

GGN – Geopark Annual Report 2023

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name:	Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark (HKUGGp)
Country:	China
Regional Networks:	Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN), Chinese Geoparks Network (CGN)
Year of inscription:	2011
Year of the last revalidation:	2017

Representative photo:



The "Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival" was organised on four islands in Hong Kong Geopark. Located on a small island connected by a tombolo accessible only during low tide, the artwork "Moonrise in Daylight" uses different shapes of the moon as a metaphor for tidal movements to interpret the delicate relationship between humans and nature.

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staff: 24, including two geoscientists

Number of visitors: 1.6 million

Number of Geopark events: 8 held by the management body and 16 co-organised with cooperating organisations (Annex I)

Number of school classes participating in Geopark educational programmes: A total of 146 Geopark educational activities were organised with primary schools, secondary schools and universities, attracting about 9,500 participants.

Number of Geopark press releases: 125 (including website, social media and newsletters)

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2023

- Organised 27 Hong Kong Geopark IUGS Geological Heritage Site Sea Excursions, attracting about 1,500 participants, including local geologists, students, teachers, the underprivileged, geopark communities and representatives from the tourism industry. The aims of this large-scale science popularisation program were to celebrate the designation of the Early Cretaceous Rhyolitic Hexagonal Rock Formation as one of the First 100 IUGS Geological Heritage Sites and to raise awareness and understanding of this valuable geological heritage.
- Supported the Hong Kong Tourism Commission to organise the Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival, which took place on four islands in the Geopark. Hong Kong Geopark provided technical support and engaged the local communities from design to implementation. The festival promoted the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Geopark through a number of artworks and a diverse range of arts and cultural activities to visitors, providing an immersive experience integrating arts, culture and exploration. It also increased the sense of belonging and pride among the villagers.
- In collaboration with the local community, we established a new geopark attraction – High Island – which involved cultural conservation, local engagement, promotional activities and improvements in public transport and infrastructure, to promote sustainable development and green tourism in this rural area.
- Supported the First Hong Kong Inter-Secondary School Geology Quest, a competition that attracted the participation of hundreds of students from 49 schools. The aim of the event was to foster interest in geology among secondary school students.

Contribution to the GGN – Networking and participation

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

(i) Took on the role of social media coordinator for the Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN);

(ii) Coordinated four "Let's Do It" online meetings among APGN geoparks to facilitate communication, exchange ideas, and discuss common challenges faced by geoparks in the APGN network; and

(iii) Actively participated in the 10th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks in Morocco and the annual meeting of the Chinese Geoparks Network.

Management and Financial Status

- The management and financial status of the organisation remained stable, with an annual recurrent budget of US\$2.88 million. This covers key management areas, including (i) management and operations, (ii) promotion, (iii) science popularisation, (iv) networking, (v) capacity building, and (vi) local engagement and sustainable 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, in which 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)

- After the Covid-19 pandemic, with local green tourism promotion, there was a slight increase in the number of visitors to 1.6 million in 2023. HKUGGp collaborated closely with the tourism industry and local communities, focusing on capacity building and promoting sustainable and responsible tourism. To increase Geopark exposure, we participated in the International Travel Expo Hong Kong and collaborated with the media and YouTubers to issue reports and videos about the Geopark.

- To improve the visitor experience, we initiated a project to repackage geopark attractions with new designs for interpretation panels, map boards and leaflets, and completed four attractions in 2023. Work is continuing on the remaining sites.
- To improve accessibility to HKUGGp, we collaborated with the Transport Department and ferry companies to introduce two new ferry services: one operating between Sha Tau Kok and various geopark attractions in the Northeast Sedimentary Rock Region, and another between Sai Kung Town, Kau Sai Village, and High Island in the Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region. These new routes have made it easier for visitors to explore these sites and attracted the return of the villagers. Additionally, improvement works for multiple piers in the Geopark are in progress.
- In collaboration with the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, we organized training programs for about 1,000 tourist guides and local escorts. These programs included lectures and field visits to enrich the participants' knowledge of the Geopark's geological and cultural heritage to help them provide high-quality guided tours in the Geopark.
- We undertook a thorough review of the Recommended Geopark Guide (R2G) system. Based on the review findings, we decided to simplify the guide system, standardise the application procedure, and enhance the training of the geopark guides. In 2023, six training sessions, consisting of two outdoor field trips and four indoor lectures, were provided. We also had meetings with geopark tour operators to enhance information sharing and explore better promotion strategies.

