



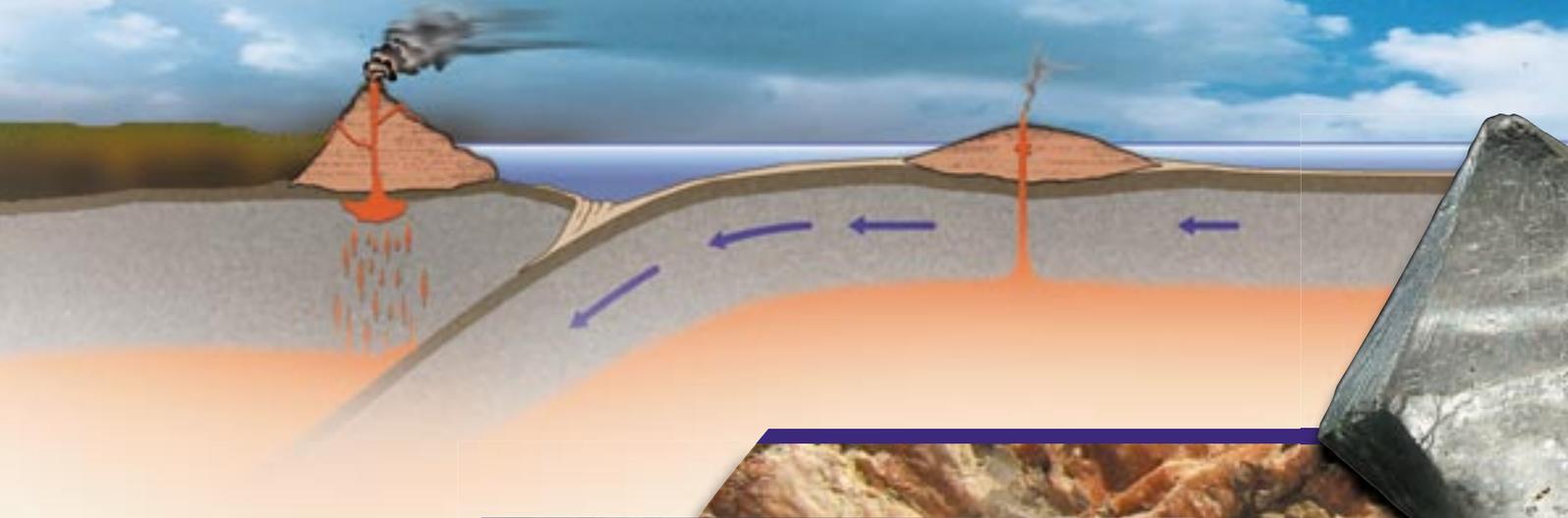
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

GLOBAL GEOPARKS NETWORK



Ecological and Earth Sciences in UNESCO





Fossils on display in the Luberon Geopark, southern France.



The Knockan Puzzle: how do old rocks end up on top of young ones? This open-air display at the Knockan Visitor Centre shows the sequence of rocks as found in the North-West Highlands Geopark in Scotland. But the black rock on top is twice as old as the white limestone underneath: how did this happen?

Geopark Bergstrasse-Odenwald, Germany: block field caused by spheroidal weathering of rocks.

What is a GEOPARK?

A **GEOPARK is a nationally protected area** containing a number of geological heritage sites of particular importance, rarity or aesthetic appeal. These Earth heritage sites are part of an integrated concept of protection, education and sustainable development. A GEOPARK achieves its goals through a three-pronged approach:

CONSERVATION

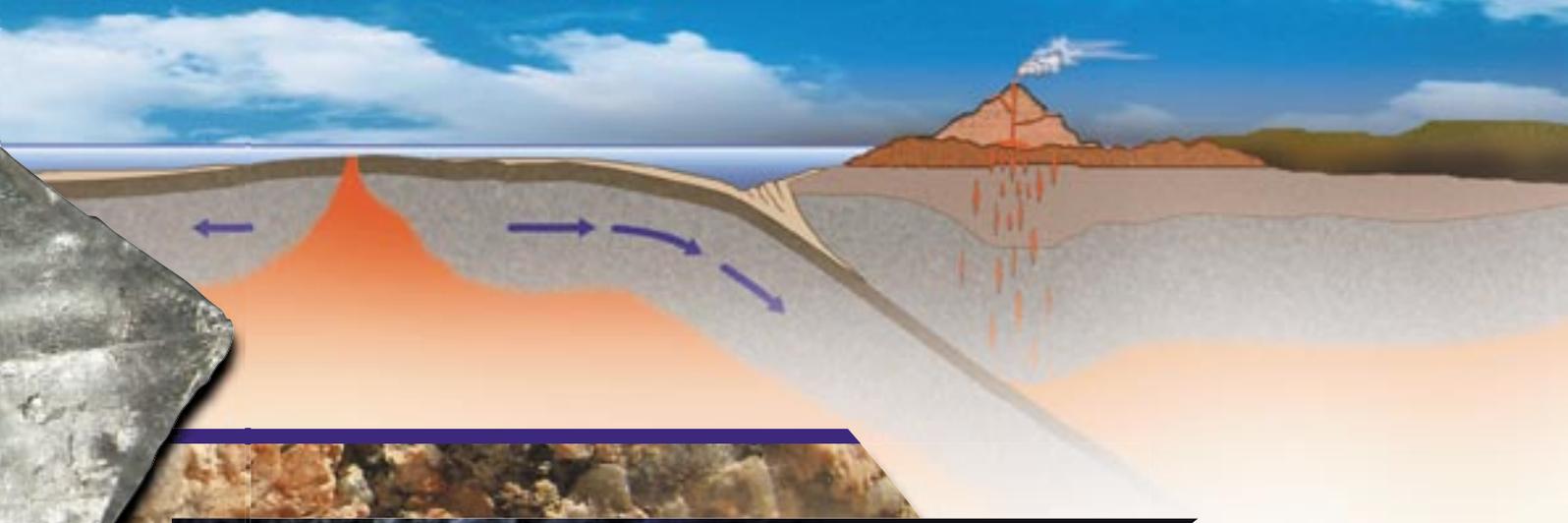
A GEOPARK seeks to conserve significant geological features, and explore and demonstrate methods for excellence in conservation. The management authority of each GEOPARK ensures adequate protection measures in consultation with collaborating universities, geological surveys or relevant statutory bodies in accordance with local traditions and legislative obligations.

