

Geoparks promotes geological heritage

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At present tourism is considered to be the fastest growing industry worldwide. In Finland, the use of geoheritage and geological sites as a promoter of tourism and as a producer of further information is rather new.

The Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) has already worked for several years with the clear aim of spreading knowledge about geological heritage to the public, to the tourism sector, and to places of education. The key task has also been the increase of geological knowledge in basic school education.

With the aims of marketing geological heritage and of increasing geological knowledge, the GTK makes an evaluation of regional nature values, mapping and popularisation of nature targets, the design of nature parks, trails and visitor centres, the production of educational and tuition materials. The work has been done in many places in different parts of Finland in co-operation with local government areas, towns, companies from the tourism sector, and with other organizations.

Today the most interesting issue in geotourism in Finland are Geoparks and the Global and European Geoparks network. Rokua Geopark is the first Geopark in Finland and still the northernmost Geopark in the world. Today there are four areas which have plans or projects aiming to European Geoparks Network; North- Karelia in eastern Finland, Saimaa lake area in south-eastern Finland, Kauhaneva – Lauhavuori area in Ostrobothnia and Salpausselkä ice marginal formation area near Lahti city.

GTK gives professional help to the local projects in their work to create new Geoparks in Finland. From GTK's point of view there are four main geological themes in Finnish Geoparks; bedrock, quaternary deposits and formations, peatlands and lake-/seascape. Geoparks based on similar geological themes should be avoided.