

Creation of a museum network in the Itoigawa Global Geopark

KO TAKENOUCHI, HIROSHI MIYAJIMA, YOSUKE IBRAKI, TSUTOMU KIJIMA, AND YOICHI YAMAGISHI - *Itoigawa Geopark Council, Itoigawa-shi, Niigata-ken, 941-8501, Japan <geopark@city.itoigawa.niigata.jp>*

The Itoigawa Global Geopark is home to a number of museums¹. In the past, these museums have operated with no strong sense of cooperation or shared purpose. However, since Itoigawa's certification in 2009 as a Global Geopark, a number of close partnerships have been developed. We discuss here two outcomes of this new network.

The first is increased tourism and employment. The privately owned Tanimura Museum of Art (Buddhist Artwork) and the Gyokusi-en and Hisui-en Gardens (Japanese Traditional Gardens) had been forced to close as a result of decreasing tourists. However, after certification, these facilities were able to reopen in 2011 as a new "Garden Museum" and they now enjoy renewed interest as tourist attractions. Guided tours, discount museum network passes, and shuttle buses are some of the new programs in place to increase the number of visitors.

The second result is the development of Geopark awareness and educational programs. Itoigawa is home to an ancient road that runs along an extensive fault. This road was used in the Neolithic era to transport jade and starting in the Middle Ages was used to transport salt and maritime products. This history provides an opportunity of connecting activities of various museums: At the Fossa Magna Museum visitors learn geology while at the Chojagahara Archaeological Museum and the Salt Trail Museum they can learn the cultural history. In addition, educational workshops have been created to fuse geology and history, which have proven very popular for school field trips.

¹*In accordance with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) a museum is defined as any facility or organization which exhibits either tangible or intangible heritage and its environment (including art museums, gardens, and historic sites).*

Presented in Theme 3