

GGN – Geopark Annual Report 2021

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name: Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark (HKUGGp)

Country: China

Geopark networks: Global Geoparks Network (GGN), Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) and Chinese Geoparks Network (CGN)

Year of inscription: 2011

Last revalidation: 2017

Representative Photo



As one of the main highlights of the HKUGGp 10th Anniversary Celebration, community fairs were organised in six distinct locations, enabling thousands of visitors to experience the culture and heritage of these geopark communities.

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

No. of geopark staff: 24, including two geoscientists

No. of visitors: 1.2 to 1.5 million

- No. of geopark events:** six events held by the management body and 46 events co-organised with cooperating organisations (Annex I)
- No. of educational programmes:** 20 school activities, covering classes in primary schools, high schools and universities
- No. of geopark press releases:** about 200 (including website, social media, newsletters)

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

The major achievements in the reporting period were as follows:

Contribution to the GGN – Networking and Participation

HKUGGp recognises the important role and function of networking and partnership in geopark networks. To facilitate knowledge exchange and experience sharing, we co-organised and participated in a number of networking and promotional activities, including the following:

- (i) Took up the role of social media coordinator for the Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN);
- (ii) Coordinated a series of “Let’s Do It” online video meetings among APGN geoparks during the pandemic (seven meetings in 2021);
- (iii) Participated in the 2nd GGN Digital Forum, the APGN Coordination Committee meeting, the Digital 9th International Conference on UGGps, and the 2021 Online Thematic Seminar on Management Challenges of Internationally Designated Areas; and
- (iv) Continued to serve as an intellectual hub for the China Geoparks Network (CGN), Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) and GGN, and to foster closer relationships among sister geoparks.

Management and Financial Status

The management and financial status of HKUGGp remained stable, with an annual recurrent budget of US\$3.74 million. The provision covers key management areas, including (i) management and operations; (ii) promotion; (iii) science popularization; (iv) networking; (v) capacity building; and (vi) local engagement and sustainable socio-economic development.

Geoconservation

Located in the east part of Hong Kong and extending from the northeast New Territories to the Sai Kung area, HKUGGp is a single entity, where sites and landscapes of international significance are holistically managed with the support of local communities and other geopark stakeholders. The most sensitive

areas of ecological, cultural and geological significance are protected and managed under the prevailing legal framework of Hong Kong.

Sustainable Tourism (Geotourism)

Though there were very few overseas visitors in 2021 because of the pandemic, the number of local visitors increased, resulting in the total number of visitors in 2021 – 1.2 to 1.5 million – being similar to the figures for the past five years. HKUGGp continued to work closely with the tourism industry and local communities on capacity building, and promoting sustainable and responsible tourism activities.

To enhance the visitor experience, we established two new visitor facilities – the Kat O Heritage Trail and the Lai Chi Wo Story Room – with stories and information obtained in the past few years through our interviews with and research on the Geopark communities. We also provided corresponding training to geopark guides to deepen and diversify their knowledge of the history and intangible cultural heritage of the local communities of Kat O and the Hing Chun Alliance. Another round of recruitment of Recommended Geopark Guides was completed in January 2021; six candidates passed the assessment to join the elite group.

To celebrate the 10th Anniversary of HKUGGp's becoming a member of the GGN, a host of events and activities were held with partners and communities from July to December 2021. These included promotional videos, public talks, roving exhibitions, a photo and video competition, a stamp-collection activity and community fairs. These activities promoted both the natural and cultural heritage of the geopark, and green tourism and local sustainable development.

To further improve accessibility to HKUGGp, we continued to work closely with transport and tour operators to explore opportunities to improve their coverage of and frequency to HKUGGp geosites. Public minibus service to the High Island East Dam was extended to full-day service on Sundays and public holidays. Improvements to multiple piers in HKUGGp have been planned.

Early work is being done on extending the High Island Geo-trail to the Fa Shan vantage point, which provides visitors with a breath-taking, close-up view of the Po Pin Chau sea stack.

