

Effects and Issues of Resident Involvement in Geopark Model Route

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One of the important roles of geopark activities is resident understanding of the geopark concept, territory and its features. For this purpose, it is important that local residents participate in geopark activities positively. However, in Japan, where local development has been undertaken by governmental organizations, it is difficult for local residents to take part in geopark activities. This time, we planned "Geopark Model Route" across the San'in Kaigan Geopark in cooperation with local people, to promote better understanding and communication with local people, government and academia involved in geopark activities.

<San'in Kaigan "Geopark Model Route">

In a geopark, creating a tour route and map which allow visitors to explore the geosites easily is required. We have therefore prepared a "Geopark Model Route" for walking tours, sea kayaking, driving in half-day or one day, and for enjoying the feature of each area. Each map includes outlines of about twelve must-see geological spots, allowing visitors to enjoy sightseeing and learn about the San'in Kaigan Geopark.

<The process for planning a "Geopark Model Route">

1) San'in Kaigan Geopark Promotion Council Academic Group selects the candidate sites from the area where geopark activities are prosperous, and if requested to create a map by local residents. 2) Local guides, tourism facilities, local residents, geopark-related officials and academic members form a working group on creating a draft of map. 3) The working group surveys the field and checks the highlights, safety, estimated walking time, etc. 4) Academic Group creates a map. 5) The working group checks the content of the map.

Since Academic Group directly got involved in creating a map, the contents were thought to become difficult. To make it understandable to the general public, we posted images and descriptions on the map to Facebook and modified them to more simply by collecting public opinions through SNS during the process 5).

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We were able to make "Geopark Model Route" useful for local residents, by involving experienced local guides and people in the area. It is important that geopark guides take part in map creation especially in the process 2) & 3). Firstly, geopark guide's participation made the map more practical. Secondly, by working together by local residents and researchers, scientific information could be shared among local people. As mentioned above, we think that resident involvement in planning "Geopark Model Route" was effective, however, some problems were found in its operation. The map is not used effectively in the area which has fewer visitors and no local guides.

From now on, it is also necessary to accept visitor's opinions and correct continuously so that the map may come to be more effective and useful for both visitors and local residents.

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