The Global Geoparks Network (GGN) is a voluntary network of geoparks supported by UNESCO. The GGN is a dynamic network where members are committed to working together and exchanging ideas of best practice and join in common projects to raise the quality standards of all products and practices of a Global Geopark. While the GGN as a whole comes together every two years, the GGN functions through the operation of regional networks such as the European Geoparks Network which meets twice a year to develop and promote joint activities.

A Global Geopark is a unified area with geological heritage of international significance. Geoparks use that heritage to promote awareness of key issues facing society in the context of the dynamic planet we all live on. Many Geoparks promote awareness of geological hazards, including volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis and many help prepare disaster mitigation strategies among local communities. Geoparks hold records of past climate change and are educators on current climate change as well as adopting a best practice approach to utilising renewable energy and employing the best standards of “green tourism.” Geoparks also inform about the sustainable use and need for natural resources, whether they are extracted, quarried or harnessed from the surrounding environment while at the same time promoting respect for the environment and the integrity of the landscapes. Geoparks are not a legislative designation though the key heritage site within a geopark should be protected under local, regional or national legislation as appropriate.

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**Where are the Global Geoparks?**

As of September 2013, there are 100 Global Geoparks spread across 30 countries. While the Global Geoparks have until recently been concentrated in Europe and in China, the last few years have seen the geoparks initiative spread worldwide so that there are existing Global Geoparks, or active applications to become Global Geoparks, on all continents.

**Is a Geopark only about geology?**

No! While a geopark must demonstrate geological heritage of international significance, the purpose of a geopark is to explore, develop and celebrate the links between that geological heritage and all other aspects of the area’s natural, cultural and intangible heritages. It is about reconnecting human society at all levels to the planet we all call home and to celebrate how our planet and its natural, cultural and intangible heritages. It is about adopting a best practise approach to utilising renewable energy and employing the best standards of “green tourism.” Geoparks promote awareness of key issues facing society in the context of the dynamic planet we all live on. Many Geoparks promote awareness of geological hazards, including volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis and many help prepare disaster mitigation strategies among local communities. Geoparks hold records of past climate change and are educators on current climate change as well as adopting a best practice approach to utilising renewable energy and employing the best standards of “green tourism.” Geoparks also inform about the sustainable use and need for natural resources, whether they are extracted, quarried or harnessed from the surrounding environment while at the same time promoting respect for the environment and the integrity of the landscapes. Geoparks are not a legislative designation though the key heritage site within a geopark should be protected under local, regional or national legislation as appropriate.

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For more information on individual Global Geoparks:
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On successfully becoming a member of the GGN, the membership period is four years. After this period your membership must be renewed by a restatement of your activities as a geopark and by the undertaking of a further "revalidation" mission.

**How to join**

The motto of the Global Geoparks Network is: "Celebrating Earth Heritage, Sustaining Local Communities." Geoparks are fundamentally about people and about exploring and celebrating the links between our communities and the Earth. The Earth has shaped who we are: it has shaped our farming practices, the building materials and methods we have used for our homes, even our mythology, folktales and folk traditions. Global Geoparks therefore engage in a range of activities to reconnect these links. Many Global Geoparks have strong links to the arts and science, with the synergy released by bringing science and the arts together can yield surprising results.

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