

The Haute-Gaspésie geopark project

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The Haute-Gaspésie geopark project is the initiative of the Municipalité de Mont-Saint-Pierre and the Corporation du Tourisme de Mont-Saint-Pierre. These two organisations were looking for new ways to improve the tourism offer of the region by using its most outstanding resource that is its natural environment. At the same time, researchers from Université du Québec à Rimouski (UQAR) had been studying the glacial history of the area for many years and the people of Mont-Saint-Pierre had seen this as an opportunity to enhance their tourism offer by proposing interpretation activities based on geosciences and original research results. It became self-evident that the best model to achieve the objectives of the town of Mont-Saint-Pierre was a geopark. Thus it became a partnership between the Municipality of Mont-Saint-Pierre and UQAR. Other regional and provincial partners were added : the Centre local de développement de la Haute-Gaspésie, the Société d'aide au développement de la Gaspésie, the MRC de la Haute-Gaspésie and the Parc national de la Gaspésie and the Centre géoscientifique de Québec.

The original thematic of that geopark is the evolution of the landscape from mountain building to the glacial and erosional processes. The present-day Appalachians are the relics of two giants mountain ranges that were completely leveled in a few millions years by erosion. The understanding of landscape story can be seen in a geoscientific tour that comprises "geomorphosites". Each site is presented to explain one part of the long story of landscape evolution. The geomorphosites are landforms or landscapes with scientific, cultural, historic, esthetic and socio-economic value because of the way they are perceived or exploited. This approach, developed in Europe and largely used to support and create geopark was adapted to Quebec and it is applied for the first time here in the development of Haute-Gaspésie.

Some of the highlights include marine terraces, glacial valleys and stone pillars, a thrust oceanic crust (ophiolite), marine volcanic and sedimentary rocks, granitic and metamorphic rocks. Other scientific attractions of the geopark project include the Gaspésie National Park, interpretation trails, sea museum, a copper museum and an agate mine.

Presented in Theme 4