

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

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

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



The national training meeting of the Japanese Geoparks Network hosted by the UGGp

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of geopark staff: 8 staff, 1 geoscientist with an advanced degree

Number of visitors: 16,598 (visitors to the central facility)

Number of geopark events: 287

Number of educational programs for schools: 118

Number of press releases: 41

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major Achievements in 2024

We took major action to address the recommendations for improvement provided by UNESCO on the revalidation of the UGGp. Substantial progress has been made.

Recommendation a: involvement of local communities

- We recruited citizen representatives from the public and appointed them as working group members to formulate the next-term master plan. The master plan has a binding force on projects that the Secretariat Office shall work on, with the mayors of the cities and towns of Izu Peninsula committing to it once adopted by the Executive Board. Working group members comprise an equal ratio of men and women (see recommendation d), and each working group includes one youth to have a say from the perspective of the next generation. The first two meetings have been held.
- We appointed representatives of civil society, including those engaged in citizen activities and social entrepreneurs, to the Geopark Council. This organization has the authority to deliberate on project proposals of the UGGp.

Recommendation b: visibility

- Installation of interpretation panels for the Literature Trail and the Faith Trail was approved.
- Several rituals that have been recorded as digital archives are available on the Digital Map.

Recommendation c: connections between geological, natural, and cultural heritage

- Similar to previous years, a series of casual talk shows “Geo-Café” were organized, covering a wide range of topics such as land-ocean connections, the mystical ancient path of pilgrims, submarine topography and seabirds, and communal baths.

Recommendation d: gender balance

- The proportion of female delegates to the Geopark Council increased from 11% (as of the previous validation year) to 47%.
- A staff member of the Secretariat Office took paternity leave, which ensured equal opportunities and treatment for men and women in employment.

Recommendation e: partnership

- The selection standards for local products promoted by the Secretariat Office were clarified.
- The comprehensive agreement previously concluded with the Kokugakuin University Museum—one of Japan’s most influential institutions for research on Japanese traditional beliefs and culture—was upgraded to a comprehensive agreement with Kokugakuin University. The upgrade is the outcome of collaboration up to now.
- A new comprehensive agreement was concluded with the Izu Stone Culture Association.

Others

- We hosted a nationwide training meeting for the Japanese Geoparks Network. It covered challenging topics, such as cultural diversity, an inclusive society, and a circular economy, and contributed to raising awareness of the role of geoparks in enhancing individual and societal transformation to create a sustainable society. An officer from the UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia provided the keynote.
- Two large-scale symposia on disaster risk reduction were held in collaboration with Shizuoka University and its constituent municipalities.

Contribution toward the GGN: Networking and Participation

- A comprehensive agreement with Indonesia’s Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UGGp was successfully updated. The West Java Provincial delegation in charge of the sister Geopark visited our UGGp to discuss future collaborations.
- We accepted a delegation from the Kyrgyz Republic, which is working to establish UNESCO Global Geoparks.
- We dispatched a staff member to both the 8th APGN Symposium in Cao Bang and the international intensive course in Lesvos.
- An article on ESD was submitted to GGN Newsletter 2024 ISSUE 1-2.
- Entries were submitted for each GGN 20th Anniversary Contest 1 and Contest 2.
- The SDGs Template was submitted to the GGN SDGs WG for activities in 2024.

Management and Financial Status

- The mayor of Izu City, who had an excellent understanding of Geoparks, became president of the Izu Peninsula Geopark and Tourism Bureau.
- We launched working groups including academic experts from multiple disciplines (see recommendation a).
- Roundtable meetings were conducted to listen to the voices of the guides and strengthen grassroots democracy in Geopark management.
- We received generous support from Shizuoka Prefecture and 15 other municipalities on the peninsula. The public sector plays a significant role in Geopark management. The settlement of accounts for Fiscal Year 2024 was JPY 58,981,532.

