

The news that UNESCO has included the area of the Djerdap canyon – a protected nature resort – on its list, which includes a total of 161 geoparks from 44 countries, has aroused public interest. What exactly are UNESCO's global geoparks and what does this undoubted recognition mean for Djerdap?

Apart from being one of the five national parks in Serbia, Djerdap has recently, by the decision of the UNESCO Executive Council, become the first geopark in our country. According to the website of that world organization, global geoparks are unique, geographically complete areas that are characterized by sites of international geological significance, and they also contain exceptional natural and cultural heritage. It is an initiative that was conceived in 2004, and concretized in 2015 in order to encourage international cooperation in such areas in terms of their protection, sustainable development and education.

"UNESCO Global Geoparks" use the connection of the geological heritage of these sites with all other aspects of their natural and cultural heritage in order to increase awareness of key social issues, such as sustainable use of planetary resources, mitigation of climate change and mitigation of natural disasters. "Raising awareness of the importance of geological heritage in these areas throughout history and today, encourages the creation of innovative local companies, new jobs and high quality training courses, with the development of geotourism and protection of geological resources of these sites," reads the UNESCO website.

In particular, membership in this body brings the opportunity to geoparks to develop mutual partnerships, with the activation of all locals in these areas – from landowners, through the community and tourism providers, to indigenous people and local organizations operating in a geopark. The list is entered by the countries nominating "candidates" from their territory, whereby the condition is that the locality for which the application dossier is submitted enjoys a certain degree of protection in the home country, whether it is local or regional acts or national legislation.

According to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the proclamation of the "Djerdap geopark " created conditions for the development of practices and models for a unique connection between the protection of geological heritage and regional sustainable economic development of this area. The relevant ministry added that back in 2014, before UNESCO institutionalized the venture of the global network of these areas, an initiative for the establishment of geoparks in Serbia was launched. Then, at the end of 2015, the Working Team for the establishment of the "Djerdap geopark " was formed, which prepared the application file. The application was submitted to the secretariat of that international

organization through the National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO.

Geopark Djerdap was established on the basis of an agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia, PE 'National Park Djerdap' and the municipalities of Golubac, Majdanpek, Kladovo and Negotin, which provides for PE 'NP Djerdap' to be the bearer of the activities of the Geopark ", states the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

Apart from the area of the Djerdap canyon – which is the longest in Europe with a length of over 100 kilometers – an integral part of the geopark, whose total area is 1,330 square kilometers, are also parts of the Kucaj and Miroc mountain massifs.

The status of the UNESCO global geopark, by the way, is not "eternal". Each site receives this label for four years, after which UNESCO evaluators in the field examine whether the conditions for membership are still met. If so, the geopark received a green card for another four years. Otherwise, a yellow card follows, with the obligation to correct the shortcomings in the next two years. If the management of the geopark does not do that, a red card and exclusion from the UNESCO network will follow.

### **Mayan tree and mysterious steam**

At the recent plenary session of the UNESCO Executive Council, in addition to Djerdap, 14 other locations from Europe, Asia and "both" Americas were included among the global geoparks. On that occasion, Serbia, together with Nicaragua and Russia, was one of the three countries from which an area reached this list for the first time. Thus, Djerdap found himself in the company of the Nicaraguan site of Rio Coco, also known for the 500-year-old golden ceiba tree that the ancient Maya considered sacred, but also of the Russian Yangantau Park, near the mountain of the same name near the border with Kazakhstan. The UNEX list also includes two geoparks from Canada, Spain and China, as well as one location each from Finland, Indonesia, Portugal, South Korea, Great Britain and Vietnam. Out of a total of 161 protected areas in the UNESCO network, most of them are in China (41), followed by Spain (15). When it comes to the former Yugoslav states, the list includes two geoparks from Croatia (Papuk mountain and Vis archipelago) and Slovenia (the old mining settlement of Idrija and the Karavanke mountain range, for which this state applied together with Austria).

Source: politika.rs

## The first geopark in Serbia - the area of the Djerdap canyon