

Geotourism, Geotrails and Geoparks Explained

A recent submission to the Chief Government Geologists Committee, prepared by the Geotourism Standing Committee of the Geological Society of Australia (GSA), has detailed recent geotourism developments in Australia as well as explaining what the potential of the geotourism industry offers for employing geoscientists, and becoming an important customer for the goods and services of geological surveys of Australia and their equivalents. This submission has been supported by the Australian Geoscience Council http://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Geotourism_Chief-Govt-Geologists_briefing_2017update.pdf

Geotourism is an emerging global phenomenon which fosters tourism based upon landscapes. Its definition has recently been defined by the GSA as 'tourism which focuses on an area's geology and landscape as the basis for providing visitor engagement, learning and enjoyment', all of which serves to shape the character of a region.

The concept of a '**geotrail**' can deliver geotourism experiences through a journey linked by an area's geology and landscape 'as the basis for providing visitor engagement, learning and enjoyment'. Geotrails can offer the advantages of relating directly to the tourism experience of a journey linking destinations and should incorporate and package in the biodiversity and cultural components (including mining heritage) of the region through which the geotrail traverses.

Geotourism attractions are now being developed around the world primarily as a sustainable development tool for the development of local and regional communities. A major vehicle for such development is through the concept of '**geoparks**'. An UNESCO Global Geopark is a unified area with geological heritage of international significance and where that heritage is being used to promote the sustainable development of the local communities who live there) <http://www.geoexpro.com/articles/2017/03/unesco-global-geoparks> and <http://en.unesco.org/news/eight-geological-sites-asia-europe-and-latin-america-become-unesco-global-geoparks>

Two Pre-Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark projects are currently under development in Australia. <http://bit.ly/2qHITsz>

Geotourism offers another benefit by raising public interest in geoscience, particularly as a means of encouraging young people to see that a career path based on a geoscience qualification can open up a wider range of future employment opportunities. Based on the anecdotal observations of travellers enjoying a quality geotourism experience 'in the field', it is now being recognised that the educative (and 'excitement') value greatly augments the more traditional experiences such as offered by special exhibitions and by natural history museums.

Further information:

<http://bit.ly/2irGlem> and <http://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/index.php/geotourism-industry-groups/>

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