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

- We restarted the school educational activities after the Covid-19 pandemic. We organised 146 Geopark educational activities for about 9,500 participants from primary schools, secondary schools and universities. These activities included online lectures and student exchange activities in collaboration with overseas geoparks, such as Itoigawa Geopark in Japan. These initiatives allowed students to engage with geopark experts and peers from different countries to foster cross-cultural learning and broaden their horizons.
- HKUGGp continued its close cooperation with the Hong Kong Science Museum in 2023, co-organising regular “Nice to meet you, Mr. Rock” public workshops and public lectures on

Earth Day and International Geodiversity Day.

- To celebrate International Geodiversity Day on 6 October 2023, a series of activities were organised with the Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong, including an online talk and three field trips for students and underprivileged groups.
- We collaborated with the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups on the Hong Kong Young Ambassador Scheme to provide geopark training to 20 young ambassadors and arranged for them to work as volunteer guides at the HKUGGp Volcano Discovery Centre. In addition, we collaborated with local universities and provided summer internship for 12 students to work in the Volcano Discovery Centre.

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 programmes. The operation of all visitor centres and story rooms, together with on-going capacity-building endeavours, was handled by our supporting partners and local communities.
- We continued to engage local communities in our “Same Roots, Same Origins” project to record, conserve and promote their history and intangible cultural heritage and build up their capacity. 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.
- With the launch of the Second-phase Opening-up of Sha Tau Kok, Hong Kong Geopark consulted the various local communities in the area and liaised with different stakeholders to address the needs and concerns of the villagers, resulting in the launch of a promotion campaign titled "Protect the Countryside – Respect the Rural Communities"; adjustment of public ferry services to meet the needs of both visitors and villagers; and the refinement of promotion strategy.

Promotional activities

- We collaborated with our geopark partners, local operators and communities in the following

promotional activities in 2023:

- i. A promotion campaign on the Early Cretaceous rhyolitic columnar rock formation of Hong Kong Geopark being selected as one of the First 100 IUGS Geological Heritage Sites, with advertisements on buses and minibuses;
- ii. The Protect the Countryside – Respect the Rural Communities” campaign, to remind visitors of proper etiquette when visiting the Geopark , with advertisements on buses and minibuses, social media posts, and banners in village areas and on kaito ferries;
- iii. The Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival, which encourages visitors to appreciate the geological and cultural heritage of four islands through artworks and a series of art and cultural programmes; and
- iv. A series of education events to celebrate Earth Day, International Geodiversity Day and other special dates associated with the Geopark, the environment and the Sustainable Development Goals, such as public lectures, seminars for students, and field trips for students and teachers.

4. CONTACTS

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Annex I – Geopark Events in 2023

Events held by the management body

Month	Event
Feb–Nov	1. Six training sessions (lectures and field training) for Geopark guides
Mar	2. First aid training for Geopark communities
Mar	3. Lecture for students and teachers from Baptist University of Hong Kong
Apr	4. International Mother Earth Day 2023 Marine Refuse Public Lecture
Jul-Oct	5. Hong Kong Geopark IUGS Geological Heritage Site Sea Excursions
Aug	6. Two training sessions for staff of Geopark Hotels
Sep	7. Online lecture for the Hong Kong Museum of Climate Change
Oct	8. Geological Field Excursions to celebrate International Geodiversity Day

Events co-organised with cooperating organisations

Month	Event
Jan	1. Public lecture on local cultural heritage (Hakka songs)
Jan	2. Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival 2022
Jan–Apr	3. The First Hong Kong Inter-Secondary School Geology Quest
Feb	4. Countryside Conservation Conference 2023
Mar	5. "Feathered Dinosaurs" public lecture, hosted by Prof. XU Xing
Apr	6. Two Geopark community coastal cleanup activities to celebrate Earth Day
Apr	7. "Conservation Work for Ap Chau, Kat O and Lai Chi Wo" Public Lecture
May	8. Field trip for teachers on geopark cultural heritage
May	9. Geopark excursion for members of the Geological Society of Hong Kong and the Geological Society of London Hong Kong Regional Group
Jun	10. Public lecture on geotourism resource at the HK International Travel Expo
Jun & Dec	11. Two online training sessions for local tour guides & tour escorts on geotourism
Jul	12. Geological field excursion for a summer camp program organised by the University of Hong Kong
Sep	13. Online seminar for International Geodiversity Day
Oct	14. Geopark excursion for travel agencies from China
Mar–Apr	15. Hong Kong Science Festival 2023
Nov–Dec	16. Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival 2023