcome by Taxi" training course will strengthen the quality of this service available to visitors to the Arouca UNESCO Global Geopark.



Bauges UNESCO Global Geopark (France) A Wi-Fi "geoborne" for the Prérrouge's Cave geosite

The entry of the Prérrouge Cave is now equipped with an autonomous electronic device that combines a local wireless Wi-Fi router with an imbedded server. The "geoborne" is powered by a photovoltaic panel coupled with a Li-Ion Battery. The device displays the content of the Geopark's geocorner, including the the Geoparks Network, geosites within the Geopark and a video presentation of the Prérrouge géosite. This allows visitors to view changes in the water levels within the cave and to follow the activities of cavers. The inventors of the geoborne have recently been rewarded in a startup contest in the city on Lyon.

Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark (Italy): Enjoy snowshoe trails!

During the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development Beigua UGG launched several outdoor activities and events. One special designation is for snowshoe trails which have been arranged for the winter season. The paths, marked with specific yellow/black trail signage, define circular routes of varying levels of difficulty, winding across the wonderful landscapes situated in the Stura Valley, the Sassello Forest and including the Alta Via dei Monti Liguri itinerary. Beigua Geopark published a dedicated guide-book (Snowshoeing between sea and mountains) with maps, altimetric profiles, photographs and information about the trails. Rental services for snowshoes and sticks are available in the Geopark Visitor Centres.



Bergstrasse-Odenwald UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): 32 touristic highlights as a special offer

The Geopark territory offers unique insights into regional Earth history, nature and culture. Guests from two European Metropolitan Regions use the territory for recreation and leisure during one-day or weekend excursions. They expect their hosts to provide good advice and special offers to discover the landscape and to find the most spectacular sites. In this context, the Geopark, the Chamber for Industry and Commerce and the regional tourist associations have compiled, in fact sheets, a list of 32 highlights which enable the gastronomy and tourism information staff to provide first class advice. An informative bus tour for more than 70 staff members completed their advanced training providing them with an authentic impression of the offers they promote to their guests.

Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark (Ireland): Ask me about the Geopark!

A great way to discover the natural and cultural heritage of a UNESCO Global Geopark is to take a tour in the landscape with a local guide, or in a "Visitor Centre Experience". The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, through its GeoparkLIFE programme, has launched a heritage interpretation programme for outdoor guides and visitors centres. The 'Ask me about the Geopark' programme highlights the importance of heritage interpretation in the Geopark visitor experience, provides heritage interpretation training and helps guides understand how they can weave local stories, cultural characteristics and heritage references into the experiences they offer.



Chelmos-Vouraikos UNESCO Global Geopark (Greece): 37th Panhellenic Passage of Vouraikos Gorge

Chelmos - Vouraikos UNESCO Global Geopark maintains a continuous interest in landscape and nature, considering them as rich natural resources and as a basis for the development of Sustainable Tourism in the region. It develops soft forms of tourism, such as geotourism, hiking tourism and agri-tourism. On Sunday, 14th of May, 2017, the 37th Panhellenic Passage of Vouraikos Gorge will take place. The descent through the canyon, covering a total distance of 22 km by hiking, follows the international path E4 along the lines of the Odontotos Rack Railway starting from Kalavryta and finishing at Diakopto. Along the path there are information signs. Due to the amount of geological, ecological and cultural data, visitors leave with memorable experiences. Stay informed at www.fdechelmos.gr

Styrian Eisenwurzen UNESCO Global Geopark (Austria): Partner Network focus on Sustainable Tourism.

Our Geopark has a diverse Partner Network including restaurants and accommodation providers. Different projects are helping to strengthen these partners including the transfer of knowledge to their guests about nature protection, geology and biodiversity. Every two years we have a best practice competition in these fields. The winner of this year's award is the so called "Stiegenwirt" in the municipality "Landl". Their team created a restaurant menu including information about our Geopark, nature and geo-conservation. Furthermore, different workshops and excursions are showing our partners the importance of sustainable tourism.



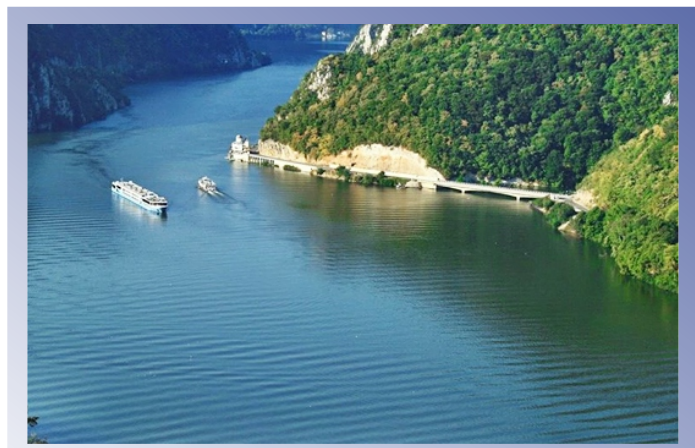


Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark (UK): Our Ambassadors Scheme - a contribution to sustainable tourism.

