

UNESCO Field Revalidation Report

The field evaluation for the revalidation of Izu Peninsula UNESCO Global Geopark was conducted from October 11 to 13 by Kristin Rangnes (Norway), general manager of Gea Norvegica UNESCO Global Geopark, and Rasanubari Asmah (aka Rasa, Malaysia), a geologist at Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark). The two evaluators arrived at the Izu Peninsula on October 10. Having completed their three-day field inspection, on October 14 they presented their review and gave a press conference before leaving Japan.

Key Points of Revalidation

Izu Peninsula Geopark was designated as an UNESCO Global Geopark in April 2018. Normally, field evaluations are conducted every four years to determine whether or not geoparks are to receive revalidation. A field inspection of Izu was supposed to take place last year, but it was delayed by one year because evaluators were unable to enter Japan due to Covid pandemic restrictions.

The two main points of the inspection were: 1) how much improvement has been made following the nine "recommendations for improvement" presented at the time of global recognition four years ago, and 2) whether the Geopark has steadily implemented Geopark activities over the past four years. The secretariat selected inspection sites with an emphasis on answering these questions, and developed explanations with the geoguides who were to guide the evaluators. The previous field inspection (in 2017) focused on establishing the geological importance of the Izu Peninsula and included 16 sites. This time, the emphasis was on showing people's activities rather than geological values, and the number of inspection sites was narrowed to ten (seven geosites and three visitor centers, including two other sites that overlap).

In the evaluators' review on the 14th, they indicated their intention to consider the matter in detail and issue "recommendations for improvement" in the future. The vice president of the Geopark, Yutaka Kikuchi, expressed confidence that it would be revalidated. Below is a report on the field evaluation.

October 10

Briefing (Hotel in Izu)

Research fellows Katsuhiko Asahi and Shyuji Tsuji gave an overview of Izu Peninsula Geopark and explained the schedule from the 11th. They also explained their work since UGGP designation in 2018, and took a few questions.

October 11

Briefing (Georia)

"The Izu Peninsula is rich in diversity, including ocean, mountains, and hot springs," said Takeshi Toyooka, chairperson of the Izu Peninsula Geopark and Tourism Bureau. "The theme of Izu Peninsula Geopark, 'The Gift of a Volcano from the South,' expresses the feelings of the people of Izu well. Our slogan is 'Unite the Peninsula.' We want to come together in our diversity to enhance the beautiful Izu Peninsula." The research fellows also explained the response to each of the "recommendations for improvement" items presented at the time of global geopark designation. The evaluators asked many questions about the organisational integration in April of this year, as well as the agreements with partner businesses and what kind of collaborative projects are being developed.

Nirayama Reverberatory Furnaces

Selecting the reverberatory furnace as an inspection site was intended to articulate the collaboration between the



Geopark and the World Cultural Heritage site. The evaluators were met in front of the Guidance Center by Takeshi Isozaki, Deputy Mayor of Izunokuni. “We signed a comprehensive



partnership agreement with Geopark last December,” said Isozaki in his address. “I hope the World Cultural Heritage site and Geopark will have a synergistic effect by taking advantage of each other's features.” Next, Yuichiro Kudo, chief of the city's cultural properties section, gave the evaluators a tour of the reverberatory furnaces. The evaluators asked things such as why a reverberatory furnace was built on this site, and whether any records remained of the people who worked at the time of construction. They also exchanged views with geopark research fellows on how to deepen collaboration in the future.

Wasabi Fields

Guided by geoguide Hiroo Ando, the evaluators took a tour of the wasabi fields of Ikadaba in Izu on e-bikes (electric-assisted bicycles). At Koarashi Bridge, wasabi producer Yoshihiro Shioya explained the cultivation method and history of wasabi while holding a freshly picked wasabi plant in his hand. The evaluators were curious about wasabi, which they had never seen before, and asked a flurry of questions such as how many varieties there are, how they can be distinguished, and whether they flower. At Koarashi Bridge, research fellow Asahi introduced a geo-signboard created in collaboration with GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems program).



They also stopped by Takaso, a wasabi pickle shop, where they enjoyed a hands-on experience grating wasabi under the guidance of Noritoshi Takamura. Although surprised by the spiciness of the wasabi, they enjoyed adding a little to foods such as satsuma-age (fried fish cake).



Yugashima Literary Tour

The evaluators were given a literary tour in the Yugashima area, where the creation of a literary village is underway. Geoguide Makiko Suzuki introduced them the area, which is associated with Nobel Prize-winning author Yasunari Kawabata and where Yasushi Inoue spent his -boyhood. In the “Upper House”, Akiko Okada, caretaker of Asunaro-kai (Inoue Yasushi

commemoration group),

talked about the writer's

novel *Shirobamba*. “This work from Inoue's youth depicts many of the places he visited. I adore Inoue, and we often read *Shirobamba* together,” she explained. “We have a theatre group, too, and we hold handicraft classes and mini-concerts at the house above this one. In cooperation with Geo, we have also

opened the Geo Literary Café”. The evaluators had many follow-up questions, such as whether anyone was living in this house now, and where the theatre company performed. Later, guided by Suzuki, they enjoyed an autumn stroll along the *Yumichi* hot spring path.



