

Outstanding geoheritage values of the Hantangang River Geopark in Korea

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Hantangang River originates from the Pyeongyang area in Gangwon province, North Korea and flows down to Cheorwon, Pocheon, and Yeoncheon in Gyeonggi province, South Korea. The total length of the river is about 141 km long including the length of about 81 km in South Korea. About 500,000 to 130,000 years ago, basaltic lavas were erupted from multiple volcanic activities near Pyeongyang area in North Korea. These lavas flowed down for over 110 km along low land areas (pre-Hantangang River), and formed the large area of lava plateau in Pyeongyang-Cheorwon-Pocheon-Yeoncheon regions. The beautiful scenery of basalt gorges has been formed by the erosion of the Hantangang River and its distributaries. The Hantangang River Basalt Gorge has very significant geological and geoheritage values to understand the volcanic activities during the Quaternary Period near convergent plate boundary and the special landforms produced by river erosion in central part of the Korean Peninsula. Along the river, geological features such as multiple lava flow units, basaltic columnar joints, columnar joint-produced waterfall, caves, pillow lavas and paleosols can be found produced by a combination of volcanic activities and river erosion processes, together with Paleolithic remains. The presence of pillow lavas that are larger than 1 metre in diameter along the valley provides significant geoheritage values because it is not common to find such a large amount of pillow lavas on land. Pocheon-si, Yeoncheon-gun and Cheorwon-gun have begun to develop a geopark program along the river with geotourism and sustainable socio-economic development. Strong involvement of local residents will assure the strong potential to become a member of Global Network of National Geoparks.

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