From Local to National to Global: A Case Study of How a Local-based Hotel and Communities Helped Develop HK Geopark into a World-class Destination for Sustainable Adventure Tourism

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Chapter 1: Situational Analysis

An Overview of the Development of Inbound Tourism in HK
- Tourism as a Locomotive of Hong Kong’s Economy for Decades
- A Surging Need for HK to Diversify its Tourism Products and Markets
- An Abundance of Geological Heritages in HK Global Geopark promising Great Potential for Adventure Tourism Development

From a historical perspective, tourism has long been playing a vital role in Hong Kong’s economy since the latter shifted from an industrial to a service sector model in the late 1980s. Well recognized as one of the four economic pillars of HK, the role of inbound tourism becomes even more important after the introduction of the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) in 2003, which keeps bringing tens of millions of tourists from Mainland China on a yearly basis and results in mainland visitors now accounting for more than half of the sector’s revenue. (Figure 1)

Despite these seemingly positive figures, it has been observed and pointed out that the long-term prospect is not that optimistic as HK is becoming over-dependent on one single country for its prosperity. Having been heavily dependent on the mainlanders from China as the main source of tourist arrivals for decades, HK’s economy will be at stake in case the sole market shrinks or the mainlanders get bored with the same destination someday.

Moreover, the economic success brought about by the Independent Visit Scheme is not without cost as a number of side effects have subsequently emerged.

For instance, land price increases and consumer goods become expensive for the locals; numerous local shops have been forced to close down as they can no longer afford the skyrocketing rent offered by the world famous brands. A high concentration of tourists in urban areas also disturb the life of the local residents, giving rise to social problems like congestion, segregation and stereotyping, etc. Social harmony and cohesion are tarnished by the hostility and cultural difference between the locals and the mainland tourists.

Moreover, with shopping still being the main tourists’ activity, Hong Kong is widely perceived as a short-stay city destination, with the average length of stay being roughly three days. As a result, the benefits of tourism are spread too thinly. Some observers commented that potentially very lucrative forms of tourism continue to be ignored and underdeveloped in the territory. (Hills 2004)
To tackle the above problems, a surging demand for HK to diversify its market and develop other forms of tourism on top of its mainstream tourism activities is identified. There is an urgent need for us to make tourists more aware of alternative forms of tourism they can pursue.

In view of the above, there exists a demand and marketing niche for other forms of tourism to flourish in HK. After our investigation and a mini survey carried out in May, sustainable adventure tourism can be one of the solutions to the said problems and with the multitude of geological gems we examine in our site visits, we see HK Global Geopark as a potential destination for such development. Thus, in this project, it is our objective to

1) Stock-take all the geo and cultural heritages of HK Global Geopark,

2) Analyze its potential to be developed into a destination of sustainable adventure tourism and

3) Examine how different stakeholders, especially the business sector, and a local-based hotel, to be specific, join hands and help to work towards this ultimate goal together.

It is hoped that after this study, we can get a better understanding of the beautiful HK Global Geopark and its close relationship with the tourists, local citizens and different business sectors, through which we can afterwards thrive to promote and display to the world another side of Hong Kong which we Hong Kong citizens are proud of. We would like to inspire them that the international image of Hong Kong does not have to be just a city with skyscrapers but can also be a natural and healthy international metropolis.
Figure 1

Top 4 Popular Tourist Activities in Hong Kong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank of Popularity</th>
<th>Tourist Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gastronomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Clubbing</td>
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</tbody>
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On 17 and 18th March 2015, we interviewed 25 tourists in Tsim Sha Tsui. Only 11 of them have heard about HK Global Geopark but 19 of them expressed great interest in exploring the geological landforms in HK. This mini survey shows HK Global Geopark promises much potential for further development!
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Adventure Tourism

According to our research, adventure tourism can be classified into two main categories, namely

i) Hard adventure tourism
ii) Soft adventure tourism

(Source: Queensland Tourism Board)

There is a distinction between the two kinds of adventure tourism. For hard adventure tourism, it combines a unique experience in an outdoor setting with excitement and a certain degree of risk. In many cases, it frequently demands physical exertion as well as a level of skill.

