Expanding Ecotourism Horizons

Geoparks: A global approach to promote sustainable tourism for local communities

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Outline

1. Geopark: concept & principles
2. Social benefits
3. Economic benefits
4. Cases in China
5. Conclusions
1. Geopark: concept and principles
4 spheres of Planet Earth & environment

- Atmosphere
- Hydrosphere (sea, rivers, underground water)
- Biosphere (plants, animals)
- Lithosphere (land, rocks, soils)

- Least known
- Least protected
- Stories untold
UN’s protection programmes and initiatives

- **Man & Biosphere**  
  (651 sites in 120 countries)

- **World Heritage Listing**  
  (1031 sites in 163 countries)

- **Global Geoparks Network**  
  (120 sites in 33 countries)

(Sources: UNESCO’s MB, WH, GGN 2015)
• Geopark: ‘an area with particular geological heritage with international significance but also with a sustainable development plan or strategy involving local communities’. (McKeever 2015)

• A holistic approach to manage and protect geological heritage with the consideration of their interaction with the biological and cultural environment, particularly the livelihood of the people living within or near them.
Geopark’s objectives & mission

Conservation

Education

Sustainable development
All these factors generate geotourism and ecotourism opportunities.
Ecotourism and geotourism

Ecotourism: ‘Ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation’. (EA 2015)

Geotourism: ‘Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents’ (National Geographic 1997)

‘Tourism which focuses on geology and landscape as the basis for providing visitor engagement, learning, and enjoyment’. (GSA 2015)
Nature-based & cultural tourism

Geology & landscape (Geotourism)

Ecology (Ecotourism)

Culture/history (Cultural tourism)

Other environmental components
Principles of geotourism

• Geology as a basis

• Experiences enjoyment, learning Sustainable manners of enjoying, learning and engaging experiences

• Raises awareness, interest, appreciation, understanding of geoheritage and geoconservation

• Communicates geosciences with understanding geology through effective interpretation and story-telling skills

• Fosters sustainable tourism and local development

• Takes place in anywhere, any season and at anytime

• Geopark and mining parks are ideal venues for geotourism activities
Geotourism & Geopark

• Geopark branding = quality assurance

• Regular national and international quality monitoring of the site and its services

• Geopark: ideal platform for geotourism
  ✓ Tranquil environment
  ✓ Outstanding and attractive scenery
  ✓ Internationally significant geological and geomorphological features with good interpretation
  ✓ World class management and services
  ✓ Superb facilities and reasonable accessibility
  ✓ Excellent safety and security measures
2. Social benefits
• Revives deprived areas, towns and villages

• Engages local communities

• Preserves local culture

• Establishes strong local, national, regional and international networks

• Creates strong sense of place and identity

• Develops sense of pride and belonging
3. Economic benefits
Economic benefits to local communities

- Geoparks driven by geotourism
- Encourages investments
- Generates businesses
- Creates jobs
- Improves livelihood
4. Chinese cases
Number of tourists before (2004) and after (2007) the establishment of geoparks (in million)

Case 1
Performance of 8 geoparks in their first 4 years

(Source: CGN 2014)
Total geotourism related revenue
Before (2004) and after (2007) the establishment of geoparks
(in million CNY, USD1 = CNY 6.3)
(Source: CGN 2014)
Case 2
Yuntaishan Geopark, Jiaozuo, Henan
Jiaozuo (JJ) phenomenon

- Jiaozuo City, Henan Province – poor, environmentally devastated coal mining city, heavily polluted, low employment city in 1999

- In 1999, GDP dropped by 16%, tax revenue fell by 24%

- Yuntaishan Geopark was established and used to transform Jiaozuo City in 2001

- ‘Jiaozuo Phenomenon’ – A model of geopark-induced drastic change as geotourism related income increased by nearly 50 times from 0.6 billion in 2001 to 25 billion in 2012
JJ Phenomenon - Number of tourists to Jiaozuo City

Comparing 2000/2014
+ 29.6 million
+ > 8 times

Source: Jiaozuo 2014
JJ Phenomenon -
Total geotourism related revenue, Jiaozuo City

(in billion CNY, USD1=CNY 6.3)

Source: Jiaozuo 2014
Case 3
Changyu Cave, Yandanshan Global Geopark

Changyu Town
Changyu Quarry and Cave

Ancient volcano (caldera)

Shanghai
Changyu Cave

- Six geosites (Eight Fairy Cave, Sky & Heaven Cave, Water & Cloud Cave, Double Gate Cave, Double Gate Sculpture, Sunset Cave) and one Panda House
Transforming & restoration projects

• Total quarry area 16.18 sq. km

• Shapes of pits – Open or closed/underground bench-like, perpendicular, bell-like

• 28 tunnel systems, 1,314 grottos

• Hammered and chiseled manually for over 1,500 years

• Largest man-made cave in the world (Guinness Record 1998)

• Artefacts: bridges, roads, floodgates, wharfs, slabs, houses, window frames, arches, tombs, posts, household utensils, tools

• Taoist, Buddhist temples, concert hall

• 1st stone culture museum in China – 5 exhibition areas
Environmental improvement

• Upgrading the overall environment

• Solving environmental problems – tailings, dust, flooding, safety, water quality, toxic soils, abandoned machines and equipment, improve aesthetic value
No. of visitors

Source: YDS Management Authority 2014

2005: 0.69m
2006: 0.99m

+43%
Ticket revenue

CNY in million

+184%

20.53m (USD3.34m)

7.24m (USD1.18m)

Source:
YDS Management Authority 2014
Non-ticket revenue

CNY in million

Source: YDS Management Authority 2014
5. Conclusions
• Nature-based tourism is about telling stories of our Nature

• Telling stories of our Earth has long been missing or insufficient in nature-based tourism and this can be done through geotourism and geoparks

• Geotourism can grow better and faster with geopark

• UNESCO Global Geopark is a global movement and is moving very fast in the past decade

• Geopark is more than just rocks, it comes together with a sustainable management and development strategy of our geological heritage benefiting local communities

• Many successful cases in China may provide insights for some similar sites in Australia and other areas in the Asia Pacific region
Thank you!

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