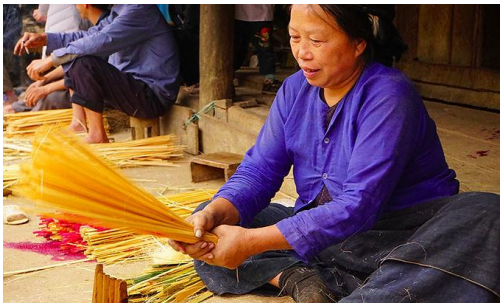
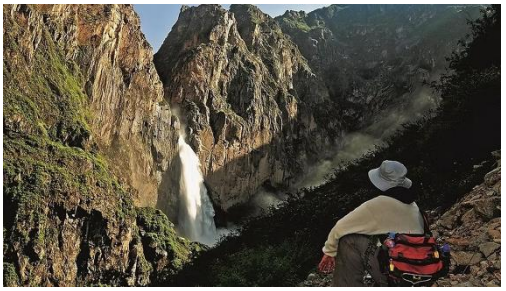
UNESCO NAMES 12 NEW GLOBAL GEOPARKS COMBINING COSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

September 2026

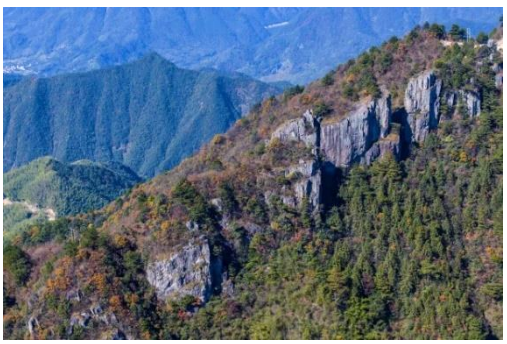
In April 2026 the UNESCO website published an article announcing that 12 new Geoparks have been designated, bringing the total number of sites in the UNESCO Global Geopark Network to 241 in 51 countries, covering an area of over 882,000 km2. The 12 newly designated Geoparks are located in China, France, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Tunisia and Uruguay.



The UNESCO Global Geoparks designation, created in 2015, brings together territories recognized for their rich geological heritage. These rock formations, mountain or volcanic ranges, caves, canyons, fossil sites or ancient desert landscapes each bear witness to the planet's history, evolution and climate. The sites combine conservation, environmental education and a sustainable approach to development, while also supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities in promoting their culture and know-how.



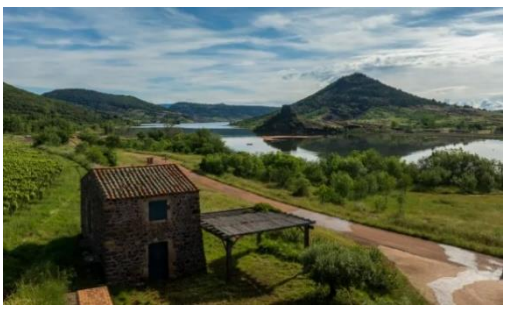
Each year, new sites are added to the network by decision of UNESCO's Executive Board, after an evaluation of the applications by the Global Geoparks Council, which is made up of international experts.



UNESCO continues to promote the programme in areas where geoparks are less common, notably in Africa, the Arab States and Small Island Developing States. UNESCO does this by facilitating expert missions, tailored training sessions and individual consultations on both a national and local scale, to guide the preparation of applications for UNESCO Global Geopark status.

The article presents the main features of the new UNESCO Global Geoparks which are:

- China. Changshan UNESCO Global Geopark.
- China. Mt. Siguniang UNESCO Global Geopark.
- France. Terres d'Hérault UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Greece. Nisyros UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Ireland. Joyce Country and Western Lakes Global Geopark.
- Japan. Miné-Akiyoshidai Karst Plateau UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Malaysia. Lenggong UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Malaysia. Sarawak Delta UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Portugal. Algarvensis UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Russian Federation. Toratau UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Tunisia. Dahar UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Uruguay. Manantiales Serranos UNESCO Global Geopark.



The website of the International Geoscience and Geoparks UNESCO Programme highlights that UNESCO Global Geoparks

are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Their bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular.

