

Seeking for the solutions on the issues of geotourism in a workshop
~Report of the 3rd Chubu Regional Conference of Japanese Geoparks~

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Geopark is an initiative aiming for local development using geological heritages. Although geotourism is one of the main geopark activities along with education and conservation, there are many problems among it.

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One of the reasons is the feature that the situation differs among each geopark and we cannot take a standard solution. Therefore, each geopark needs to seek for their own solution and this is leading to some difficulties in finding solutions. However, if people from different geoparks or different positions can exchange their ideas, we may be able to find a new viewpoint and find out the hint for the solution.

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Accordingly, we held a workshop in the 3rd Chubu Regional Conference of Japanese Geoparks on 17th-18th November 2015 which took place in Hakusan Tedorigawa Japanese Geopark. We had a group discussion seeking for solution of the problems which each geopark in Chubu region is facing. On the second day we had a geotour, searching problems in our geopark's tour and hints for each geopark tours' improvement.

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In the group discussion, we discussed the solutions for each problem on geotours or geoguides, which each geopark is really facing. The topics were decided based on the questionnaire submitted by each geopark prior to the conference, which asked the subject, the ideal, the background etc. 8 topics were picked up in 8 groups, each composed of around 6 members. A delegate from the geopark facing the problem topic was included in the members, in order to explain the situation. Members were composed of management staffs and geoguides, avoiding members from the same geopark. After the discussion, each group presented their results in front of all the participants.

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For example, in the group which discussed the Itoigawa Geopark case, the situation was explained that the aging of guides is serious and it's difficult to make their lives only by guide. In the discussion, a solution to certify guides in divided areas was proposed. The delegate from Itoigawa Geopark noticed that it is one of the solutions to train and certify the local people conserving each geosite, in despite of the criteria for certified guides is to know equally about the whole geopark area in order to keep the high quality of guides.

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In the geotour, we had 3 courses based on the real tour held in our geopark for customers. In the end, we had a monitor survey to pick up the honest opinions or feelings of the participants. We asked the reason selecting this course, satisfaction level of meals, perspicuity of guides, satisfaction level of the whole tour, etc. One participant who walked around the town by an old map mentioned that the future development using the old map was difficult to understand, which we noticed firstly on this survey. Another one who joined the salmon tour mentioned that he would like to adopt the style involving the local people in the tour.

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As the conclusion, the group discussion was helpful for each geopark to get the hints for solving their problem. In addition, each geopark seems to have brought back some realistic solutions since

the guides were involved in the discussion.

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The geotour also seems to have offered some hints for solution to not only our geopark but also to the other geoparks, by finding some good points and bad points through the participation in the real tour.

Keywords: Geopark, Geotourism, Problem solving, Workshop