

## Aso Geopark Infrastructure Development; International Students Monitoring Tour

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Aso Geopark has been applied for joining the Global Geopark Network (GGN) in December 2013. The Promotion Council has been maintaining both the hard and soft elements of the park infrastructure for not only Japanese tourists but also visitors from abroad as we expect more visitors after becoming the GGN member. In November 2013, international university students in the Tokyo area, who are from Canada, UK, Czech Republic, Korea, China and Taiwan, are interested in Aso region, carried out 3 days monitoring tours to evaluate Aso Geopark's foundations to meet visitor satisfaction. The group researched geological sites, public transport systems, the Geopark's base facilities, guiding leaflets and foreign language service at tourists' information and accommodations. During the tour, related people from municipalities, accommodation unions and the council staff gathered together with students and discuss about findings which students discover as native tourists. From the monitoring tour, overall performance includes guide's skill, numbers of signboards and omotenashi at accommodations are relatively highly satisfied. However, explanations in multilingual signboards at public transport stations and base facilities and also automatically translation service on the geopark official website were pointed out and need of immediate development. Even though there are many experiment activities in Aso Geopark, most of students suggested having more kindly information service from an entrance to a goal for main tourist's route to look around Aso region with stress free. Explanations for Japanese culture such as use of Ryokan and Onsen, hot spas are essential. This monitoring tour has been programmed to have sustainable relationship between the council staff and students as an adviser for future infrastructure developments. Only long-term stay students were selected and asked to check the geopark's official website both before and after the monitoring tour. The promotion council will boost our infrastructures from this research and continue to have more monitoring activities.

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