

## **GEOFEST 2024 SYDNEY WORKSHOP – COMPLETION REPORT**

The 5th Geotourism Festival and International Conference 2024 was initiated by the Indonesian Geoparks Network (IGN) which is a geopark network in Indonesia comprising 10 UNESCO Global Geoparks and more than 10 national geoparks.

### **GEOFEST 2024 Sydney Workshop**

The Conference included a one-day workshop in a partner country, this year in Australia. The GEOFEST 2024 Sydney Workshop event, comprising the Workshop and further days devoted to tours and a special Wildlife Tourism workshop, was convened over the period 18-20 July. It was an international event attracting 100 delegates including geoscientists, environmental professionals, educators, students, and tourism planners/managers/operators. The focus of the workshop event was on building a strategy framework for geotourism development in destinations where the volcano was reviewed as a key attraction.



The GEOFEST event was co-hosted by The University of Sydney. In his welcoming address, **Dr Jon Hronsky OAM**, Chair of the National Geotourism Strategy (NGS) said that the event is the first international joint co-hosted geotourism project organised in Australia with our closest neighbour Indonesia, and with New Zealand as a warmly invited participant.

He pointed out that the event is very lucky to have attracted a large delegation from Indonesia and that the Australian participants were all looking forward to learning from their experiences with geotourism and their impressive range of UNESCO global geoparks. In responding by way of an official welcome, **H.E. Ambassador Dr Siswo Pramono** of the Republic of Indonesia advised that he was very pleased to see this significant event taking place. In a separate address, Dr Pramono explained how the development of the Natuna Geopark related to the socio-economic development of the Riau Archipelago Province of Indonesia.

**Ipuk Fiestiandani Azwar Anas**, Regent of Banyuwangi, Banyuwangi Regency of East Java, Indonesia then spoke about the impacts of volcano geotourism and the UNESCO Ijen Global

Geopark on enhancing economic development in the East Java Province, precisely in Banyuwangi where per capita income continues to rise and the poverty level decreases.

**Mohamad Farid Zaini**, Chairman of the IGN discussed managing volcano geotourism destinations to sustain local communities. He explained that by demonstrating the efficacy of collaborative approaches, community empowerment, and holistic management strategies, Indonesian geoparks serve as a beacon for other volcanic destinations aspiring to balance conservation efforts with socio-economic benefits. This study underscores the global imperative for sustainable geotourism practices, emphasising the critical role of scientific research and stakeholder engagement in nurturing resilient and inclusive tourism ecosystems. **Dedy Asriady**, Head of Genung Rijani National Park Office in Lombok, discussed the social and economic impacts of geotourism of Gunung Rinjani National Park in West Nusa Tenggara.



For the Australian side, in a follow-up presentation, **Dr Hronsky** affirmed that the AGC is fully supportive of working with global partners, particularly in the Asia Pacific Region. He advised that engagement with the Australian mining industry in developing geotourism strategies for maximising the value of cultural landscapes, particularly in regions where mining operations are facing closure was a top priority. With a further commitment to digital transformation strategies through the design and development of the Australian Geotourism Discovery Portal, Dr Hronsky further suggested that the AGC is becoming a leader in nature-based tourism in Australia.

**Professor Phil McManus** of The University of Sydney explained that many parts of regional and remote Australia are looking for opportunities to rejuvenate their local economy. Volcanic landscapes, which exist from north Queensland to Tasmania and west to Mount Gambier in South Australia, offer sustainable geotourism potential. His presentation explored what it might mean to build sustainable tourism around volcanic landscapes in parts of eastern Australia, what are the opportunities and challenges and how this may enhance the

protection and awareness of crucial geological features and processes. Both volcano geotourism specialist **Dr Patrica Erfurt** and Savannah Guides General Manager, **Russell Boswell** were able to provide the audience with a comprehensive overview of past volcanic activity across Australia and Far North Queensland, respectively. **Sasha Morriss**, Geoeducator and Geoscientist of the Waitaki Whitestone UNESCO Global Geopark, discussed the evolution and rationale for New Zealand's first geopark.



With a focus on the role of geoscientists in geotourism development, **Professor Mega Fatimah Rosana**, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering Geology, Padjadjaran University in West Java, advised in considerable detail how geoscientists play a multifaceted role in bridging scientific knowledge with practical applications to promote sustainable geoparks and geotourism and to protect geological heritage in the areas of geodiversity, geoheritage, geoconservation, and protection; education, research, and monitoring; interpretation, geotourism promotion and planning; and collaboration and advocacy.

