

GGN – Geopark Annual Report 2020

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



APGN “Let’s Do It” online exchange meeting with the participation of the Latin America and Caribbean Geoparks Network; exchange activities like this have become the new normal during the pandemic

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

No. of geopark staff: 24, including 2 geoscientists

No. of visitors: about 1.5 million per year

No. of geopark events: 9 events held by the management body and 24 events co-organised with cooperative organizations (Annex I)

No. of educational programmes: 35 geopark school activities, covering classes in primary schools, high schools and universities

No. of geopark press releases: about 80

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 series 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 (11 meetings from March to December 2020);
- (iii) Established an HKUGGp web-sharing platform, supported by the GGN, for knowledge sharing among UGGps during the pandemic (released in mid-2020);
- (iv) Participated in the Tourism Working Group and the Education Working Group of the GGN;
- (v) Participated in the 1st GGN Digital Forum and APGN Coordination Committee meeting; and
- (vi) 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 promotion; (ii) infrastructure; (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)

HKUGGp received 1.2 to 1.5 million local and overseas visitors each year for the past five years, with the number following the basic trend of Hong Kong's inbound visitor numbers. HKUGGp continued to work closely with the tourism industry and local communities in capacity building, and promoting sustainable and responsible tourism activities.

To enhance the visitor experience, we extensively enriched the content of the Siu Ying Story Room with stories and information obtained in the past few years through our interview and research work on the seven villages of the Hing Chun Alliance. At Lai Chi Wo, a new digital weather information panel was installed and a coastal boardwalk was upgraded. In addition, we provided training on the history and intangible cultural heritage of the local communities of Kat O and the Hing Chun Alliance for geopark guides to deepen and diversify their knowledge.

To further improve accessibility to HKUGGp, we continued to work closely with transport and tour operators to explore opportunities to improve their coverage and frequency to HKUGGp geosites. Kaito ferry service frequency from Ma Liu Shiu to Lai Chi Wo was improved with Saturday sailings. Improvements to multiple piers in HKUGGp are in the pipeline.

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, up-close view of the Po Pin Chau sea stack.

Education Programmes on Geoconservation and Sustainable Development

The annual HKUGGp School Programme was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the year. To continue to promote earth science and enhance public awareness of the importance of nature conservation during the pandemic, we launched the "Little Geoparker" online learning platform for students stuck at home. Online lectures and talks were provided to local geopark schools and university students, as well as to students of other UGGps outside of Hong Kong, including Hexigten and Unzen Volcanic Area geoparks. We also coordinated online exchanges among three local geopark schools and students of Itoigawa High School in the form of questionnaires.

Strategic Partnerships

In collaboration with relevant geopark stakeholders, HKUGGp continued to support, promote, and in some cases operate geo-education, geo-conservation, socio-economic and cultural development initiatives. The operation of all visitor centres and story rooms was supported by HKUGGp or our supporting partners, together with on-going capacity-building endeavours.

We continued to engage local communities in our “Same Roots, Same Origins” project to record, preserve and promote their intangible cultural heritage, as well as to build up their capacity. The project led to the establishment of the Siu Ying Story Room and “The Lucky Harbour Kat O” publication in 2020. As with the other story rooms in the project, the Siu Ying 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 “wear masks” banners. HKUGGp also engaged non-governmental organisations to recruit geopark ambassadors to station at popular geosites 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 2020:

- (i) Published a book on Kat O and organised a media tour to promote the cultural heritage of Kat O;
- (ii) Developed a new mobile-friendly website;
- (iii) Provided technical support to the Hong Kong Science Museum for the establishment of the Earth Science Gallery and Palaeontology Gallery to promote earth science knowledge and HKUGGp;
- (iv) Provided technical support to the Hong Kong Museum of History for the establishment of the Hong Kong Story Exhibition; and
- (v) Organised engagement visits with Hong Kong District Councils to promote the geopark concept and to solicit their support for the continued development of HKUGGp.

4. CONTACTS

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Annex I – Geopark Events in 2020

Events held by management body

Month	Event
Feb	Lions Nature Education Foundation visit to the Hing Chun Alliance
Jun	Launch of the “Little Geoparker” online learning platform for students
Jul	Tourism Commission visit
Sep	Online training on Kat O and the Hing Chun Alliance for Geopark guides
Oct	Kat O press tour
Oct	Kwun Tong District Council visit
Nov	Eastern District Council visit
Nov	Online training on the High Island supervolcano for Geopark guides
Dec	High Island East Dam press tour for a television (TVB) reporter

Events co-organised with cooperating organisations

Month	Event
Mar–Dec	APGN “Let’s Do It” online exchange meeting (x 11)
Mar	Online sharing with frontline staff of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration
Aug	Online lecture for Hexigten UGGp primary school students
Aug	Online lecture for Unzen Volcanic Area UGGp students (x 2)
Aug	Online exchange with Messel Pit World Heritage Site (WHS)
Aug	Lecture for Travel Industry Council tourist guides
Oct	Launch of the book <i>Same Roots Same Origins series – The Lucky Harbour Kat O</i>
Oct	Online lecture for undergraduate students of the Chinese University of Hong Kong
Oct	Online lecture for master’s students of the Chinese University of Hong Kong
Oct	Student questionnaire exchange between students of HKUGGp and Itoigawa UGGp
Oct	Online exchange with Messel Pit WHS and Bergstrasse Odenwald UGGp
Dec	Lecture for Travel Industry Council tourist guides
Dec	Geopark ambassadors at major geosites
Dec	Exhibition on “Geological Wonders and Nature Conservation in Sai Kung” in a public library