

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2021

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network:

Unzen Volcanic Area UNESCO Global Geopark, Japan, Asia Pacific Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2009 / 2017



The “Teiten” area, rebuilt as a disaster memorial site of the 1991 volcanic disaster

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staff:

- 22 staff members, including 6 staff members with 100% engagement in geopark management and 6 professionals with geo-scientific expertise.

Number of visitors:

- 65,373 visitors to the paid zones of the Gamadas Dome (Mt. Unzen Volcano Museum), a core facility of the geopark. (Increased by 0.3% from 65,168 visitors in 2020, and decreased by 65.2% from 188,093 visitors in 2019 due to travel restrictions under the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021.)

Number of Geopark events:

- 5 events held directly by the Secretariat of the Council of Unzen Volcanic Area Geopark, including 4 seminars for local residents and 1 exhibition. 6 seminars were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The information of events held by member organizations of the Council in 2021 will be available in April 2022, since the activity reports of Japanese budget year 2021 (April 2021-March 2022) will be submitted by all the member organizations in April 2022.

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes:

- 91 classes, including 38 for elementary school, 16 for junior high school, 35 for senior high school, and 2 for university. (Increased by 42.2% from 64 classes in 2020 and by 65.5% from 55 classes in 2019.)

Number of Geopark press release:

- 239 articles on newspapers, including 94 on the Nagasaki Shimbun, 75 on the Shimabara Press, and 70 on other newspapers. (Increased by 42.3% from 168 articles in 2020 and by 123.4% from 107 articles in 2019.)

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2021

- The “Teiten (Observation Site)” was rebuilt in 2021 on the local residents’ initiative, to be preserved as a disaster memorial site of the 1991 Mt. Unzen-Fugendake Volcanic Disaster. It took 30 years for all the people related to the disaster happened to this area to make a joint decision, through patient efforts and uncountable dialogues, to preserve it to pass on the experiences of volcanic disasters to the future as well as to the people in other regions which do not have experiences of such disasters.
- A new educational tour focusing on the volcanic disaster, called the “Teiten Tour”, has started since July 2021 as a collaborative program jointly developed and managed by the Shimabara Tourism Board, the Gamadas Dome, the association of geopark guides, the Unzen Sabo (Erosion) Control Center, and the Secretariat of the Council of geopark. Despite the travel restrictions under the COVID-19 pandemic, a total of 28 tours for 947 visitors were conducted in July-December 2021.
- We managed to conduct a larger number of geopark learning classes for schools (+42% from 2020, +65% from 2019) and to increase the media coverage (+42% from 2020, +123% from 2019).

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- 2 staff members of the Secretariat of the Council participated in the 2nd GGN Digital Forum on 23-24 February 2021.
- 1 staff member of the Secretariat of the Council participated in the Digital Course on UNESCO Global Geoparks on 7-20 June 2021.
- 2 staff members of the Secretariat of the Council participated in the Geotourism Fest & International Conference on 5-7 August 2021, hosted by the Rinjani Lombok UGGp,

Indonesia.

- The president of the Council and 3 staff members of the Secretariat of the Council participated in the 9th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks on 12-16 December 2021, hosted by the Jeju Island UGGp, Korea.
- During the Second APGN Week (22-28 April 2021), we introduced one UGGp from each of 7 member countries of APGN every day for 7 days on our Facebook.
- 1-2 staff member(s) of the Secretariat of the Council participated regularly in the APGN “Let’s Do It” zoom bi-monthly meetings.
- A special photo exhibition featuring the Jeju Island UGGp (Korea), one of our sister geoparks, was held at the Gamadas Dome in December 2021. It had 1,041 visitors. It is further planned to have a traveling exhibition at local libraries in our geopark in 2022.

Management and Financial Status

- The Secretariat office of the Council has 6 full-time staff members and 1 part-time advisor. Since October 2021, one of the 2 staff members with geo-scientific expertise has been dispatched to a Japanese geopark in other region to provide technical support there. In order to sustain the activities of our geopark with a smaller number of the Secretariat staff, we have increased the number of geopark classes handled by the geopark guides, and it has been contributing to enhancing the skills of the geopark guides as well as having a larger number of geopark classes at schools.
- Funding for the geopark activities directly managed by the Secretariat of the Council and the salaries of 2 staff members directly hired by the Secretariat is allocated as the regular budget by the 3 cities in our region. The amount of funding has remained fairly constant at around 26 million Japanese yen per year since 2017.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the budgets for travels and the revalidation mission in 2021 were not used. Therefore, parts of these budgets were re-allocated for renovating and updating the contents of many interpretive panels and road signs which had been deteriorated by aging.