With a further commitment to digital transformation strategies through the design and development of the Australian Geotourism Discovery Portal, this theme was explained by PhD candidate and NGS Working Group Chair, **Mark Williams**, who outlined a range of opportunities for geoscientists (including other 'geo-professionals') through volcano geotourism. Furthermore, Mark suggested that the geoscientists and geopark practitioners could be engaged in activities related to data collection and analysis, content creation and curation, visitor education and engagement, and sustainable practices advocacy.



To bring together all of these themes, the Workshop included two panel sessions entitled 'Geotourism and sustainable development' (hosted by **Dr Peter Mitchell OAM**, member of the NGS Steering Committee and **Dr Noel Scott**) as well as 'Geotourism opportunities for geoscientists' (hosted by **Dr Jon Hronsky OAM**, **Angus M Robinson**, Coordinator of the NGS, and workshop Master of Ceremonies and NGS Working Group Chair, **Dr Melinda McHenry**).

## Wildlife Workshop

Led by **Dr Ronda Green**, President of Wildlife Tourism Australia, with specialised knowledge of wildlife in the Asia Pacific region. Ronda is chair of the Biodiversity Working Group within IUCN's Tourism and Protected Areas Group. Indonesia and Australia are both amongst the world's highest-ranking countries in terms of biodiversity and endemism.

The session discussed these shared groups and some of the endemic creatures of both countries, in the context of understanding the formation of the Gondwana landmass. Some of the species were considered in relation to their dependence on kinds of soils or landscapes, and in some cases their own influence on soils. The session discussed some ideas on incorporating wildlife interpretation into geotourism displays and activities. Other speakers included Professor Jatna Supriatna of the Universitas Indonesia who discussed the primates of Indonesia as well as paleontologist Professor Julien Louys of the Australian Research Centre for Human Evolution at Griffith University who presented on the topic of 'Australasian Exchanges and Extinctions: why is Australia, New Guinea and Wallacea so alike and yet so different?'. Finally, Dr Simin Maleknia of Tetratherix Medical reported on forensic investigations into illegal wildlife trafficking in Australia and Indonesia.

## The Welcoming Dinner at The University of Sydney

The dinner attended by 60 guests featured speeches firstly by **Dr Elizabeth Thurbon**, Professor of International Political Economy, School of Social Sciences, University of New South Wales. Elizabeth spoke about the opportunity for applying economic and cultural statecraft based on successful models developed in East Asia, so important for Australia's future relationship with its closest neighbour. **Ipuk Fiestiandani Azwar Anas**, Regent of Banyuwangi then spoke about the significance of the development of a close and warm relationship through the auspices of geotourism and UNESCO Global Geopark development. then spoke about the significance of the development of a close and warm relationship through the auspices of geotourism and UNESCO Global Geopark development. The guests were treated to a delightful performance by the Balinese Oleg Tamulilingan dance company.



## The Tours

### Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

Led by **Dr Peter Hatherly**, a specialist of landforms of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, the large tour group visited the World Heritage Exhibition Centre in the Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens located on the volcanics outcrops of Mt Tomah, the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, and various geosites and short walking trails including the Triassic sedimentary landscapes of the Upper Blue Mountains at Echo Point.



The highlights of this tour are captured in a short video clip produced by Raiza Sartori and Marcia Cunha <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtZXzp9gJII>

### Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion



Led by **Dr Peter Mitchell OAM**, a member of the GeoRegion Steering Committee. The tour group visited Long Reef on Sydney's Northern Beaches to gain an appreciation of how a geotrail along the coastline with 17 identified sites in a highly populated area is being constructed. The Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion is well known for its significant natural and cultural heritage values. The GeoRegion covers protected areas, principally the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park as well as the coastal cliffs and lagoons along a section of the Northern Beaches of Sydney. An integral part of a GeoRegion is the development of

geotourism projects such as educational geotrails focusing on the geology, landscape, flora and fauna, and cultural heritage.

