

## The Unzen Volcanic Area Geopark: A new approach of regional development through Geopark

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<http://www.city.shimabara.lg.jp/section/shokan/geopark/index.html>

The Unzen Volcanic Area Geopark is promoting the improvement of geosites in Shimabara Peninsula, and trying for an approval to join a member of the World Geopark Network. This geopark is located in the southern region of Nagasaki Prefecture on the western end of Japan. Amazing sceneries shows the evidence of the moving earth, the Heisei-Shinzan (newly formed lava-mountain of Unzen volcano), the active fault in Chijiwa, for example. Recently, an international conference (the Cities on Volcano 5) was held in 2007. The geosites and the human activity against volcanic disaster in Shimabara Peninsula were appealed by collaboration among scientists, government, and local volunteers. The conference was highly acclaimed by participants, and also became a chance to reconsider the nature in Shimabara Peninsula. After that, the council for the promotion of the Unzen Volcanic Area Geopark was established in 2008. This Geopark was approved to the first member of the Japan Geopark Network in October 20, 2008. Training for geopark guides are provided by the council. Specialists of geology, nature, and history of Shimabara Peninsula are invited for the purpose of developing personnel who can conduct comprehensive guided tours. There are many institutions and information sites in Shimabara Peninsula, but it is not enough a network to use practically for the geopark. It is necessary to build up a closer connection between these institutions and information sites. The council is making effort to develop the organized system for geotours and to improve the museum and natural trails. These approaches are important keys to success the regional self-development in Shimabara Peninsula. Another regions in Kyushu are planning to join the member in the Japan Geopark Network, Kirishima, Aso and Sakurajima, Goshoura in Amakusa, for example. It will be wonderful to evolve by a closer connection between these regions as the Kyushu Volcano Geopark in future.