

# GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2023

## 1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Izu Peninsula UNESCO Global Geopark (Japan). A member of APGN

Year of Inscription/Year of the last revalidation: 2018/2022



A geotour on the connection between geological and cultural heritage

## 2. GEOPARK FIGURES

**Number of geopark staff:** 7 staff, 1 geoscientist with an advanced degree

**Number of visitors:** 12,937 (visitors to the central facility)

**Number of geopark events:** 155

**Number of educational programs for schools:** 121

**Number of press releases:** 51

## 3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

### Major Achievements in 2023

We took major actions to address the recommendation for improvement provided by UNESCO on the revalidation of the UNESCO Global Geopark. The progress was substantial.

- In agreement with the master and action plans of the geopark 2021-2025, the mid-term strategy and action plans of Education for Sustainable Development (hereafter addressed as ESD) were officially adopted by the Executive Board and the Steering Committee. These were prepared by working groups composed of geo-guides, NGO, and local university representatives, where citizens were able to voice their opinions. (Recommendation a)

- Workshops in agreement with the mid-term strategy and action plans of ESD were conducted to increase communication across a wide range of local communities. These include sharing of ideas related to sustainable development within the geopark's territory among the younger generation as well as a round-table discussion with geoguides to improve geopark activities. (Recommendation a)
- A comprehensive database on cultural heritage containing 143 items was compiled to be available online. The database will be combined with an interactive digital map to enhance the visibility of the rich cultural assets in the geopark. (Recommendation b)
- A series of events that connect geological heritage (land formed by volcanic activities) and cultural heritage (the resulting religious beliefs) were conducted in collaboration with researchers from Kokugakuin University. (Recommendation c)
- A cultural site, Atagawa Hot Spring, was newly designated in consideration of the connection between geothermal heat and the sustainable use of hot water produced. The designation is the first case to be recognized for its intangible cultural value. (Recommendation c)
- A series of articles were published on a local newspaper. The series provides a thorough explanation about the geological and geomorphological features of a site in focus and how these contributed to the distribution of historical sites in the area. (Recommendation c)
- Similar to previous years, a series of casual talk shows named "Geo-café" were coordinated in addition to interactive workshops. The events in the show covered a wide range of topics, such as literary works and communal baths, a children's book explained from the aspect of geology, and a dialogue between a poet and an ecologist.
- Large-scale literary events were coordinated in collaboration with The Japan P.E.N. Club (a local center of PEN International) and Shizuoka Performing Arts Center. The former advocated the need for peacebuilding in East Asia, while the latter aimed at revitalizing old literature through modernization of Yasunari Kawabata's work on stage. He is a Nobel Prize winner in literature, and his work took place in the peninsula.

#### **Contribution towards the GGN: Networking and Participation**

- Four delegates from the geopark (including a city mayor and CEO) participated in the 10th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks in M'Goun, Morocco, to show support for GGN's networking activities in Africa. A researcher was registered as a presenter in a Thematic Workshop held at the conference.
- As a member of UNESCO Global Geoparks, the SDGs Template was submitted to the GGN Working Group on SDGs for activities in 2023.
- An article was submitted to Issue 2 of the GGN publication 'Geoparks Going Green,' which presents good examples from UNESCO Global Geoparks that contribute to the implementation of Climate Change and Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **Management and Financial Status**

- The mayor of Izunokuni City, who is known for his international experiences and had just become the vice-president of the management entity of the Izu Peninsula Geopark, participated in the International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks in September and the National Geoparks Conference in Japan in October.
- A joint meeting and workshops were coordinated between the Geopark Secretariat and visitor centers on Izu Peninsula to reinvigorate the network of geopark activists.
- We received generous support from the Shizuoka Prefecture and the 15 municipalities in the Peninsula. The public sector played a significant role in underpinning the council. The budget allocated for Fiscal Year 2023 was JPY 56,614,242.

