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# GTG

## GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites

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## **GEPARKS, GEOHERITAGE AND GEOTOURISM: OPPORTUNITIES AND TOOLS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERRITORY**

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This special issue focuses on the three main concepts that can represent an important opportunity of growth and sustainable development for a specific territory or area: geoparks, geoheritage and geotourism.

In particular, we mean for *Geoheritage* a generic but descriptive term applied to sites or areas of geologic features with significant scientific, educational, cultural, or aesthetic value. In some zones of the Earth the geoheritage is particularly important and it is concentrated in a limited protected geographical area, the *Geoparks*, where geological heritage sites are part of a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. These sites represent for the local community, directly, but also for all the society, an added value that can increase and improve the local economy, using the synergy between geodiversity, biodiversity and culture, in addition to both tangible and non-tangible heritage.

All the above cited concepts are directly linked to the *Geotourism*, defined as “*tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place, its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents*”. This concept was introduced in a 2003 report by the Travel Industry Association of America and National Geographic (Traveler magazine) and successively adopted by Hose (2012). Geotourism adds to sustainability principles a geographical character, the “sense of place” (Hose, 2012), to emphasize the distinctiveness of its place and benefit visitor and resident alike, such the case proposed by Lazzari (2013).

To facilitate public interest in geotourism, geoscientists, government agencies, communities, and other stakeholders must collaborate to sensitize the public, develop, and preserve these national patrimony/heritage sites for teaching, training, research, sustainable development, job creation, environmental conservation, and exploration of alternatives to traditional exploitation/uses.

This special issue has been realized in continuity with the activities of the 12th European Geoparks Conference (presence of 400 delegates from 41 countries from 5

continents), held on 4 - 7 September 2013 in the National Park of Cilento, Vallo di Diano and Alburni Geopark, which highlighted the strategies developed by the European and Global Geoparks Networks to promote an understanding of geohazards and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The title of the conference, "*Geoparks an innovative approach to raise public awareness about geohazards, climate change and sustainable use of our natural resources*" has been chosen to address the aims of the conference:

1. To verify how Geoparks can disseminate the scientific knowledge of the academic community concerning these issues;
2. To understand how Geoparks address these issues in the educational system;
3. To promote the role of Geoparks on the public awareness and sustainable use of natural resources.

The papers selected for this special issue discuss the topic from a methodological point of view (Geodiversity as a new quantitative index for natural protected areas) or take into account some particular sites of Italy, such as the coastal cliffs of Capo Caccia in north-western Sardinia, the natural and cultural heritage in the landscape of the Carignano wine district of the Sulcis region (SW Sardinia) and the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park (central Italy) with example of Mount Greco and Chiarano valley.

The contents of this issue certainly do not exhaust a so wide and complex topic, but they can provide a direction of virtuous studies and researches, of which the communities and the areas, described in the papers, have benefited.

## REFERENCES

- Hose, T., A., (2012), *3G's for Modern Geotourism*, *Geoheritage Journal*, 4, p. 7-24.  
Lazzari, M., (2013), *Geosites, cultural tourism and sustainability in the Gargano National Park (southern Italy): the case study of the La Salata (Vieste) geoarchaeological site*, *Rend. Online Soc. Geol. It.*, Vol. 28 , p. 97-101.