

WHAT ARE GEOPARKS?

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“Geoparks are “unique geological features of spectacular importance to earth science (global scientific importance) and to the surrounding community”.

WHEN WAS THE CONCEPT BORN?

In 2004, at the 30th International Geographical Congress in Glasgow UK, the International Geographical Union (IGU) initiated what was called the “Geopark Task Force” to bring a geographical perspective to UNESCO programs for the management and protection of natural and cultural heritage.

WHO IS PROMOTING GEOPARKS?

- UNESCO is coordinating the effort to create Geoparks, with the backing and assistance of several international organizations, including
- the International Geographic Union (IGU),
- the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS),
- the Global Network of National Geoparks and
- the European Geoparks Network.

WHY CREATE GEOPARKS?

The Geopark Program complements UNESCO's two other highly successful conservation programs:

- ▶ the one directed at the establishment of **Biosphere Reserves**, and
- ▶ the other at the establishment of **World Heritage Sites**.

WHERE ARE GEOPARKS LOCATED?

- ▶ At present there are 57 “World Geoparks”, located in 18 countries.
- ▶ Most are in Europe (with 32) and China (with 21).
- ▶ Other countries include Malaysia and Australia.

HOW IS A GEOPARK PROCLAIMED?

- ▶ Under the auspices of UNESCO, the Global Geoparks Network has developed a procedure for evaluating a proposed region and applying for Geopark status.
- ▶ This procedure involves obtaining endorsements from official authorities at the regional and national levels, including from the National Commission of UNESCO.

HOW IS A GEOPARK PROCLAIMED?

- ▶ Central to the process is the completion of a lengthy “Self-Evaluation” form which evaluates the proposed area’s potential in terms of six major categories.
- ▶ If the proposed area receives a high score, it will then be re-evaluated by a UNESCO-designated official or panel.

WHAT CRITERIA ARE USED TO EVALUATE A POTENTIAL GEOPARK?

- I. Geology and Landscape
- II. Management Structures
- III. Interpretation and Environmental Education
- IV. Geotourism
- V. Sustainable Regional Economic Development
- VI. Access

WEIGHTING OF CRITERIA

- ▶ Geology and Landscape count - 35%
- ▶ Management Structures - 25%
- ▶ Interpretation and Environmental Education -15%
- ▶ Geotourism - 10%
- ▶ Sustainable Regional Economic Development - 10%,
- ▶ Access - 5%.

**A MINIMUM REQUIREMENT FOR
PROCLAMATION IS GETTING AT LEAST HALF
THE MARKS ALLOCATED TO EACH CATEGORY**