

## New Information Facilities and Their Roles of Itoigawa Global Geopark

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With the opening of the Hokuriku Shinkansen Bullet Train Line (March 14, 2015) the connection between the Hokuriku region with Tokyo and Nagano will be stronger than ever before and access to the Itoigawa Geopark will be greatly improved. Needing to adapt to this large change, the work began to strengthen the Itoigawa Geopark's guidance facilities. These improvements include the creation of the Itoigawa GeoStation GeoPal center inside Itoigawa Station, a complete renovation and overhaul of the Fossa Magna Museum (a geological science museum) and its exhibits, and new transportation options which connect these two centers. Below is a description of each of these programs.

### Itoigawa GeoStation GeoPal

This is an Information Center located on the first floor of Itoigawa Station's Alps Entrance (South Entrance), targeted toward those visiting the Geopark by rail. It consists of three zones, the "Geopark Tourist Information Center," the "Kiha-52 Waiting Room," and the "Diorama and Model Railroad Gallery." The Geopark Tourist Information Center includes a Tourist Information counter where certified Geopark Guides are stationed at all times. It also features illustrations of sites within the Itoigawa Geopark, a photographic map of Itoigawa on the floor, the marine life living in Itoigawa's seas, an interactive exhibit on Japan's East-West culture divide, a stone identification diagram, touch panel displays, and information about other Japanese and Global Geoparks. Trick art, a Mt. Myojo-themed indoor slide, and a bouldering wall have also been installed to attract the attention of children. The Kiha-52 Waiting Room includes a preserved and rebuilt portion of the historic brick depot building which had been demolished for station construction and a display of a restored Model Kiha-52 train, which previously operated along the Oito Line. The Diorama and Model Railroad Gallery features a variety of model trains (HO Gauge, N Gauge, and plastic rail). These have been included in order to promote the use of trains to visit Itoigawa Geopark's many geosites. The entire facility has access to free public wireless internet.

### The Fossa Magna Museum

Located atop a hill about 2 km from Itoigawa Station, this information center is primarily used by those visiting the Itoigawa Geopark by car. A geological museum which opened in 1994, the exhibits which have been completely overhauled in order to better share the Geopark's most basic and valuable asset, that is to say, the story of its land. Exhibits on jade (science, hands-on experience, history, and legend), a Fossa Magna Theatre, exhibits on the father of Japanese Geology, Dr. Edmund Naumann, and exhibits about rocks, minerals, and fossils have all been renovated to better showcase Itoigawa as a "Geopark Town." The birth of the Japanese Islands are explained using resources found in and discoveries made in Itoigawa, which shows not only visitors, but the people of Itoigawa the value of Itoigawa's land. New video displays, interactive exhibits, and dioramas have been added to make the museum enjoyable for children as well as adults. All exhibits and videos have been translated into English as well, to better improve the museum's ability to reach international visitors.

### New Transportation Options

These two facilities function as a gateway to the Itoigawa Geopark. GeoPal provides a wide variety of basic information about the Geopark, while the Fossa Magna Museum offers visitors a more in-depth view into the land. As the two are complementary in their focuses, we want visitors to be able to visit them both. To that end, a new bus line, the Miyama Park and Museums Line, will begin operation starting on April 1st, running shuttle buses regularly between the Itoigawa Station Alps Entrance and the Fossa Magna Museum. Rental bicycles, including electric bicycles, will also be available for rent, providing multiple ways to visit the two facilities.

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