

OHRID GEOPARK AND ITS UNIQUE GEOHERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

The term of Geopark refers to a rich territory with geological heritage of particular scientific, educational and aesthetic values. It is identified through this definition by assessing the geo-tourism as a development option with positive effects on the community that lives within it. This initiative is a big step forward in the process of identifying the most important national geosites and of managing the natural and cultural heritage of a national park in an integrated way. Since 2015 when UNESCO ratified the creation of a new label, the UNESCO Global Geoparks is a new international designation which is not a legislative one and does not imply restrictions on any economic activity inside them. In Albania the use of geopark term is new and through it a lot of areas with the most interesting tracks geological heritage are identified, among which the most interesting one is Geopark of Ohrid.

The geopark of Ohrid is located in southeast of Albania, in municipality of Pogradec. It takes its name from the presence of Lake Ohrid, which is one of the most distinguishable, hydrographic and tectonic zone. Ohrid Lake is formed by the influence of tectonical-karst processes at the most northern limit of the long Albanian-Thessalian depression. The area is still tectonically active and this way it might compensate sedimentation by subduction. Most of the studies agree on a time frame about the origin of Lake Ohrid of 2–5 million years ago. It is considered as an interesting interborder ecosystem between Albania and Macedonia. It is unique concerning its oval form, hydrodynamic water regimen, its fauna, high transparency (15-25m) and clean waters.

*Underground karst water springs in contact of molasses with limestone rocks getting their water from Prespa Lake and from Mali i Thate carbonate basin supply Ohrid Lake. Driloni, Shen Naumi and Tushemishti karst springs are important geological sites. Lakes Ohrid is bounded to the east and west by high mountain chains, such as Mokra Mountains (1,500 m) to the west and Galicica and Mali i Thate Mountains (2,250 m) in the east. Lini peninsula lately is known as a geosite where are found the outcrops of Triassic limestone with ammonites. Concerning the unique fauna of this lake amongst the unique fish (*Salmo letnica* Karaman) we remind especially about some mollusks, which are remained yet only in this lake of Europe. In Ohrid geopark there are also some geological sites such as: Guri i Kamjes, Memelisht Cave, Najazmes Cave, Ohrid tectonic secession, Alarupi coal mine, etc. In addition to its geological and biological interest, the rich cultural heritage of the area such as: archeological monuments (castle of Pogradeci, Prehistoric Settlement of Zagradies, Mosaic of Lini, Tombs of Selca), architectural monuments (Goliku bridge, Terziu bridge, etc), religious monuments and historical monuments.*

In Ohrid geopark the key mineral assets are coal, chrome, iron-nickel, etc. At the upper part of western slope in transgression contact of ultrabasic rocks with limestone there is formed a large iron-nickel ore deposit. Industry in this region received a great development during the period of socialism, while it was accompanied by environmental problems and many of the mines are closed today. Usually in Europe the old coal and iron mines but also the gold ones are returned to tourist attractions. Industrial facilities raised as a result of mineral processing can be utilized by tourism as industrial heritage objects. On the other hand there are some quite interesting open careers, which with limited investments are made in function of tourists.

Keywords: geopark, Ohrid Lake, geological site, cultural heritage, industrial heritage