

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: Salpausselkä UNESCO Global Geopark, Finland, European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2022



Photo: Various events were organised during the European Geopark Week to celebrate the outstanding geological heritage of our Geopark. The photo is from one of the most popular events: A string concert that was held at an industrial cultural heritage site by the Lake Päijänne in Padasjoki.

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 4 staff members including 2 Earth scientists

Number of visitors: Total number of the visitors is difficult to estimate. Below as examples are estimated numbers of visitors to some of the major geosites and museums / visitor centres:

Lahti Sports Centre 500000, Lahti Ski Museum 23600, Likolampi Trail (Lahti Health Forest) 36000, Lahti Health Forest Trail Kintterö 7500, Tiilijärvi Lakes Trail 50000, Päijänne National Park 67000,

Päijänne House Visitor Centre 45000, Paistjärvi Nature Reserve 5000, Heinola

DiscGolfPark World at Heinolanharju Esker geosite 35000, Kammiovuori Trail 4000, Padasjoki Local Heritage House 2200.

Number of Geopark events: 11 held by management body, 22 by cooperative organisations

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 10 school classes, 6 kindergartens

Number of Geopark press release: 5

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2024

- We organised a seminar celebrating the intangible cultural heritage of our region, the tradition of sahti making, in collaboration with the Päijät-Häme Regional Council and the Lahti City Museum / Regional Museum of Päijät-Häme. Sahti tradition represents the oldest beer style in the world and remains a living heritage throughout our geopark area. The seminar was very successful with some 70 participants, excellent presentations and lively conversation.
- New Salpausselkä Geopark leaflet was created and published.
- The first common development project of all the Finnish Geoparks resulted in common social media campaign and national geotourism development plan.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Participation in the EGN CC meeting in Kula-Salihli UGGp in March.
- Participation in the European Geoparks Conference in Reykjanes UGGp in October, two oral presentations in the conference programme and a stand at the Geoparks Fair with other Finnish geoparks.
- Participation in the EGN CC Digital Meeting in November.
- Participation in the online webinar of Japanese and Finnish geoparks in April.
- Participation in the Nordic Geoparks' online meetings and a meeting held during the EGN CC meeting.
- GGN 20th anniversary photo contest was carried out in Salpausselkä Geopark in the autumn, at the same time with other Finnish geoparks; later the three best photos were chosen amongst the winners of each geopark.
- Participation in the collaboration of the Finnish UNESCO Global Geoparks and in the work of the Finnish National Committee.
- Participation in the online meetings for collaboration of the Nordic UNESCO Global Geoparks.

Management and Financial Status

Salpausselkä Geopark's management and development is coordinated by the Geopark Unit within regional non-profit tourism organisation Lahden seutu - Lahti Region Ltd (DMO Visit Lahti), in close cooperation with the Geopark municipalities: Lahti, Hollola, Heinola, Asikkala, Sysmä and Padasjoki. The annual funding and the operating budget of the Geopark Unit is 154000 euros. All of this funding comes from the six Geopark member municipalities, based on a permanent financing agreement. The Geopark management also makes use of project funding. The Geopark executive manager is in charge of the operations with the support of the steering group, which consists of representatives of the municipalities, Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland and the business partners. Daily operations of the Geopark include the environmental educators of the City of Lahti developing and coordinating Geopark education programmes for children and young people. This is covered by the City of Lahti and the costs are not included in the annual budget of the Geopark Unit. The municipalities, Metsähallitus and other landowners take care of the geosite maintenance at their cost.

Geoconservation

- Geosite Lake Sietikka was proclaimed a nature reserve in 2024 by the landowner City of Lahti.
- The restoration of Virtaankoski rapids of geosite Tainionvirta river in Sysmä begun in November 2024, led by the owner Sysmän Tainionvirta Oy, a non-profit company with the aim to restore the rapids. The geopark staff were members of the support group formed by stakeholders and experts.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- The geopark ran a project with funding from the Regional Council of Päijät-Häme to inventory the sites and services suitable for paddlers and to design paddling routes and a paddling map for the four big lakes of the geopark area. The routes and their descriptions were published on an international online platform (Outdooractive) and on the geopark website.
- Within the first common development project of all the Finnish Geoparks (Geoparks as assets for sustainable tourism 2022-24), a national geotourism development plan was compiled.
- *Cultural heritage and sustainable tourism* seminar was organised in cooperation with the Finnish Heritage Agency, the Regional Council of Päijät-Häme, the Lahti City Museums and Visit Lahti for the region's tourism sector.
- We created a new 7-day travel itinerary *Geopark Excursion in Lakeland Finland* with another Finnish Geopark, Saimaa UGGp.
- Eight more companies joined the Geopark's business partnership programme, committing to

sustainable tourism development. Partner network meetings were held in February and September.

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

- Salpausselkä Geopark School Programme piloting started, based on good experiences from the Early Childhood Education Programme.
- Salpausselkä Geopark Guide training was offered as part of the training of new local guides by Salpaus Further Education Department of Tourism, in cooperation with the Geopark staff.

Strategic partnership

- Salpausselkä UGGp collaborated closely with the region's largest vocational training and education institution Salpaus Further Education, integrating Geopark themes and contents in the curriculum, and with LAB University of Applied Sciences, planning and carrying out common development projects.

Promotional activities

- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted in January in the Visit Lahti exhibition space at the Matka Travel Fair, the largest travel industry event in Northern Europe (Helsinki), and at the Spring Fair in Helsinki in March.
- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted at FIS Nordic ski World Cup (Lahti / Salpausselkä Ski Games), onsite and on social media and website. A permanent section about the geopark and geological heritage was created on the Lahti Ski Games website, with a link to the geopark website.
- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted at Finlandiahiitto ski marathon's website and social media (the largest mass skiing event in Finland, organised every year in the geopark area) and featured in the medal that was given to all finishers.
- Six Salpausselkä UGGp attractions were promoted in the social media campaign “The 100 Most Instagrammable Places in Finland”.
- Within the first common development project of all the Finnish Geoparks (Geoparks as assets for sustainable tourism 2022-24), a social media campaign promoted sites of each Finnish geopark on the channels of the popular Retkipaikka-media (Facebook, Instagram, blogs), and the geoparks are now featured permanently on their website, with all the published blogs gathered on a dedicated section of the website.
- Within the same project, Finnish geoparks were promoted at two popular fairs: K50 in Tampere in March and International Outdoor Expo in Riihimäki in June.

- New Salpausselkä Geopark leaflet was published in August.
- Salpausselkä UGGp Instagram and Facebook channels were used actively to promote the geopark.
- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted throughout the year in the DMO Visit Lahti social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn)

4. CONTACTS

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