

Momentum is building for Australian geotourism!

Some significant geotourism initiatives in Australia have been 'kick started': geotourism workshops were convened in 2015, and the Geotourism Standing Committee recently undertook work for the Chief Government Geologists' Committee detailing recent geotourism developments in Australia and explaining the potential of the geotourism industry for employing geoscientists.

In Queensland, Etheridge Shire Council has recently advised the Geotourism Standing Committee that with the support of Savannah Way Ltd, there are now moves for the establishment of a geotrail that starts in Cairns and travels across Northern Australia along an existing tourism route, the Savannah Way, to Broome in Western Australia. Etheridge Shire Council has also signalled its desire for the geotrail to be constituted as a geopark (embracing the former mining centres of Georgetown, Mt Surprise, Forsyth and Einasleigh, and including the Undara Volcanic National Park and the famous lava tubes of the Undara Experience). Etheridge Shire wishes to establish geotrails within the geopark and for each local government area along the proposed Savannah Way to also create local geotrails. A working group of Savannah Way member organisations, chaired by the Standing Committee Chair, will now be established under the auspices of Savannah Way Ltd to work through the geotrail and/or geopark recognition process.

In New South Wales, under the auspices of Regional Development Australia (Orana Region), discussions are proceeding with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to assess the opportunity to establish a major geotourism project in the Warrumbungle region. The Geotourism Standing Committee is also facilitating a collaborative venture being directed by Centennial Parklands (and involving the three major botanical gardens in Sydney) with the collaboration of the Geological Survey of NSW, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences of Macquarie University. They aim to develop a Sydney Basin Geotrail for launch for the 2017 Sydney Science Festival. In April, members of the Committee presented at a mine site rehabilitation seminar in the Hunter Valley on the proposed establishment of the Hunter Valley National Mining Park, a concept that embraces geotourism opportunities.

In addition, the recent emergence of the Tasmanian West Coast Living Earth GeoTrail, a co-venture of Mineral Resources Tasmania, Department of State Growth Tasmania and West Coast Council, is a welcome development. This geotrail, connecting the mining centres of Zeehan, Rosebery and Queenstown, provides information so visitors understand and appreciate the geological processes and landscapes featured along the geotrail. Each site has either a large roadside sign with information and

The Savannahlander – for geotourists travelling to Etheridge Shire from Cairns. Image courtesy Etheridge Shire Council





TOP: The West Coast Wilderness Railway – for geotourists enjoying the Living Coast GeoTrail. Image courtesy Angus M Robinson



BOTTOM: Undara Lava Tubes, Etheridge Shire, Queensland. Image courtesy Bird Lai, 2014 Taiwan Forestry Bureau study tour

explanations, or a small sign displaying a QR code web-link to the Living Earth website at <http://thelivingearth.com.au/>. It is hoped that this much-needed new project will receive more exposure at the Geotourism Workshop of *Global Eco 2016* to be held in Hobart, 21–23 November 2016.

It is significant that this project evolved from the Cradle Coast Geotrail feasibility study conducted in 2013 by the Cradle Coast Authority in partnership with the State Government represented by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism Tasmania, member councils and the Indigenous community. The project also involved the then-Departments of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, and Sport and Recreation Tasmania; Parks and Wildlife Service; the Tasmanian Minerals Council; and the mining industry. The detailed feasibility study proposed four geotrails – the West Coast Trail, the Coastal Trail from Devonport to the Edge of the World, Cradle Mountain and King Island. It is available at: <http://www.cradlecoast.com/literature/Cradle%20Coast%20GeoTrail%20FINAL.pdf>.

Of interest to train buffs is the fact that geotrails in the Etheridge and West Coast regions can be partly accessed by fascinating heritage railway services – the 'Savannahlander' and the West Coast Wilderness Railway, respectively.

To nurture the development of geotourism in the Northern Territory, the Geotourism Standing Committee Chair and Christine Edgoose (Manager, Basin Geoscience for the Northern

Territory Geological Survey and member, GSA Governing Council) have recently collaborated to write a geotourism feature about the 'Big Red Centre' national landscape. This feature has been published in the April issue of the *GEOExPro* magazine for petroleum geologists at: <http://www.geoexpro.com/articles/2016/04/australia-s-big-red-centre>.

Albany, Western Australia, will be the location for the Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA) meeting on 26–28 October 2016. SEGRA will featuring a 'spotlight' geotourism theme and will be hosted by the Great Southern Development Commission. It will be situated within the Great South West Edge National Landscape, the steering committee chair of which is Geotourism Standing Committee member, Ross Dowling.

With a full program of geotourism papers to be presented at AESC 2016, geotourism session co-convenor, Bernie Joyce, plans to ensure that all geotourism developments from across Australia get a full airing. Arrangements have also been made for visiting keynote speaker Professor Patrick McKeever, UNESCO's Chief of Section, IGCP Secretary, Section on Earth Sciences and Geo-Hazards Risk Reduction, to attend government-organised roundtables in Adelaide, Canberra and Coonabarabran, as well as a 'flying visit' to the Flinders Ranges.

The Geotourism Standing Committee is pleased to welcome two new members to its ranks: Monica Yeung, Director, Gondwana Dreaming, from the ACT and Michael Vicary of the Tasmanian Department of State Growth (Mineral Resources), who replaces retiring member Michael Comfort. Michael has provided valued contributions to the Standing Committee and its predecessor, the Geotourism Subcommittee, since its inception in 2011.

Members with an interest in contributing to any of the projects mentioned in this article are invited to contact the Geotourism Standing Committee by email.

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