Education Programmes on Geoconservation and Sustainable Development

While the annual HKUGGp School Programme was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the year, HKUGGp continued to provide online lectures and talks for local geopark schools and university students. We also coordinated online exchanges between students of local geopark

schools and students of two overseas Geoparks: Oki Islands UGGp and Hateg UGGp.

HKUGGp supported the Hong Kong Science Museum to establish the Earth Science Gallery, and following its opening, co-organised the “Nice to meet you, Mr. Rock” workshop with the museum.

Strategic Partnerships

In collaboration with relevant geopark stakeholders, HKUGGp continued to support, promote, and in some cases, launch and operate geo-education, geo-conservation, socio-economic and cultural development initiatives. The operation of all visitor centres and story rooms was handled by our supporting partners and local communities, together with on-going capacity-building endeavours. A community seminar was held in July 2021, where all geopark stakeholders, including NGOs, government departments, villagers, geopark hotels, universities and geopark guides, were invited to share their experience and engage in discussions on HKUGGp-related matters.

We continued to engage local communities in our “Same Roots, Same Origins” project to record, preserve and promote their intangible cultural heritage, and to build up their capacity. The project led to the establishment of the Kat O Heritage Trail and Lai Chi Wo Story Room in 2021. As with the other story rooms in the project, the Lai Chi Wo Story Room is operated by local villagers, who can give visitors first-hand accounts of their community, culture and heritage. In addition, we continued to engage non-government organisations to promote nature conservation and manage rural areas with an innovative mindset. Three examples are the Sustainable Lai Chi Wo Project, the Chief Executive’s Community Project, and the Management Agreement Scheme in Lai Chi Wo.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, HKUGGp supported the local communities by providing masks, hand sanitisers, and banners to remind visitors to wear masks. HKUGGp also engaged non-governmental organisations to recruit geopark ambassadors to be stationed at popular geosites and on kaito ferries to give health and geo-conservation messages to visitors.

Promotional Activities

We collaborated with geopark partners, local operators and communities in the following promotional activities in 2021:

- (i) Established a heritage trail in Kat O and organised a media tour to promote the cultural heritage of Kat O;
- (ii) Established a new story room in Lai Chi Wo and organised a media tour to promote the Hing

Chun Alliance; and

- (iii) Organised a promotion campaign for the HKUGGp 10th Anniversary with launch of 10 promotional videos, a radio programme, a magazine advertorial and a photo album, as well as a series of promotional activities on a dedicated website, and on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

4. CONTACTS

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Annex I – Geopark Events in 2021

Events held by the management body

Month	Event
Mar	Press tour for a local TV station – Tung Ping Chau
Mar	Press tour for a local TV station – Ma Shi Chau
Mar	Press tour for a local newspaper – Lai Chi Wo
Aug–Sep	Radio programme with five episodes
Nov–Dec	10th anniversary “Geopark Master” stamp-collection activity
Nov–Dec	10th anniversary photo and video competition

Events co-organised with cooperating organisations

Month	Event
Apr–Dec	“Discover Hong Kong Geopark” roving exhibitions around the city (17 locations)
Apr	Online student exchange between HKUGGp and Oki Islands UGGp (2 sessions)
May	Online student exchange between HKUGGp and Hateg UGGp (2 sessions)
Jul	Community seminar and 10 th anniversary kick-off ceremony
Jul–Nov	“Nice to meet you, Mr. Rock” public workshop at the Hong Kong Science Museum (10 workshops)
Jul–Sep	10th anniversary roving exhibitions at local shopping malls (4 malls)
Jul–Oct	10th anniversary public seminars at the Hong Kong Science Museum (6 seminars)
Sep	Press tour of a new facility: the “Kat O Heritage Trail”
Nov–Dec	10th anniversary community fairs (6 geosites)
Dec	Opening ceremony for the “Lai Chi Wo Story Room”
Dec	Launch of “A Glance”, a commemorative photo album