Koganezaki

The evaluators were greeted by the mayor of Nishiizu, Joshin Hoshino, and observed eight sixth-grade students from Nishiizu Municipal Kamo Elementary School undergoing geo-learning at Koganezaki. Haruki Tsuchiya, the geoguide for the elementary school students, pointed out a rock in front of them shaped just like a horse, and told them there were more animal-shaped rocks in Nishiizu. Calling the town a kind of zoo for strange-

shaped rocks, he urged the schoolchildren to look out for other such local treasures. Then, when he faced Suruga Bay and explained that it was 2,500 meters deep, the children rolled their eyes in wonder. The evaluators listened to these explanations through an interpreter and took notes intently. The group then moved to the Nishiizu Visitors Center, Koganesuto, where Yoshie Nakata, president of the Izu Peninsula Geoguide Association, explained the operation of Koganesuto and the activities of their association.



Dogashima

The evaluators experienced a geo-excursion on a sightseeing boat. Their geoguide Nakata shared stories from her own life, and since the evaluators were both geologists, she also

explained various traces of undersea volcanoes, such as underwater debris flow visible from the boat. The evaluators

were keen to take lots of photos. They gave an involuntary gasp as the boat entered Tensodo Cave, the climax of the tour. Research fellow Daisuke Endo further explained on the boat,

from which the white cliffs near Tensodo Cave could be seen, that this site had inspired research on undersea volcanoes. The evaluators eagerly took notes.



Irozaki Ocean Park



Ocean Park opened in 2019. After being welcomed by the mayor of Minamiizu, Katsuhito Okabe, the evaluators heard about the town's initiatives from Hidetoshi Suzuki, chief of its Commerce, Industry and Tourism Division. "We want to continue to promote Geopark activities based on a clear division of roles between the government and the private sector," he explained. The evaluators asked things like where the posters made by the town were posted, and how

Georgia and the Minamiizu Visitor Center were collaborating. Next, under the guidance of geoguide Tamae Ikeno, they enjoyed a guided tour of Irozaki in strong winds. The evaluators seemed interested in the lighthouse, and asked whether people had used firewood or oil to light it when it was built. Ikeno explained that they had used rapeseed oil. There was no automation back then, so someone had to walk to the lighthouse every day to light the fire.

Beach Cleaning

At Road Station Kaikoku Shimoda Minato, the evaluators listened to a talk by geoguide Mayuri Aoki about beach cleaning activities. Later, they enjoyed making accessories from plastic pieces picked up during cleanups. Another geoguide, Takeshi Saito, explained how Izu Geoschool was first launched under the slogan "Let's present a clean earth to our children in 1,000 years' time." In his words, "Some parents saw their children picking up trash and wanted to join them." The evaluators found it very interesting how parents can change when they see their children doing something.



Izukyū SDGs Train



The SDGs train "The Connector", which Izukyū began operating in July 2022, is a symbol of the partnership in the Izu Peninsula Geopark. The evaluators rode the train from Izukyū-Shimoda Station to Izu-Kogen Station. Inside the train, Masato Suzuki, manager of the Sales Promotion Division of Izukyū Holdings, and research fellow Shyuji Tsuji explained the background to the train's creation and



the exhibits onboard. The group were seen off at Shimoda Station by Mayor Shoichiro Matsuki and greeted at Izu-Kogen Station by Hideki Kobayashi, president of Izukyū HD, adding a touch of colour to the field evaluation.

Geo Terrace

The signboard at the Ito Visitor Center's Geoterrace was created by students from Ito High School Jogasaki Branch. The students sent the evaluators a video containing the message, "Please enjoy the nature of Ito." The evaluators nodded their heads as they watched the video. They were also given a tour of the building by geoguide Midori Seki. The evaluators asked a number of things, such as how many visitors there are annually, and who decides the content of the exhibitions, which are changed every month.



Mt. Omuro



Mount Omuro was the final destination for this field evaluation. First, in front of a signboard at the foot of the mountain, geoguide Asae Tabata of Machikon Ito emphasized that the signboard was renovated with local donations. At the summit, geoguide Hitoshi Yamazaki explained how the beautiful landscape has been maintained by mountain burning in Ike, a local community area, stating that, "Here, the mountain, the region, and the people's lives are all integrated." Both guides' explanations highlighted the power of the local community to

support the preservation and utilization of Mt. Omuro.

The evaluators showed great interest in mountain burning, and eagerly asked questions such as how the mountain is burned and what the effects of burning are on vegetation. Yoshinori Takahashi, president of Ike Community Tourism Board, took over for Yamazaki and explained the process of mountain burning in detail. The evaluators said they would really like to come back next year when the mountain burning is held. They also commented on how satisfied they were with this final location.

Summary and Feedback

The Q&A and discussion with the evaluators continued from the previous evening around the roundtable at Georia. The future of tourism and the revitalization of the local economy through the use of local products were among the topics discussed. As one of the evaluators, Rasa, noted, the format of tours has been changed due to the Covid pandemic, and this will need to be made sustainable. The other evaluator, Rangnes, expressed their intention to review this field evaluation in detail and present their "recommendations for improvement" at a later date.



Press Conference

After the field inspection, the evaluators held an informal press conference in Georia. When asked by a reporter what had impressed them most, Rasa replied, "The numerous visitor center installations and the excellent work of the geoguides." Rangnes said that, in addition to the geoguides' activities, "It's great that they are working with the government and partner companies. Izu Peninsula UGGp is also actively working on the SDGs. I enjoyed riding the train very much. I felt that the Geopark activities are also contributing to the local economy."



In another press conference, vice president Yutaka Kikuchi was asked how he felt the revalidation process was going. "It's going perfectly," he replied confidently. "I'm sure the Geopark will be revalidated."