### Royal National Park & South Coast Volcanics



Led by **Dr Sabin Zahirovic** and sponsored by the NSW Division of the Geological Society of Australia, this field trip took participants to the NSW South Coast, more specifically to Kiama and Bombo. This area records the end-Permian mass extinction in the rock outcrops, driven by volcanism on the other side of the planet (via the Siberian flood basalts) 251 million years ago, as well as preserving the Late Cretaceous rift-related basalts formed during the opening of the Tasman Sea. Further inland, the region also hosts significant and geologically recent

intraplate volcanics, highlighting the significant impact of volcanism and tectonics on shaping this region. In addition, the Kiama Blowhole is a significant geotourism destination on the NSW coast.

## Acknowledgements



The GEOFEST 2024 Sydney Workshop was co-hosted by generous sponsorship from various AGC member societies (The AusIMM and its Sydney Branch, the Australian Institute of Geoscientists, and the Geological Society of Australia inclusive of its NSW Division), as well as by the Sydney Minerals Exploration Discussion Group. This financial support enabled the Workshop to be run successfully and within budget, with the small surplus achieved to be applied by the AGC for activities devoted to the further development of geotourism in Australia.

Special thanks are also extended to the members of the Workshop Executive and Advisory Committees, Chair Dr Young Ng and his colleagues of the NGS Leadership team, Angus M Robinson and Mark Williams, as well as Pat Hanna, President of the Australia Indonesia Association, Professor Phil McManus of The University of Sydney (ably assisted by Dr Sabin Zahirovic), Dr Michael Leggo and Ian Neuss (ably assisted by David Turvey) representing the sponsors, and Raiza Sartori. The ongoing support of the IGN team represented by Mohamad Farid Zaini assisted by Meihva Ang and Ana Oktaillah is particularly acknowledged.

Workshop Master of Ceremonies, Dr Melinda McHenry as well as tour leaders Dr Peter Hatherly (with Ian Brown), Dr Peter Mitchell OAM, and Dr Sabin Zahirovic all contributed significantly to the technical success of the event, as did Dr Ronda Green and Dr Noel Scott

representing Wildlife Tourism Australia. Much appreciated administrative and logistic support was afforded by Nikki Montenegro and Erin Brightwell and a decided group of student volunteers from The University of Sydney. Thanks also to Kim Frankcombe, Ron Colman, and Ian Lewis representing the AGC, and to Michael Kim of Nocturnal Designers for the website design and production.

The GEOFEST 2024 event has continued to forge new and friendly relationships amongst geotourism practitioners in the Asia Pacific Region. It has also provided fresh insights based on the Indonesian experience into the extent of input required by geopark proponents coupled with broad support from government agencies and communities that is necessary to secure UNESCO approval of sustainable projects. In addition, the event has demonstrated what members of professional geoscience groupings can achieve by collaboration and shared funding support, working within the framework of a cohesive national strategic framework.

### Link to Full Digital Programme for both Workshops and the Three Tours

[https://www.earthbyte.org/webdav/ftp/Training\\_Outreach/Workshops/2024/GeoFest\\_2024\\_FullDigitalProgram.pdf](https://www.earthbyte.org/webdav/ftp/Training_Outreach/Workshops/2024/GeoFest_2024_FullDigitalProgram.pdf)

Angus M Robinson, Coordinator, NGS

Dr Young Ng  
GEOFEST 2024 Sydney Workshop Convenor and  
Chair, NGS Working Group 6

5 August 2024



**GEOFEST**  
**2024 SYDNEY WORKSHOP**  
VOLCANO AS A WORLD CLASS  
SUSTAINABLE GEOTOURISM DESTINATION

EVENT OPENS TO GEOSCIENTISTS, ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS, EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, TOURISM PLANNERS/MANAGERS/OPERATORS.

**MAIN TOPICS**

- SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF GEOPARKS
- CHALLENGES OF GEOTOURISM AND GEOPARK OPERATION
- DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION IN VOLCANIC GEOTOURISM

FEATURING SPEAKERS FROM AUSTRALIA, INDONESIA & NEW ZEALAND

**FIELD TRIPS**  
BLUE MOUNTAINS  
KU-RING-GAI GEOREGION  
SOUTH COAST VOLCANICS  
& A SPECIAL SESSION ON WILDLIFE TOURISM

**LOCATION**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY  
Camperdown  
Darlington Campus

**18-19TH  
JULY  
2024**

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Logos for UNESCO, IGC, Geoparks Australia, The University of Sydney, AusIMM and Spatial Assets, Geoparks Australia, and National University of Science and Technology are visible at the bottom.