

The Geopark Safaris of the Hondsrug area

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The Hondsrug region is a unique geological area where the cultural heritage is closely linked to the land. Although the Hondsrug name is well known, people often know little about the region's historical origins and its rich cultural heritage. Our challenge is to help visitors experience the area and its history. To this end, we developed the concept: Geopark safaris. The Hondsrug is a geological complex of linear till ridges of about 60 km in length. It was formed during the Saalian glaciation, about 150,000 years ago. Around 5,500 years ago the first farmers built 47 prehistoric monuments made from big boulders dating from the Ice Age. The strong relationship between geology, nature, cultural history and contemporary culture is visible through thousands of landscape objects all around the area. The Hondsrug Geopark tells the story of the landscape in many different forms. These include: museum exhibitions, educational programs, geosites open to the public, hotspots, a website, tourist programmes, books, new walking and bicycle tours, smart phone apps and many other activities and products. Both tourists and the local population are the target groups for Hondsrug Geopark. Today, more than ever, tourists want to "experience" things, so that is precisely why, together with nature conservation organisations and entrepreneurs, we have developed the Geopark safaris. These trips offer a link to ancient Drenthe: its genesis, its rich cultural history and beautiful nature. We are trying to attract visitors to the local area by offering special arrangements. Once settled in a hotel, holiday park, or bed and breakfast, they have a choice of what to do. This paper will provide detailed description of how visitors can experience the Hondsrug area.

Presented in Theme 1