#### **Geoconservation**

- A female researcher expertized in ecology was newly hired. This is the first case for the Geopark to introduce the field of study to deepen an understanding of ecological heritage. The appointment is also expected to improve gender balance.

- A comprehensive database on biodiversity information has started to be compiled. Information will be combined with an interactive digital map to enhance the visibility of the rich ecological assets in the geopark.
- A lecture on the connection between tree planting and the conservation of the marine environment was provided to a local community.
- A researcher participated in an intensive training course on Geographic Information System to strengthen heritage conservation in the geopark.

### **Sustainable Tourism (Geotourism)**

- A project to develop next-generation geo-guides was conducted to overcome the challenge of aging issues and to ensure a continuation of geo-tourism and education in the geopark. Special training was also provided to enhance an understanding of the GGN principles.
- Under supervision of the Ministry of the Environment, the Geopark Secretariat formulated a strategy on ecotourism to promote sustainable transport and to make a good use of geopark heritage based on common rules.

### **New Education Programs on Geoconservation, Sustainable Development, and Disaster Risk Reduction**

- The Geopark Secretariat compiled a pamphlet on inquiry-based learning that aims to enhance an understanding of geopark heritages through the lens of SDGs. The pamphlet was established in response to the renewal of the national curriculum guideline, which is now more focused on proactive, interactive, and authentic learning.
- A local high school founded a new learning program on tourism in cooperation with our partner Izu Peninsula Geo-Guide Association. It aims at providing courses similar to geo-guide training programs. Students are expected to guide tours using a wide range of heritages in the geopark at the final step.
- Researchers made an active commitment to the ESD Resource Center of the Tokyo Metropolitan Region such as the provision of a lecture and participation in workshops. These activities took a multi-stakeholder approach.

### **Strategic Partnership**

- A comprehensive agreement was newly concluded between Kokugakuin University (The Organization for the Advancement of Research and Development) and our team. The two parties offered a series of programs related to religious beliefs associated with Izu Peninsula in cooperation with Mishima Taisha Shrine and Shirahama Shrine.
- Based on the comprehensive agreement on research collaboration between Shizuoka University and our team, three researchers from the Geopark Secretariat were newly inaugurated as a visiting associate professor of the university. The two parties also offered a joint workshop on inquiry-based learning.
- The Geopark Secretariat honoured Tokai Jidosha Co., Ltd with a testimonial commending for its donation since the conclusion of the comprehensive agreement on the promotion of geopark activities in 2015. The company donated part of sales proceeds from a local product, and its total amount exceeded JPY 1,000,000 in Fiscal Year 2023.
- Based on the comprehensive agreement on sustainable regional development between Shizuoka Gas Ltd. and our team, the two parties offered a series of programs related to the marine environment. These include cooking workshops and public lectures on wild life on the shore and under the sea, fisheries, food culture.

### **Promotional Activities**

- We are grateful for the merger between the Izu Peninsula Geopark Council and the Izu Peninsula Tourism Bureau that took place in April 2022. The merger significantly strengthened the capacity for marketing and promotion in the geopark.

- The extended network of the former tourism bureau had strong leverage to promote the peninsula as an ideal destination for educational tours. For example, the pamphlet on inquiry-based learning compiled by the Geopark Secretariat (see the first bullet point of New Education Programs) is actively used to educate the youth who visit the geopark.
- In response of increasing demands for inbound tourism, the former tourism bureau promotes premium tours and fam trips toward Taiwan and Vietnam using geopark heritage of the peninsula.
- The Geopark Secretariat appreciates the opportunity to promote our heritage in the Kansai region (southern-central part of Japan) through fam trips, as marketing and promotion is traditionally targeted toward the Tokyo Metropolitan Region.

#### **4. Contact Information**

Manager: Shigeya Kanazashi (Mr.): [info@izugeopark.org](mailto:info@izugeopark.org)

Geologist : Daisuke Endo (Mr.) : [info@izugeopark.org](mailto:info@izugeopark.org)