EDUCATION

A GEOPARK organizes activities and provides logistic support to communicate geoscientific knowledge and environmental concepts to the public. This is accomplished through protected and interpreted geosites, museums, information centres, trails, guided tours, school class excursions, popular literature, maps, educational materials and displays, seminars and so on. A GEOPARK also fosters scientific research and cooperation with universities and research institutes, stimulating the dialogue between the geosciences and local populations.

GEOTOURISM

A GEOPARK stimulates economic activity and sustainable development through geotourism. By attracting increasing numbers of visitors, a GEOPARK stimulates local socio-economic development through the promotion of a quality label linked with the local natural heritage. It encourages the creation of local enterprises and cottage industries involved in geotourism and geoproducts.



A GLOBAL GEOPARKS NETWORK

Hands-on learning at Lesvos Petrified Forest Geopark, Greece.



A prospective GEOPARK can apply for membership to the Global Network of National GEOPARKS.

This network promotes high quality standards in park services, the sharing of common strategies and best practice for preservation and geotourism development, and the exchange of knowledge and support on various issues facing GEOPARKS around the globe.

The management and activities of proposed sites must be in line with guidelines and criteria defined by UNESCO and must be evaluated by an international team of experts.



Natural History Museum of Vienna, Austria.

Calanques. Geological landscape in the western part of Madonie Geopark, Sicily, Italy.





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Marble Arch Caves
Geopark, winner
of the Northern
Ireland tourism
awards 2006 being
voted as the No. 1
tourist attraction
in Northern Ireland,
U.K.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) works to advance peace and security around the world by creating the conditions for genuine dialogue between nations based on respect for shared values and the dignity of each civilization and culture. This dialogue centers on various topics in the fields of education, science and culture.

GEPARKS and UNESCO

The Earth sciences programmes within UNESCO's Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences are unique in the UN, as they pay particular attention to enhancing knowledge of the Earth System.

These programmes address interdisciplinary research and capacity building in the fields of geology and geophysics, including the sustainable management and development of the Earth's environment and its mineral and energy resources. They also deal with global Earth observation, hazard mitigation and the safeguarding of geological heritage.

Consequently, UNESCO's support for the GEOPARK initiative is a natural extension of its work since the GEOPARK approach promotes a truly interdisciplinary network of international cooperation for studying the Earth System while sustaining local communities. Pursuant to the decision of its Executive Board in June 2001 (161 EX/Decisions, 3.3.1), UNESCO has been invited 'to support ad hoc efforts with Member States as appropriate' in order to promote territories or natural parks having special geological features.

This innovative initiative introduces a unique international framework linking socio-economic development and the conservation of the natural environment and hence constitutes a new and vital approach to conservation issues.

The GEOPARKS NETWORK works in close synergy with UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) World Network of Biosphere Reserves and national and international undertakings and non-governmental organizations active in geological heritage conservation.



GEOPARKS a new strategy:

GEOLOGY for DEVELOPMENT



UNESCO's support for national GEOPARKS responds to the strong need expressed by the geoscientific community in numerous countries around the world for an international framework of geoconservation to enhance the value of the heritage of the Earth. This new strategy seeks to safeguard and sustainably manage landscapes and geological formations which are key witnesses to the history of life on Earth, thereby stimulating regional economic and cultural development.

North-West Highlands Geopark, Scotland, U.K.: a place of living culture. Pupils from the local schools performing music and songs.

Some of the key events that led up to this initiative:

1991 First International Symposium on the Protection of Geological Heritage: Declaration of the Rights of the Memory of the Earth, Digne-les-Bains, France;

2000 Founding of the European GEOPARKS Network;

2001 Agreement for cooperation between the Division of Earth Sciences of UNESCO and the European GEOPARKS Network;

2004 Formation of the Global Network of National Geoparks assisted by UNESCO - First International Conference on GEOPARKS held in Beijing, China;

2005 The Madonie Declaration defines the European GEOPARKS Network as the integrating organization for the members of the Global Network of National GEOPARKS in Europe;

2006 Second International Conference on GEOPARKS, Belfast, Northern Ireland, U.K.;

Today The Global Network of National GEOPARKS continues to grow as regions in all parts of the world apply to become members.

Water Adventure Park, Geopark Eisenwurzen, Austria.



Cover photos:

Shilin Geopark, Yunnan Province, China, is famous for its 'stone forest' of limestone pinnacles.

Fossilized dragonfly from the limestone of Nova Olinda, Araripe Geopark, Brazil, considered as one of the world's greatest fossil insect faunas.

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More information

as well as application guidelines

can be found online at:

<http://www.unesco.org/science/earth>

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Young visitors in the Italian Geopark of Madonie, Sicily, Italy.

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Petrified Forest Geopark on Lesvos Island, Greece. Geotourists discovering petrified tree-trunks (under water) knocked over by a violent volcanic explosion twenty million years ago, covered by lava flow and petrified. Left, lava flow deposits. The Park organizes geological tours as well as educational programmes for primary and high school classes.