

Waitaki Whitestone Geopark

environment | science | culture
education | sustainable development
community | slow tourism



Waitaki Whitestone
Aspiring Global
Geopark

"Ka titiro ake ki te tihi o
Aoraki,

Heke atu ki te awa
tapu o Waitaki,

Huri ki te Moana
o Araiteuru,

Tēnā koutou katoa"

.....

"Look up to the top of
Aoraki,

and back down the
Waitaki River,

to the Coast of the
ancient canoe of the
Gods,
Araiteuru,

Greetings to you all"

This mihi is kindly given to the
people of and visitors to Waitaki
by Ngāi Tahu Whānui, the
original peoples of Te
Waipounamu



Waitaki Whitestone Geopark



Welcome to the Waitaki - a window into the world of Te Riu-a-Māui/ Zealandia, the world's eighth continent - formed under an ancient sea. Volcanoes, mountains, rivers, glaciers and people then further shaped this region. Written in the stone and in our land is the story of the Waitaki - a geological wonderland, steeped in Kāi Tahu Whānui histories and culture waiting to be explored.

Nau mai, haere mai tauati mai rā ki te rohe o Te Rūnanga o Moeraki

Our Earth is facing environmental and societal challenges - climate change, biodiversity loss, sustainable use of resources, geohazards and sustainable economic development to name a few. To find holistic and innovative solutions to address these issues, we need to understand our land's past to look to a better future.

Education through storytelling is at the heart of the Waitaki Whitestone Geopark. We believe that with understanding comes appreciation and protection of our whenua (land). Education provides a platform for addressing the societal and environmental challenges we all face and results in a more resilient society.

The local Ngāi Tahu Whānui representatives, Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, as mana whenua are members of the Trust and partners in delivering the Geopark.

The Geopark concept has the potential to set a new standard for

- Place-based community collaboration
- Tourism that supports regeneration
- Innovative storytelling
- UN's Sustainable Development Goals delivery

Together with our partners, we are looking to implement our strategy. This includes:

- Sustainable access and facilities at key sites
- Education programmes with schools and communities
- Community engagement events
- Sharing local and indigenous knowledge
- Visitor Discovery Hubs
- Interpretative signage
- Sustainable tourism experiences

“ To recognise the significance of the Waitaki landscape and its people in the endorsement for our takiwā to be proposed as the first Global Geopark in New Zealand, is something we see as a great step in supporting our aspirations to share our cultural histories and ensure our ancestors' footprints are visible throughout the landscape.”

David Higgins, Te Rūnanga o Moeraki Upoko

THE WAITAKI WHITESTONE GEOPARK

Where is the Waitaki Whitestone Geopark?

The Waitaki Whitestone Geopark covers an area of 7,214 km² and has the same boundaries as the Waitaki District Council. The area contains approximately 16 towns and 22 000 people and received 1.1 million visitors in 2019.

Beginnings

The Vanished World Centre and Trail in the rural Waitaki village of Duntroon has been in operation since 2001, introducing thousands of visitors to the unique geology, culture and history of our region.



Current Status

The Trust (through the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO) applied to UNESCO for Global Geopark status in November 2019. In July 2022 we welcomed two evaluators' to Waitaki to carry out a field inspection of the area. In September 2022 we were one step closer to becoming New Zealand's first UNESCO Global Geopark following the recommendation from the UNESCO Global Geopark Council to accept the application.

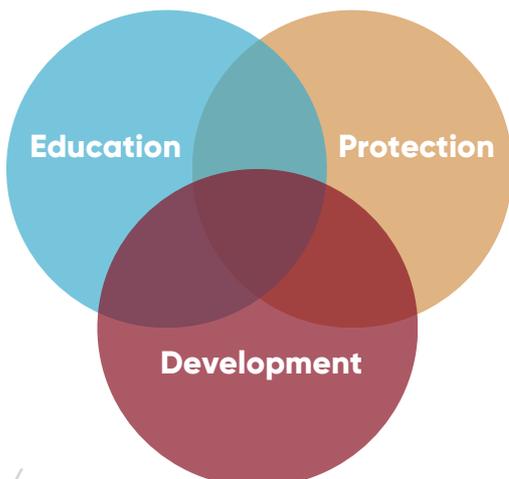
The next step is for the Executive Board of UNESCO to endorse the recommendation which is expected in May 2023.

“There is no question that the potential is here.”
Nickolas Zouros, Global Geopark Network President

Masterplan

The UNESCO term "Masterplan" equates to the Strategic Plan for the development of the Geopark. The Strategic Plan 2021-25 was published in September 2021 and is co-developed with local iwi. The Plan sets out the Mission, Vision, strategic direction, development roadmap and operating philosophy of the Geopark. It can be found on our website:

<https://www.whitestonegeopark.nz/the-trust>



What is a Geopark?

UNESCO Global Geoparks are areas of international geological significance and are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Geoparks use the regions' geological, cultural and natural heritage to tell the story of the land and how the landscapes have shaped the lives of its people, animals, and plants.



Strategic Goals

ENVIRONMENT
TIAKI TAIAO

Promote protection and enhancement of Waitaki's natural and cultural assets

COMMUNITY
TIAKI HAPORI

Drive social identity, community pride and encourage local champions for the Geopark

VISITOR
TIAKI MANUHIRI

Drive awareness, engagement and advocacy

ECONOMY
ŌHANGA

Current businesses benefit from an economically sustainable Geopark and new businesses and residents are attracted to come and invest here. Strive to be less dependent on outside funding.

UNESCO Global Geoparks align and actively contribute to a variety of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.



“The prospect of attaining UNESCO status though would be a game-changer. Simply by being part of that exclusive club, the Waitaki region would be on the map for those wanting to see the most remarkable geological sights. This region has a wonderful story to tell, and the prospect of telling it to more people is exciting.”

Jacqui Dean, MP for Waitaki

Geopark Alive

Let's have a look at how the Geopark concept comes alive! These are a few examples of what has been achieved so far:



The Geopark organised a volunteer party in 2021 to plant 800 native trees at Five Forks to support the Clifton Falls Walkway Community project.



The Geopark Public Talk series saw experts from all kinds of backgrounds come to Waitaki to share their knowledge and expertise. Since July 2020, over 650 people have attended the public talks.



The Geopark organises regular Beach Clean-Ups - a great way for the community to actively look after our beaches. So far, over 20 bags of rubbish have been collected.



Interpretative signage has been installed at a number of sites across the district. They offer educational material focusing on geological, cultural and natural stories. As of February 2023, 16 signs have been installed.



Our Geoeducator provides education programmes to schools and public engagement opportunities. In 2022, the classroom series has reached 768 pupils - 21% of all school age children in the Waitaki engaged with the Geopark as part of their curriculum.