Geoconservation

- A conservation working group was established to discuss strategies for the next term (see recommendation a).
- We distributed a leaflet on the protection of geological materials to the members of the corporation who managed the UGGp. A special exhibition on social issues caused by the unsustainable trade of geological materials was held at the UGGp museum to raise awareness among the general public.
- Communication related to connections between geological and natural heritage improved. One example is the creation of an interpretation panel that explicitly explains the establishment of a unique ecosystem resulting from geological events.
- Environmental education on marine and riverine ecosystems was conducted four times in accordance with a comprehensive agreement with Shizuoka Gas Ltd.

Sustainable Tourism (Geotourism)

- A guide training course was administered. Lecturers included university professors, members of the management team of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Chair of the UNESCO Global Geopark Council.
- With assistance from the Secretariat Office, university students created audio guides, and high school students planned and conducted guided tours. The latter was the outcome of the Youth Summit 2023. These projects contribute to the recommendation a.
- A guidebook on the forgotten heritage of Izu's pilgrimage route was published with assistance from the Secretariat Office. This encourages readers to visit multiple places and promotes awareness of Geopark stories.

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

- Following the Youth Summit of 2023, the Secretariat Office and Shizuoka University continued to support the inquiry-based learning of university and high school students in the surrounding areas of the territory. This project contributes to youth empowerment and capacity building.
- We published a book that systematically addresses the governance of Geoparks based on cooperation with citizens and community empowerment through Geopark activities. It was used as a textbook for the JGN's National Training Meeting.
- An event on disaster risk reduction aimed at raising elementary school students' awareness of climate change was held in collaboration with the hub organization of the Ministry of the Environment's ESD promotion network.
- We supported an active learning program that enabled elementary school students to learn about the origins of the Izu Peninsula through work experience as interpreters at the UGGp's museum, Georia.

Strategic Partnership

- The UGGp's researchers are inaugurated as visiting associate professors at Shizuoka University, in accordance with a comprehensive agreement. Active collaboration continues in Geopark projects and inquiry-based learning (see the first point under New Education Programs). With the UGGp as an important partner, a research group on social inclusion and community empowerment was established.
- The UGGp and Kokugakuin University jointly hosted a large-scale Geo-Café on the mystical ancient path of pilgrims, which added value to and increased the visibility of Geopark sites (recommendations b/c). This collaboration also contributed to the creation of a science TV program (see the first point under Promotional Activities) and developed into a study group to search for research seeds.
- Based on the new comprehensive agreement with the Izu Stone Culture Association (recommendation e), we jointly submitted a proposal for an IUGS Heritage Stone that focused on stone materials produced on the Izu Peninsula.

- Geopark programs were carried out in accordance with comprehensive agreements with Shizuoka Gas Ltd. and Tokai Jidosha Co., Ltd..

Promotional Activities

- The UGGp cooperated with the supervision of a science TV program produced by a commercial broadcaster. It uncovered the origins of the Izu-Mishima belief system, which was broadcasted to 150,000 households. The previous episode won a "Good Practice Award 2024" from the Advanced Imaging Society Japan Committee.
- The book on the governance of Geoparks (see the second point under New Education Programs) was distributed to schools and libraries in the territory and to the UNESCO Regional Offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, and Beijing, increasing the visibility of Geoparks in the context of international relations.
- A special exhibition on the origins of the Izu Peninsula (UGGp) and Hakone (aGGp) was held at a major tourist destination located at the boundary of the Geoparks.
- A notebook on inquiry-based learning, compiled by the Geopark Corporation, was distributed to 286 schools and education boards within and outside the prefecture. Two schools visited Izu Peninsula to participate in the study.
- The Secretariat Office supported the evaluation of entries submitted for an inquiry-based learning contest by students nationwide.
- Promotional activities focused on tourism and local products were conducted in the metropolitan area toward those who wished to move to the countryside.
- Various pamphlets were displayed in a library in prime locations in Tokyo to appeal to potential visitors.

4. Contact Information

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