



Kula Geopark: Turkey's first European and Global Geopark

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The Kula European and Global Geopark is situated in the Aegean Region of Turkey at Western Anatolia, within Manisa Province. The Geopark area covers 300 km². The Kula Geopark area is the youngest volcanic region of Turkey where the volcanic activity continued up to prehistoric times. The outstanding volcanic structures of Kula Geopark area are well known at least for 2 thousand years. The great ancient Greek Geographer Strabo (63BC-24AD) in his majestic book "Geographica" named Kula as "Katakekaumene" (fire-born) because of the coal black lava. The geological significance and the cultural richness of Kula was mentioned by many foreign travellers and researchers like Charles Texier (1832) "Asia Minor" and Henry Washington's PhD thesis in 1893 where he named Kula basalts as "Kulaite".

Kula Geopark area is awarded with high geodiversity representing 200 million years of earth history from Palaeozoic to Holocene including maars, monogenic cinder cones, successive lava flow plains, lava caves and tubes, craters, basalt columns, xenoliths, contact metamorphism, ash deposits, waterfalls in volcanic canyons, active karstic caves, badlands and fairy chimneys, mesa structures and schist top, as far as 15 thousand years of fossil human foot prints preserved in volcanic ash.

Kula Geopark is the land of miniature volcanoes where cinder cones are not higher than 150m. As a result, the geosites are easy to access and visiting the area requires very little risk, effort and time which makes the area excellent for geotourism and geoeducation.

In addition to these outstanding natural and geological heritages, Kula Geopark reveals rich cultural, architectural historical, archaeological, and paleontological monuments. Kula represents well-preserved monuments of the 18th century Ottoman urban architecture in Turkey.

The Kula Geopark Project was initiated in 2011 by PhD Erdal Gümüş with the support of the Kula Municipality. In September 2013 the Kula Geopark was certified as the first and only Turkish member of the European Geoparks Network and the Global Geoparks Network of UNESCO.

As a result of the Kula Geopark Project, Turkey's first Geopark Visitor Centre the "Katakekaumene" and first thematic geotrail equipped with custom designed information sign and panels were established within Kula Geopark which offers regular indoor and outdoor geoeducational programs and activities.

As a result of recognition of Kula Geopark as a EGN & GGN member, for the first time Turkey gained official position within European and Global Geoparks network represented by Kula Mayor Selim Aşkın and Kula Geopark Coordinator Erdal Gümüş.

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