

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: Unzen Volcanic Area UNESCO Global Geopark, Japan, Asia Pacific Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: Inscription 2009 / Last Revalidation 2021-2022*
(*UNESCO's field mission was delayed for 1 year from originally scheduled 2021 to September 2022 and the revalidation was approved by the UGGp Council in December 2022)



Cleaning Activity at Maehama Beach, Minamishimabara

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staff: 16 staff members including 3 geoscientists (of which, 4 staff members including 1 geoscientist are engaged exclusively in Geopark management).

Number of visitors: 128,260 visitors to the paid zone of the Gamadas Dome (Mt. Unzen Volcano Museum), increased by 27.26% from 100,785 in 2023.

Number of Geopark events: 5 events held directly by the Secretariat of the Council of Unzen Volcanic Area Geopark. 25 events held by the Gamadas Dome. 2 events the Mt. Unzen Disaster Memorial Foundation. As of 31 March 2025, the number of events held by other member organizations of the Council in 2024 is not available yet, since their activity reports for the Japanese fiscal year 2024

(April 2024 – March 2025) will be submitted to the Secretariat in April 2025.

Number of school classes realizing Geopark educational programs: 42 classes for 23 schools (30 classes for 16 elementary schools, 9 classes for 5 junior high schools, 2 classes for 2 senior high schools). Additionally, we have provided 1 Geopark class for a group of school teachers from Shimabara City.

Number of Geopark press releases: 10 press releases, 13 news on the official website, 32 Facebook posts, 11 Instagram posts, and 166 articles in newspapers (67 in the Shimabara Press; 71 in the Nagasaki Shimbun; 29 in other newspapers).

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2024

- In 2024, Mt. Heisei Shinzan was nominated as one of the “Second 100 IUGS Geological Heritage Sites.” This has further strengthened the international value of the Unzen Volcanic Area UGGp.
- The Unzen Volcanic Area UGGp participated in the 2024 Volcanic Erosion Control Forum (Kazan Sabo Forum) held on October 24 and 25 in Shimabara City, Nagasaki Prefecture. The geopark joined local governments and organizations to discuss volcanic safety, sediment control, and disaster prevention on a panel discussion event. This event highlighted the importance of sustainable development and community involvement in addressing volcanic hazards while promoting regional revitalization.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Participated in the SDG's online workshop by GGN (3 Feb and 22 Mar).
- Participated in the APGN Let's-Do-It online meetings (29 Feb, 9 May, 22 Aug, and 21 Nov).
- Contributed an article to the GGN publication “Geoparks Going Green” (18 Mar).
- Exchange meetings with 5 Brazilian UGGps: Southern Canyons UGGp (11 Apr), Caçapava UGGp (24 Apr), Quarta Colônia UGGp (12 Apr), Uberaba UGGp (9 May), and Seridó UGGp (9 Jul).
- Contributed an article to the GGN Gastronomy Working Group (19 Apr).
- Hybrid Exchange Meeting between UGGps of Finland and Japan (22 Apr).
- Participated in the GGN Welcome Digital Event (22 Apr).
- Participated in the 2024 APGN Geopark Development Forum in Hong Kong, China (13-18 May).
- Received a visit from Hong Kong UGGp and the Shun Tak Fraternal Association Yung Yau College during their school trip (19-22 Jul).
- Participated in the 8th APGN Symposium in Cao Bang, Vietnam (12-16 Sep.).
- Participated in the APGN CC (Coordination Committee) meeting (11 Sep).
- Participated in the APGN CC Election (Coordination Committee) meeting (11 Sep).
- Received a visit from Prof. Min Huh, Co-Director of Mudeungsan UGGp (20 Dec).
- Contributed to the GGN 20th Anniversary by promoting its photo context.

Management and Financial Status

- No changes to the overall operation structure of the council.
- Financial status has been stable, with regular budgets allocated by the 3 cities constituting the Geopark territory.
- Total income was 26 million JPY and total expenditure was 19 million JPY for FY2024.

Geoconservation

- Monthly patrolling of trails at Mt. Unzen-Fugendake was conducted in rotation by the member organizations of the Council.
- Cleanup and weeding events were carried out by various local organizations at geo-sites.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- Educational tours for 23 schools (3 elementary schools, 14 junior high schools, 6 senior high school) from outside the region, with a total of 2,307 students, were arranged by the Shimabara Peninsula Tourism Bureau, and 17 of them were guided by geo-guides.
- The Shimabara Peninsula Tourism Bureau, supported by Nagasaki Prefecture, is currently running the Shimabara Peninsula Cycling Tourism Project. This ongoing initiative involves joint rental bike campaigns organized by the tourism departments of 3 cities within the Geopark Area. Events are held regularly, with expert guidance and explanations provided on geological sites along the cycling routes.
- Walking events at 2 Olle trail courses were organized by the tourism departments of 2 cities.
- Some road directional signs for geo-sites were renewed.

New education programs on geoconservation, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction

- Organized the 13th Exhibition of Elementary and Junior High School Students' Independent Research Works on the Unzen Volcanic Area UGGp, and a total of 30 research works were displayed (20 by elementary school students and 10 by junior high school students).
- Held the 13th Contest of High School Students' Research Presentations on the Unzen Volcanic Area UGGp, and a total of 8 teams from 2 high schools participated.
- Under the Unzen Volcanic Area UGGp Academic Research Grant Program, grants were awarded to 5 teams of researchers from 4 universities. Specifically, research was conducted on the following 5 topics:
 1. Themed on the origin of water resources in Minamishimabara City;
 2. Themed on the genetic diversity of riparian forest plants in relation to the geological history of the Shimabara Peninsula;
 3. Themed on the geochemical processes of hydrothermal alteration in Unzen Jigoku;
 4. Themed on the development of ESD-based educational materials for the Unzen Volcanic Area UNESCO Global Geopark;
 5. Themed on the discovery and conservation of a pure strain of Miyama Kirishima in the Unzen region.
- A special exhibition was organized by the Gamadas Dome: "DINOVENTURE," an interactive dinosaur exhibition combining play and learning.

- The “Disaster and Reconstruction Fieldwork” program of the Gamadas Dome was conducted for 3 groups and had 93 participants.
- Conducted special sessions to introduce the concept of Geopark and various UGGp areas in the world at the English-Day-Camp event for local students of the 5th-8th grades to enhance their interest in international issues and stimulate the motivation to learn English.

Strategic partnership

- Signed an official collaboration agreement with a local high school (the Shimabara Industrial High School) for the 2024 academic year (April 2024 – March 2025) to provide support in the research class on local tourism for the final-year students as well as educational inputs for all the students.
- Provided cooperation to a local high school (Koka High School) in the 1st and 2nd year students’ group research projects on local issues for the 2024 academic year.
- 27 corporates and 109 individuals are registered as Geopark Supporters.

Promotional activities

- A regular TV program exploring various geo-sites in our region was broadcasted 2-3 times per month on a local cable TV station (Himawari Television).
- A 1-minute quiz program on the Geopark is run by a local radio (FM Shimabara) and a cable TV station (Cabocha Television) every day.
- An article on topics related to the Geopark is regularly published in the monthly bulletins issued by 3 cities in our region.
- A local geoscientific story of the Geopark is regularly published in the monthly newsletter issued by the Heisei Shinzan Nature Center.
- A local geoscientific story of the Geopark was published in February and March on the Shimabara Press.

4. CONTACTS

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