

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2023

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: The 30th anniversary of the Päijänne National Park, part of Salpausselkä UGGp, was celebrated during the European Geoparks Week. Amongst other events, three cruises to the national park islands were organized for the public on the Lake Päijänne. The national park protects the beautiful and valuable archipelago nature of the second largest lake of Finland.

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 30100, Linnaistensuo Mire Nature Reserve 41000, Lapakisto Nature Reserve 41000, Tiilijärvi Lakes Trail 50000, Pirunpesä Gorge 30000, Päijänne National Park 67000, Päijänne House Visitor Centre 43000, Paistjärvi Nature Reserve 5000, Heinola DiscGolfPark World at Heinolanharju Esker geosite 40000, Padasjoki Local Heritage House 1400

Number of Geopark events: 13 held by management body, 14 by cooperative organizations

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 9 school classes, 5 kindergartens

Number of Geopark press release: 10

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2023

- Sustainable tourism action plan for the Salpausselkä UNESCO Global Geopark was published in August 2023.
- The Salpausselkä Geopark Unit, in charge of the geopark management, achieved the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) label in August, as the first geopark organization.
- An inventory of the current state and development needs of all the geosites and several other nature sites was conducted. The data collected and analyzed is being used in planning the maintenance and further development of trails and sites in cooperation with the landowners.
- The second Salpausselkä Geopark Guide course as part of formal vocational education was organized by Salpaus Further Education Department of Tourism, in cooperation with the Geopark staff.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Participation in the EGN CC meeting in Hateg UGGp in March and presenting a bid to host the EGN 2024 Conference
- Participation in the Norwegian Geotourism seminar in May, giving a presentation about the Finnish Geoparks
- Participation in the UNESCO Global Geoparks Conference in Marrakech in September, two oral presentations in the conference programme
- Participation in the collaboration of the Finnish UNESCO Global Geoparks and in the work of the Finnish National Committee. Main event of the year was the Geopark seminar on the International Geodiversity Day in Rokua UGGp, organized in collaboration between the Finnish Geoparks.
- Participation in the EGN CC Digital Meeting in November
- Participation in the online meetings for collaboration of the Nordic UNESCO Global Geoparks
- Contributing an article to the EGN Newsletter
- Contributing material to the Geotourism Guide presenting UNESCO Global Geoparks

Management and Financial Status

- Salpausselkä UGGp is managed by a regional non-profit tourism organization Lahden seutu - Lahti Region Ltd (DMO Visit Lahti). The Geopark's management and development is coordinated by the Geopark unit within the company, in close cooperation with the Geopark municipalities: Lahti, Hollola, Heinola, Asikkala, Sysmä and Padasjoki. The annual funding and the operating budget of the Geopark coordination 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

- A thorough inventory of the current state and development needs of all the geosites used in geotourism provides background information for the protection and further development of the sites in a sustainable manner, in cooperation with the landowners.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- The sustainable tourism action plan for the Geopark was compiled as part of an EU funded development project, in cooperation with LAB University of Applied Sciences, the regional tourism organization Visit Lahti and other stakeholders, including local entrepreneurs and tourism companies. The process included two workshops and a seminar.
- The Salpausselkä Geopark Unit, in charge of the geopark management, achieved the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) label in August, following the national travel industry sustainability programme.
- Five more companies joined the Geopark's business partnership programme, committing to sustainable tourism development.

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

- A new Geopark training package for companies working within the tourism field in the geopark area was launched in cooperation with the Salpaus Further Education Department of Tourism

- Salpausselkä Geopark Environmental Education working group, with a representative from each Geopark municipality, continued integrating Geopark themes into the cultural education programmes of the municipalities.

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.
- The Finnish Geoparks' first common development project deepened the collaboration between the Finnish Geoparks, in which Salpausselkä UGGp takes part actively

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)
- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted at the OutdoorExpo 2023, the largest event in Finland for people who love the outdoors (30 March - 2 April, Helsinki)
- Salpausselkä UGGp was one of the attractions promoted in the national summer campaign "100 reasons to travel in Finland".
- Several international media fam trips were organized to the region by Visit Lahti / Lahti Region Ltd, some in cooperation with Visit Finland, with Salpausselkä UGGp geosites among the attractions visited and Geopark as one of the main themes promoted during the activities.
- Social media influencer's campaign presenting Salpausselkä Geopark's several geosites, activities and services from May to October.
- Common website of all the Finnish Geoparks was published in November as part of the Finnish Geoparks' first common development project that was being implemented throughout the year. More promotional activities were planned for the next year.
- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted as a sustainable sports destination throughout the year in the Visit Lahti campaigns connected with sports tourism development projects and major sports events organized in the geopark area, such as FIS Nordic ski World Cup and gravel cycling events. A promotional video "Salpausselkä – Sports Destination Created by Water" was published in November.
- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted in Visit Finland's Partnership Autumn campaign *Pure Finnish Nature* in Germany as part of Visit Lahti region
- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted as part of the Finnish Lakeland and Lahti Region in a publication by the German Nordis-Magazine (travel to Nordic countries) in March

- Salpausselkä UGGp Instagram and Facebook channels were used actively to promote the geopark
- Salpausselkä UGGp was promoted throughout the year in the Visit Lahti social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter / X, LinkedIn)
- Salpausselkä UGGp is promoted in the Visit Lahti Product manual for tour operators, published in September 2023

4. CONTACTS

Manager: Kati Komulainen, kati.komulainen@lahtiregion.fi

Geologist: Vilma-Lotta Tallgren, vilma-lotta.tallgren@lahtiregion.fi