

# GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

## 1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

**Geopark name, country, regional Network:** Aso UNESCO Global Geopark, Japan, Japanese Geoparks Network)

**Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation:** 2014 / 2022



Visibility meeting with a professor of design in Kyushu University

## 2. GEOPARK FIGURES

**Number of Geopark staffs:** 3 staff including 1 geoscientist

**Number of visitors:** 10,946,437(The number of individuals who stayed at a hotel:1,047,532)

**Number of Geopark events:** 6

**Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes:** 20

**Number of Geopark press release:** 10

## 3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

### Major achievements in 2024

The values and direction that guided us before the COVID-19 pandemic no longer fully align with the current activities and needs of local residents. Through dialogue with community members and stakeholders over the past three years, we have come to recognize this shift. To better support these evolving local initiatives, we were able to create a new leaflet introducing the UNESCO Global Geoparks Programme and our renewed Geopark philosophy.

### Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Became a member of SDGs Working Group on APGN.
- Core staffs joined the 7<sup>th</sup> regional course on UNESCO Global Geopark 2024 in Langkawi

UGGp, Malaysia and presented our good practices, shared opinions as a member of panel discussion speakers.

- Applied to an evaluator after joining the international course on UNESCO Global Geoparks and sustainable management in Lesbos, Greece.
- Held an online event with the working group (Aso, Dak Nong, Rinjani-Lombok, Jeju) on the International Mother Earth Day.
- Participated "GEOPARKS IN INDIA The First Capacity Building Training-cum-Workshop on UNESCO Global Geoparks" as an online speaker.
- Visited the world heritage center in Jeju UGGp with Kumamoto prefecture hall staffs who try to find benefits of combined with the Geopark and World heritage.

### **Management and Financial Status**

Labor costs, office and project expenses are covered by both the budget from the local government and the investment profit by Aso Design Center, etc. Total Budget was approximately 24 million yen.

### **Geoconservation**

- Started to reassess the exist 33 Geosites to classify as Geological heritage site and create a list of places and objects that could be heritage sites.
- Created a drainage system map of Aso area.
- Rediscovered a pseudo-pillow lava site inside the caldera—evidence of a former lake—for the first time in about 50 years and have started research with geologists.
- Found a new outcrop showing the transition of deposits from the Aso-4 to Aso-3 eruptions near the Soyo Gorge Geological Heritage Site.

### **Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)**

- Oguni Forest Owner's Cooperative tried to create a new program and accepted excursion from HK Lion's club.
- Accepted university students in South Korea for an entrepreneurship development program at the request of the Kumamoto City International Foundation.
- Held a lecture on risk management during tours for local guides.

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

- Aso Geopark Youth team visited Mine aUGGp and a national Geopark.
- Junior Geo-leaders from Bungo-ono National Geopark visited "KIOKU" to learn disaster risk reduction.
- Junior Geoguide Program has been revised to better incorporate multisensory experiences and emotional responses with the National Youth Friendship Center (Aso UGGp Partner).
- Held lectures to the Rotary Club of Aso, the Aso Junior Chamber, and the Aso Young Entrepreneurs Group.

- Joined "Kumamoto Prefectural High School Learning Festival" exhibit with the National Youth Friendship center.

### **Strategic partnership**

- Signed a cooperation agreement with Rokua UGGp, Finland.
- Signed MoU with Merangin Jambi UGGp, Indonesia.
- Activated partnership networking with Cheongsong Ugpp, South Korea after COVID-19.
- Accepted excursion from primary school in Hong Kong.

### **Promotional activities**

- Held Geopark events for children during their summer breaks at a bookstore.
- Exhibited together with National Youth Friendship Center at a welfare event.
- Held a lecture on the visibility in Aso with a local designer who has international experiences.

## **4. CONTACTS**

**International Coordinator:** Koharu Soejima (info@aso-geopark.jp)

**Director/Geologist:** Koki Nagata (info@aso-geopark.jp)

Oguni Forest Owner's Cooperative (our partner) tried to create a new program and accepted excursion from HK Lion's club. This program offers more than just SINRIN YOKU in a cedar forest planted 250 years ago—it allows participants to witness local loggers felling trees and learn, through a visit to a sawmill, how the wood is used in buildings and everyday life, providing insights into sustainable living.