

Geomorphosites and Geotourism

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Published online: 5 August 2011
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Since the creation of a specific working group on geomorphological sites (or geomorphosites; see Panizza 2001) within the International Association of Geomorphologists (IAG) during the 5th International Conference on Geomorphology held in Tokyo in 2001, the geomorphological community has worked on several issues directly related to geomorphological heritage, including its definition, assessment and mapping, protection, and promotion (Reynard et al. 2009). The results have been shared and discussed in several international conferences and workshops held in Modena (Workshop, 2002), Cagliari (Workshop, 2003), Mexico City (IAG Regional Conference, 2003), Florence (International Geological Congress, 2004), Zaragoza (IAG International Conference, 2005), Lesbos (Workshop, 2007), Lausanne (Workshop, 2008), Oslo (International Geological Congress, 2008), Brasov (IAG Regional Conference, 2008), Paris (International Conference, 2009), Melbourne (IAG International Conference, 2009), and Lisbon (International Conference, 2010). Many of the results have also been

published in articles appearing in special issues of a number of international journals, such as the reports of Piacente and Coratza (2005) on geomorphosites and geodiversity, Reynard and Panizza (2005) on primarily assessment issues, Reynard and Coratza (2007) on geomorphosites and geodiversity, Coratza and Panizza (2010) on geomorphology and cultural heritage, and Giusti (2010) on the relationships between geomorphosites and geosites.

This issue of *Geoheritage* comprises nine papers presented at the international symposium “Geomorphosites 2009: Raising the Profile of Geomorphological Heritage through Iconography, Inventory and Promotion” (held in Paris in June 2009) and at the IAG International Conference on Geomorphology in Melbourne (July 2009) (session “Geomorphosites and Geotourism”). The papers focus on two issues, namely, the assessment and mapping of geomorphological heritage and the management of geomorphosites within the geotourism framework.

Four papers report and discuss topics related to the assessment and mapping of the geomorphological heritage. V.M. Bruschi and colleagues propose a methodological approach that focuses on the question of objectivity and the selection of clearly defined criteria for assessing geoheritage. The other three papers report practical applications of assessment and mapping methods in specific areas. Th. Feuillet proposes an evaluation of geomorphosites in the Pyrenees National Park, R. Pellitero Ondicol and colleagues assess and map geomorphosites and geodiversity in the Ebro and Rudron Canyons Natural Park in Spain, and P. Coratza et al. select and evaluate geomorphological sites in the Il-Majistral Nature and History Park in Malta. These three groups of authors propose new approaches to the assessment of geomorphological heritage at the regional scale. They also demonstrate the importance of natural

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protected areas for diffusing knowledge to both experts in the field and the general public on geomorphology, geology, and geodiversity.

The remaining five papers focus on the use of geomorphosites by the geotourist and specific issues related to active geomorphosite management. Two articles deal with volcanism and geotourism, one at the global scale (P. Erfurt-Cooper) and the second at the local scale (V. Armiero et al.). F. R. Luger et al. discuss wine production areas as a geomorphological heritage, E. Miccadei and T. Piacentini discuss geomorphosites and geotourism in the Abruzzo region (Italy), and B. Smith and colleagues discuss the management of a World Heritage Site actively sought out by tourists, namely, The Giant's Causeway, in the context of very active slope processes.

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