



Exploring the Pannonian Sea island

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Geography is one of the most complex subjects to teach in Croatia since it connects many different subjects. One of the most important aspects of the subject is fieldwork and outdoor classrooms.

I have been working in secondary vocational school for the past 18 years. My students are 15 to 19 years old. Usually, they find the classroom boring so I take them outside for outdoor classrooms which include outdoor activities during which they learn through exploring the world around them .

This year our outdoor classroom took place on a mountain situated in Slavonia, easternmost Croatian region. Slavonia is mostly lowland agricultural area but there are several mountains which arise from it. These mountains form a ringlike range around Požeška basin. One of them is Papuk, 953 m high mountain which has been proclaimed Nature Park in 1999. due to its geological variety and biodiversity as well as cultural and historical heritage. Inside Park there are several areas with higher protection level than the rest of the Park. Some of them are: the geological nature monument Rupnica, the Forest Park Jankovac, the special reserve of forest vegetation Sekulinačke planine (Sekulinačke mountains), the nature monument Dva hrasta (Two oaks), the nature monument Stanište tise (Yew Habitat) and the special floristic reserve Pliš – Mališčak – Turjak – Lapjak. Nature Park Papuk area is geologically most various in Croatia and as such was declared the Geopark and became a part of European Geoparks Network (EGN) and the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) in 2007.. To the present day it remains the only Geopark in Croatia.

I spent two days on Papuk mountain with my students. Before leaving I gave them materials to study and prepare themselves for a trip. None of my students visited Papuk before so this fact made this class more interesting. They had a chance to apply theoretical knowledge on the spot and see just how different Papuk is from the region they come from. The fact that Papuk was an island emerging from Paratethys sea (or Pannonian sea) some 17 million years ago increased their interest. Also, this is one of the few locations in Croatia where you can see volcanic rocks on the surface.

As a conclusion, students wished for more classes like this saying: "Teacher, what do you have in mind for our next expedition?".