Nearly 11,000 years of human activity in the area of the Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark created a cultural landscape in which ancient monuments contrast with the legacy of 200 years of industrial activity. Quarries, limekilns, tramroads, canals, coal and silica mines reflect a period in which the Geopark's geological resources were exploited for metal production in south Wales. Weathered and overgrown, these relicts of an industrial age are an integral part of the Geopark's beautiful and dramatic landscape. Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark is deeply engaged in helping to support the local economy using the landscape, its geology and industrial history as drivers for growth. Its contribution to sustainable tourism includes its engagement with local businesses through organizing workshops and fieldtrips, annually, for the Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark Ambassadors scheme.

Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark (Netherlands): Group excursion – Cycling in search of the Ice Ages

The Hondsrug region is a great place to visit for a day's cycling. This group safari will take you to amazing places on the Hondsrug where the landscape still bears traces of the last Ice Age. The 17 kilometre cycle trail begins at the Hunebedcentrum in Borger. The first stop is in the village of Ees at a feature known as a 'glacial kettle' (Gletsjerkuil). Cycling through the woods around Exloo you will see eroded valleys lying along the flanks of the Hondsrug. After the last Ice Age, as summers became warmer, the snow melted and the surface of the ground began to thaw. The meltwater washed away vast quantities of mud and as that process was repeated, year in and year out, it created these wide valleys. The last stretch of this cycle safari brings you back to Borger.



Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark (Slovenia): Launching the Danube GeoTour project with partners

In January 2017 a project Danube GeoTour (valorisation of geo-heritage for sustainable and innovative tourism development of Danube Geoparks), co-financed by the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme, has officially started. A leading partner IHC – Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark with 10 partners and 3 associated strategic partners (several UNESCO Global Geoparks and other institutions) will together face a challenge: the sustainable use of the exceptional wealth of a Geopark's natural resources and heritage through sustainable tourism development that avoids the negative environmental impacts. The main project result will be the joint Danube GeoTour, designed to strengthen cooperation between the region's Geoparks and act as an innovative tourism product. <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/danube-geotour>

Karavanke/Karawanken UNESCO Global Geopark (Slovenia/Austria): We are JAKOB 2017

At the 28. International Natour Alpe-Adria fair, which was held between 1st and 4th of February 2017 at Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre, Karavanke/Karawanken UNESCO Global Geopark received the JAKOB 2017 award. JAKOB is an international award for quality and excellence in tourism in the Alps-Adriatic region. Every year, an international expert committee selects the best candidate, who makes an important contribution to the mosaic of innovative activities in the tourism industry of the Alps-Adriatic region. This year the main topic was related to „Innovative touristic programmes for active vacation in natural environments“. The International expert committee, chaired by Prof. Dr. Janez Bogataj, a Slovenian ethnologist, selected Karavanke/Karawanken UNESCO Global Geopark from 44 candidates from various European countries. More Information: <http://www.natour-alpeadria.si/en/for-exhibitors/jakob-award>



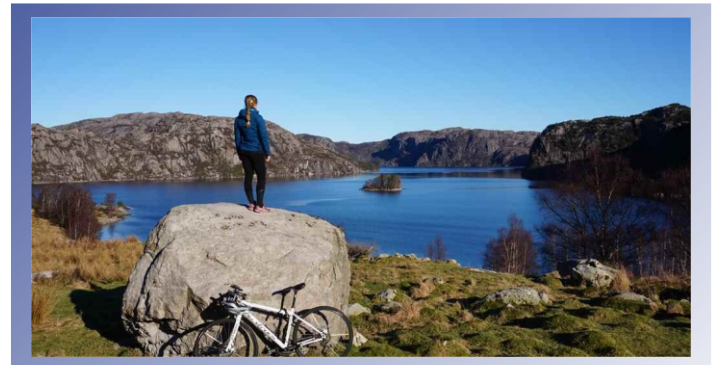


Lesvos UNESCO Global Geopark (Greece): NISSIOPi MARINE PARK - A new geotouristic attraction in extending geoheritage underwater

The Nissioi Marine Petrified Forest Park is a new geotouristic attraction for visitors located on the western coast of Lesvos UNESCO Global Geopark, Greece. It is an important area of the Petrified Forest of Lesvos and is of exceptional environmental, scientific and educational value. During guided boat tours visitors can admire the seafloor from a glass bottomed boat in the area around Nissioi, as well as exploring the fossil sites of the islet by following footpaths. Along the coast the erosive action of the waves has exposed brightly coloured giant conifers (ancestors of today's sequoias) and angiosperm trees. The diversity of the modern marine benthic flora and fauna, characterized by the dominance of seagrass meadows and the presence of important bio-communities, is exceptional. A unique visitors experience to discover!

Magma UNESCO Global Geopark (Norway): Welcome to GeoBike !

To accomplish practical actions for preserving the landscape for future visitors, we decided to create six biking routes inside the Geopark. We brought together a geologist, historian and a designer, and combined geological and historical information in an enjoyable package for our visitors. The tours take you through beautiful Norwegian landscapes with dramatic mountains and green valleys. The historical stops on the tours introduce local folk tales and historical events. The richness of the geological history tells of the events during the Ice Age and of the time of volcanos in the area.



Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark (Northern Ireland/Ireland): The Cavan Festival

The Geopark promotes the principles of sustainable tourism development and growth for all those who live and work in the region. One of the events in which the Geopark plays an integral role is the annual Taste of Cavan Festival. This festival began in 2012 as a showcase for local produce. Since then it has grown significantly with 2016 attendance figures in excess of 40,000 people. The aim of the festival is to provide a platform for local producers to showcase their artisan products to tens of thousands of local consumers and tourists to the area. The Geopark hosts an interactive information zone showcasing local artisan food and craft producers whilst providing information on the Geopark. Sustainable activities such as bee keeping demonstrations with local Geopark guides and hands-on activities such as fossil making and interactive biodiversity displays ensure an interest from our younger visitors. We also host a bi-annual Gourmet Tour where we introduce visitors to the culinary delights of the region thus supporting local businesses and promoting this beautiful location as a sustainable tourist destination.

Muskau Arch UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany/Poland): New discovery tour with an old industrial railway

In 2017, a new railway line around the glassmaking town Weißwasser/O.L. will offer tourists exciting exploration trips between an existing stunning older landscape resulting from mining and an emerging new landscape based on an active lignite mine. The special feature is that the railway is not a conventional railway, but an old industrial railway which was used only for the transport of raw materials 100 years ago. That this unique testimony to an industrial culture is still preserved, is the result of the activities of some dedicated enthusiasts and is a real stroke of luck for the UNESCO Global Geopark. Since 1995, at weekends during much of the year, the line runs tourist trains to Kromlau and Bad Muskau – both are known for their outstanding landscape parks. At the beginning of the new season, the new line of the narrow-gauge railway to a viewing tower south of Weißwasser will operate from the 13th April 2017.







TERRA.vita UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): A new Geosite catalogue for TERRA

TERRA.vita, a UNESCO Global Geopark located in northwestern Germany, will begin to catalogue its geological sites of interest this year. Based on earlier surveys, there are approximately 300 registered geosites. The new catalogue will not just serve as a scientific list of quarries, sand pits and erratic boulders, but will also serve as the basis for future geotouristic activities leading to the creation of new hiking- or cycling trails, field trip routes and attractive destinations. After gathering detailed information in a new database starting in March 2017, the content will be analyzed and the touristic value of the geosites will be evaluated. Selected contents will then be presented on the Geopark website and later be used for creating further touristic offers. The project will take at least half a year as every geosite has to be visited, surveyed and assessed.

Troodos UNESCO Global Geopark (Cyprus): Oceanic Whispers in High Altitude

TUGG team salutes the Year of Sustainable Tourism by organizing and proposing a series of activities connected to our common theme. Our effort aims to show the complexity between geology and human activities from ancient times to today. Every month we organize a walking event to our special geosites and other places of interest. Especially from the 12th to 21st May, we have the famous Wild Roses Festival in Agros Village. Visitors will have the opportunity to hike in the Geopark and pick roses early in the morning, as well as take part in gastronomy and culture activities related directly or indirectly to our ophiolites, the relicts of an ancient ocean floor! The full programme will be circulated in our website!



Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark (Greece): Religious Tourism in the Geopark

The municipality of Konitsa is currently known for its beautiful natural landscapes and its amazing stone built villages. However, the landmark of Konitsa is the arched stone bridge built during the Ottoman era at the edge of the city, the famous Konitsa or Aoos Bridge. This will be the starting point of the 5 km hiking route along the Aoos ravine to "Stomio" Monastery which is due to be organized in May, as part of the celebration events dedicated to the well-known saint "Paisios" of Konitsa. The event involves the participation of locals as well as foreigners that travel from neighbouring countries and even from as far away as Russia. You are all welcome!

Vulkaneifel UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): Representation of UNESCO Global Geoparks at the International Green Week in Berlin

At this year's International Green Week (world's biggest trade fair for agriculture and rural life) in Berlin, the UNESCO Global Geopark Vulkaneifel made a significant contribution as a showcase region at their first joint exhibition of the Federal Association of the German Low Mountain Ranges and the Association of German Nature Parks. Its recognition as a UNESCO Global Geopark is undoubtedly the outstanding event for Vulkaneifel during the past months. This has, in particular, fostered the appreciation and perception of the region and led to greater media attention. Vulkaneifel had the opportunity not only to be present at a joint exhibition, but Managing Director Dr. Andreas Schüller also presented Vulkaneifel and its sustainable tourism activities to promote the rural regional development on the LandSchau stage in Hall 4.2. by giving an interview to Heike Götz, a well-known German TV reporter. The highlight of the trade fair presentation was the importance of the recent UNESCO recognition and its opportunities for Vulkaneifel.



Agenda/Calendar

24. - 25. February 2017: International Conference on Sustainable Tourism, Penamacor, Naturtejo UNESCO Global Geopark

8. - 12. March 2017: Visit the UNESCO Global Geoparks at the ITB Berlin – Hall 4.1.b - Booth 227

21. – 26. March 2017: 39th European Geoparks Meeting, Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark