

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2022

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network:

Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark, Japan, Asia Pacific Geoparks Network)

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2013 / 2022



Waseda Field Science Academy in the Oki Islands (left) and Action Plan Workshops for Geopark Member Organizations (right)

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 22 staffs including 1 geoscientist

Number of visitors:

- Visitors to the islands: 52,661
- Visitors to the Oki Islands Geopark Museum: 8,740
- Visitors to Entô Geo Lounge: 5,321
- Tours arranged by the management body and their participants: 169 tours, 4,681 participants

Number of Geopark events:

- Events held directly by the geopark management body: 12
- Nature observation and outdoor events organized by the Ministry of the Environment: 3
- Lectures and field work tours for local communities and institutions: 7

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes

- Oki High School: compulsory course for 1st and 2nd year, elective course for 3rd year students
- Lectures and field work tours at schools conducted by geopark lecturers: 49

Number of Geopark press release: 4

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2022

- Carried out a series of workshops and engaged a wide variety of local players in order to create the geopark action plan for the 2023-2030 time period.
- Merged with the Oki Islands Tourism Association (01.04.2022).
- Signed a cooperation agreement with JTB Corp. (travel industry business) with the goal of regional development and revitalization (14.04.2022).
- Strengthened the cooperation with the Dōzen Island area of the geopark, including Oki-Dozen Senior High School and Dozen Furusato Miryokuka Foundation.
- Implemented a one-stop joint booking central service for the three Dōzen Islands in order to improve the visitor experience on the islands (10.2022-).

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Participated in and presented at the Japan Geoscience Union Meeting about the Oki Islands UGGp and its activities (22.05.2022).
- Coordinated meetings and the creation of the action plan of the Working Group on Island and Coastal Areas, Water, Ocean.
- Participated in APGN Online Exchange Project "Let's Do It!" throughout the year.
- Organized and facilitated exchanges between students from the local high schools and schools from overseas geoparks (Lang Son Aspiring Geopark: 15.02.2022, 18.05.2022, Hateg

UGGp: 23.03-08.04.2022).

- Served as a GGN evaluator of two field missions to aUGGPs abroad, and a JGN evaluator of an aspiring geopark in Japan.
- Coordinated and participated in an online exchange program with a Japanese aspiring geopark (Mikasa Geopark, 13.07.2022).
- Students from Ama Town Junior High School participated in an online exchange with schools from other geopark areas in Japan (13.07.2022: Hisaka Junior High School in Goto Islands (Shimogoto Area) Geopark; 14.07.2022: Oshima Municipal Daini Junior High School in Izu Oshima Geopark).
- Participated in the 12th National Conference of Japanese Geoparks Network and facilitated a session about the possibilities of digital transformation (DX) in geoparks. Two partner organizations, NPO Oki Shizen Mura and Oki High School, presented during the same conference about their activities (21-23.10.2022).
- Students and representatives from Oki High School presented at the 7th APGN Symposium ("A New Type of Exchange Utilizing the Geopark Network Initiated by High School Students", "Geopark Education Through Project Based Learning and Narratives for the Empowerment of the Local Community") (06-09.09.2022).

Management and Financial Status

- The management body merged with the Oki Islands Tourism Association and changed its name from Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee to Oki Islands Geopark Management Bureau (01.04.2022).
- Organized meetings of the Tourism Working Group and Education and Environment Working Group, which check the policy results, assist with project planning and budget proposals.
- The geopark operates its budget and financial management independently, with its main sources of funds being the prefectural government and the four local municipalities.

Geoconservation

- Continued the 'Subsidy for Oki Islands UGGp Academic Research' Project (7 studies were selected).
- Cooperated with the Ministry of Environment on removal of invasive species (07.06.2022 and 26.06.2022).
- Organized a marine debris cleanup with the local community in the Fuse area, Okinoshima Town. The cleanup was a part of a conservation event of *Rugosa rose*. (17.09.2022).
- Organized an exhibition about fossils and environment in Geo Lounge (Ama Town) and a touring exhibition about the invasive species of plants and animals of the Oki Islands. The Oki Islands Geopark Museum was visited by 1,603 people during 15.07.-28.08.2022, which is when the touring exhibition was installed there.
- Worked on updating the geopark site records.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- Carried out training for certified geopark guides and foreign language guides. Launched a new 3-year-long project focused on reorganizing the guide system structure on the islands with the goal of increasing the guides' income and stimulating the demand for guided visits to the geopark.
- Applied to and was approved for the implementation of "Flagship product creation project" (*Kanban Shōhin Sōshutsu Jigyō*) of the Japan Tourism Agency.
- Cooperated with Shimane Prefecture on a demonstration testing of Google Glass, as a part of the 5G Promotion Project.
- Organized "Experience the Oki Islands" Island Fair in order to stimulate the tourism sector in early spring, which has been a shoulder tourism season in the Oki Islands (02.04-08.05.2022)
- Implemented a one-stop joint booking central service for the three Dōzen Islands in order to improve the visitor experience on the islands. (10.2022-)
- Certified 3 new products as geoparks products and accepted 2 products in a packaging design subsidy program.
- Published Oki Dōzen E-bike Map, Oki Dōgo E-bike Map and Dōgo Sea Kayak Map to support the further development of outdoor activities on the Oki Islands.

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

- Published a "picture story show" about the lifestyles and traditions of the Oki Islands.

- Organized and carried out an environmental education program for the Niigata Municipal Kōshi Senior High School in cooperation with the NPO Oki Shizen Mura (02-03.11.2022).

Strategic partnership

- Entō (an accommodation and a base facility of the geopark) and Ama Town Board of Education: cooperation on the operation and management of the Geo Lounge and Geo Room Discover.
- JTB Corp.: cooperation agreement with the goal of regional development and revitalization through the tourism industry.
- NTT Docomo: cooperation agreement with the goal of minimizing the educational disparities that both children and adults are experiencing in the geopark due to its remote location.

Promotional activities

- Installed seven new signboards and cooperated with the National Park on the contents of one signboard installed in the joint areas of the national park and the geopark.
- Carried out a summer, autumn and winter promotion campaign at Jalan.net, one of the biggest accommodation booking sites in Japan, and sent out email newsletters to Jalan members.
- Continued the branding process of the Oki Islands and the Oki Islands UGGp, e.g. refreshed the photography portfolio for the main geopark sites and facilities, and created a style guide for geopark-generated content.
- Organized seminars about the Oki Islands for overseas travel agencies and companies with the goal of increasing the geopark's visibility and supporting the creation of tours for international visitors.
- Participated in the VISIT JAPAN Travel & MICE Mart 2022 and promoted the Oki Islands to 18 overseas travel agencies and companies (22-24.09.2022).
- Participated in a promotional event for travel agencies and media organized by Shimane Prefectural Tourism Federation.
- Sponsored numerous media outlets, including magazines, tourism websites, travel influencers, and invited them to visit the Oki Islands UGGp to experience the newest tourism products and spread information about them.
- The connecting bus from Matsue Station to Shichirui Port (Matsue) and the regular buses in Okinoshima Town have ad-wrapping on the outside using the Oki Islands Geopark logo and photos.
- Cooperated with Montbell, a Japanese outdoor goods manufacturer, with which the Oki Islands are linked as a Montbell Friend Area. Using the geopark as a starting point, outdoor and nature activities of the Oki Islands are introduced on the manufacturer's website and in their members-only guidebook, helping to invite tourists.
- Participated in a "Fun From Home" project organized by Japan National Tourism Organization and live streamed a tour around the geopark to promote the Oki Islands UGGp as a destination for international travelers. The live stream currently has 9,100 views.
- Published and distributed tourism and geopark brochures in Japanese, English, French and Chinese.
- Carried out promotional activities on social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram), tourism website and geopark website.

4. CONTACTS

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