Geoconservation

- The “Teiten” area was rebuilt to be preserved as a disaster memorial site on the initiative of the Liaison Council of the Annaka District Neighborhood Association for the 30th anniversary of the Mt. Unzen-Fugendake Volcanic Disaster. The great pyroclastic flow of 3 June 1991 took the lives of 43 people, who were staying around this area, including members of the press, volcanologists, members of the local firefighting unit, police officers and taxi drivers. Two taxis chartered by the press and a vehicle of a news crew, which had been left abandoned under the ground, were excavated and are now exhibited here.
- Two large-scale landslides occurred in the Unzen Hot Spring area on 13 August 2021 due to

the record heavy rainstorm. The landslides took lives of 3 residents, including a staff of our Council's member organization, and damaged several hotels and shops as well as one of the main sources of hot spring. We are grateful for having received a donation from the member geoparks of the Japanese Geoparks Network (JGN) and it was given to the Unzen City for reconstruction of the area.

- One new interpretive panel was installed and 11 interpretive panels were renovated at 12 geopark sites.
- One new warning panel was installed at a geological site to inform the visitors about the prohibited acts and conservation of the site.
- The monthly patrolling of trails around Mt. Unzen-Fugendake, a geopark site as well as a National Park, is conducted in rotation by the member organizations of the Council. The local office of Ministry of the Environment, a member organization of the Council, has installed a new warning sign about the prohibition of a campfire there, and after that, some local residents stopped making a campfire near the summit.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- The "Teiten Tour", a new educational tour focusing on the disaster prevention, started in July 2021. In July-December 2021, 28 tours for 947 visitors were conducted, including 16 tours for school trips of 752 students in total.
- The association of our geopark's official guides, named the "Unzen Volcanic Area UNESCO Global Geopark Guides Association", was established in April 2021. It is notable that the Association is now led by a female president, as it is still rare in Japan with a large gender gap.
- The English version and the Japanese version of our geopark's leaflet have been updated, and 10,000 copies of English version and 20,000 copies of Japanese version were reprinted.
- The official guidebook of our geopark was updated from the previous 2017 version, and 1,000 copies of the new 2021 version were published.
- One new welcome panel was installed, and 3 welcome panels and 30 road signs were renovated.

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

- The "Disaster and Reconstruction Fieldwork", a new disaster education program emphasizing the reconstruction process, has been started by the Gamadas Dome since April 2021. In April-December 2021, 9 fieldwork programs for 87 participants were conducted, including 2 high schools, 1 university, 2 local governments, 1 tourism organization and 3 private companies.
- In September-December 2021, a traveling exhibition featuring the Mt. Unzen-Fugendake

Volcanic Disaster in 1991 were held at 3 locations outside the region by the Gamadas Dome on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Disaster. It had a total of 15,372 visitors.

- In December 2021, an exhibition of the individual studies on themes related to geopark by local elementary and junior high school students was held in the Gamadas Dome. A total of 177 studies, the largest number ever in the last 10 years, were displayed.
- The 10th Unzen Volcanic Area UGGp High School Students Research Presentations Contest was held on 31 October 2021. 4 teams from 3 high schools presented their researches on themes related to biodiversity and development of local specialty products.
- With the support from the Unzen Volcanic Area UGGp Academic Research Grant Program, 2 researcher teams of 2 universities in Nagasaki Prefecture conducted research projects on ecological resources and universal tourism in our geopark.

Strategic partnership

- An official collaboration agreement was signed by Shimabara Industrial High School and the Council of geopark for the 2021 Japanese academic year (April 2021-March 2022) to promote collaboration in the themed research classes for the final-year students.
- The students of Shimabara Technical High School have repaired the paper lanterns of our geopark's mascots "Geo-kun" and "Jina-chan", which used to be damaged badly. They are now displayed at the entrance of a museum shop in the Gamadas Dome. This was reported in local media as a good example of collaboration between a local school and the geopark management body.
- The geo-scientific expert staff and the international coordinator of the Secretariat of the Council provided technical assistance to the local office of Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) in revising the Japanese and English interpretive panels at 4 locations related to volcanic disasters in the region.
- A staff member of the Secretariat of the Council gave presentations on the geopark activities and its collaboration with various local partners in the National Webinar for the UNESCO Future Co-Creation Platform Program, held by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) on 4 December 2021 on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Japan's accession to UNESCO. A total of 409 participants attended the webinar.

Promotional activities

- A new bi-weekly program on NBC Radio, introducing the interesting points of our geopark, started in July 2021. This program is sponsored by 3 local companies. The NBC Radio is widely broadcasted not only in our region but throughout Nagasaki Prefecture as well as some parts of surrounding prefectures.
- A new program on the Himawari Television (a local cable TV station), exploring various

geopark sites in our region, started in April 2021. It is broadcasted 2-3 times per month.

- A 1-minute quiz program on the geopark is run by the FM Shimabara and the Cabocha Television (local radio and cable TV stations) every day.
- An article on a variety of topics related to geopark is regularly published in the monthly bulletin issued by each of the 3 cities in our region.
- An article on geo-scientific topics and geopark sites in our region is regularly published in the monthly newsletter of the Heisei-Shinzan Nature Center.

4. CONTACTS

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