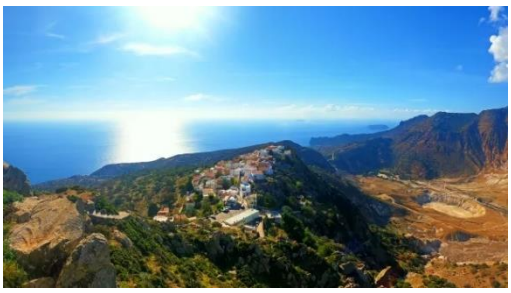
A UNESCO Global Geopark uses its geological heritage, in connection with all other aspects of the area's natural and cultural heritage, to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues facing society, such as using our Earth's resources sustainably, mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing natural hazard-related risks.

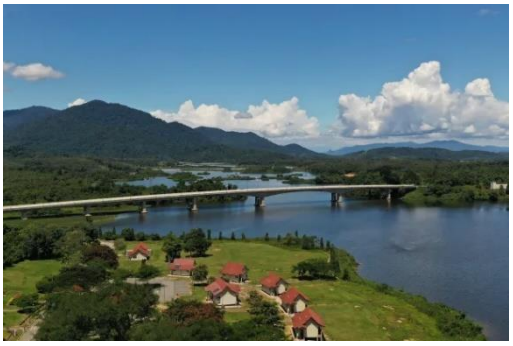
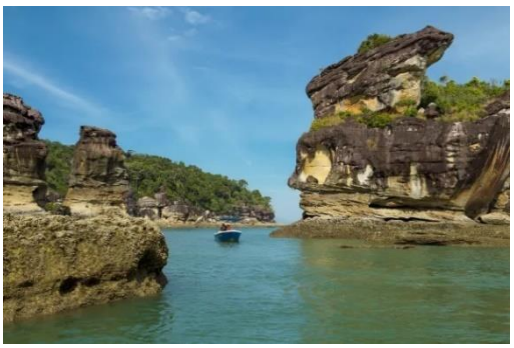
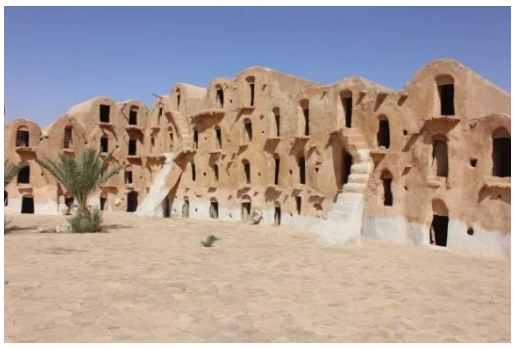
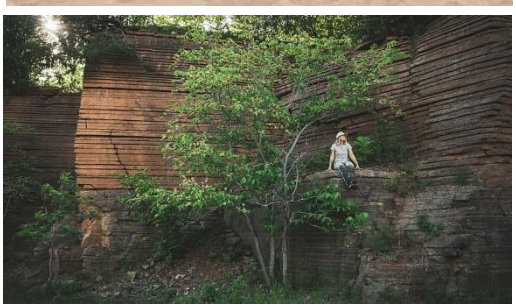
By raising awareness of the importance of the area's geological heritage in history and society today, UNESCO Global Geoparks give local people a sense of pride in their region and strengthen their identification with the area. The creation of innovative local enterprises, new jobs and high-quality training courses is stimulated as new sources of revenue are generated through geotourism, while the geological resources of the area are protected.

UNESCO Global Geoparks empower local communities and give them the opportunity to develop cohesive partnerships with the common goal of promoting the area's significant geological processes, features, periods of time, historical themes linked to geology, or outstanding geological beauty. Geoparks are established through a bottom-up process involving all relevant local and regional stakeholders and authorities in the area (e.g. landowners, community groups, tourism providers, Indigenous People, and local organizations). This process requires firm commitment by the local communities, a strong local multiple partnership with long-term public and political support, and the development of a comprehensive strategy that will meet all of the communities' goals while showcasing and protecting the area's geological heritage.

At present, 241 Geoparks are found in 51 countries. The Global Geoparks Network is the international organisation of geoparks and professionals committed to the conservation, management and communication of the Earth's heritage to society. The Global Geoparks Network has over 1,000 partners of all sizes.

The website presents a full list of the UNESCO Geoparks where information about each Geopark can be found.



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UNESCO Global Geoparks

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