Soft adventure tourism, on the other hand, also focuses on providing a unique outdoors experience or ‘adventure’. However, it involves only a minor element of risk, little physical exertion, and limited skills. It is often educational and discovery, with the environment, heritage and indigenous culture being common aspects.

When we apply the above theories to the case of HK Global Geopark, we can see that the Geopark promises great destinations for both hard and soft sustainable adventure tourism, as viewing and exploring the different landforms involves much physical strength, whereas the natural and cultural heritages provide a chance of spiritual insight and enlightenment to the visitors.

2.2 Definition of Sustainable Tourism Development

According to United Nations World Trade Organisation, sustainable tourism can be defined as:

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"
Conceptually speaking, sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

**Thus, sustainable tourism should:**

1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

To achieve the above aims, sustainable tourism should maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

Most important of all, sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.
2.3 Definition of Geopark

According to our research, the term "geopark" first appeared in UNESCO Geoparks Programme published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1997. In simple terms, UNESCO defines a geopark as an area containing geological heritage sites of particular importance.

As these Earth heritage sites require a comprehensive and coordinated management framework and a strategy for sustainable economic development, a geopark achieves its goals through a three-pronged approach, which are:-

1) It protects geosites and the natural environment.
2) It promotes popularisation of earth science and improvement of public science literacy.
3) It supports sustainable local economic and social development.

2.4 Difference between a Geopark and a Global Geopark

Comparatively speaking, a Global geopark has to fulfill MORE requirements than an ordinary geopark. It is because the key features of a global geopark are:

- A single boundary;
- Being open to public;
- Significant coverage and scope of geoheritage;
- A natural area of special geological significance and natural beauty;
- The integration of ecology, local culture and history;
- A sound protection and management system; and
- A complete management plan, including local engagement schemes

In other words, a Global Geopark is an area with a particular geological heritage of international significance and also with a sustainable development strategy involving local communities. The primary promotional focus of a Global Geopark is its geological heritage, but it is also essential that all other aspects of the area’s natural and cultural heritage are promoted in the context of their links to the area’s ecological heritage.

So it is obvious that a Global Geopark has laid more guidelines and is more demanding in terms of its eligibility, strategic management and local participation.
Chapter 3:  From Local to Global: A Study of HK Global Geopark

3.1  A Geographic overview of Hong Kong

Geographically speaking, Hong Kong is a region in the southernmost corner of China and a part of the southeastern Pearl River estuary, neighbouring on Mount Nanling in the north and South China Sea in the south.

With a total land area of 1,104 square kilometers approximately, Hong Kong comprises three main districts, namely 1) Hong Kong Island, 2) Kowloon Peninsula and 3) the New Territories, which is connected to Mainland China, and more than 200 outlying islands. The local topography is hilly with scattered coastal plains.

A map of Hong Kong

Thanks to its distinct geographic location, HK is not just a prosperous metropolis that is best known for its skyscrapers and modern cityscape. Surprisingly, our bustling city has more than 40 per cent of its land designated as protected green areas and the territory is blessed with a wealth of one of the most beautiful and diverse natural green resources in Asia.
For example, the long, sinuous coastline is indeed a natural geological gallery, featuring spectacular landforms and rock formations shaped by waves and weathering. Here, one finds wave-cut sea cliffs, sea caves, sea arches and blowholes which have come about thanks to millions of years of sedimentation. Hundreds of mostly uninhabited islands offer a broad canvas for exploring stunning flora, fauna. The verdant countryside is also home to world-class rock formations and other geological features, which promises great tourism resources that can be capitalized on.

### 3.2 A Study of Why Hong Kong was able to Build a Global Geopark

#### 3.31 The Geographical Layout of HK Global Geopark

Conceptually speaking, HK Global Geopark is a single entity composing of **EIGHT geo-areas** and their neighbouring areas, with around 50 square km under the protection of the Country Parks Ordinance and Marine Parks ordinance. Embedding a fusion of the uniqueness of natural and human landscape, HK Global Geopark is made up of **TWO** main regions, namely

- a) **Northeast New Territories Sedimentary Rock Region** and
- b) **Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region**

with each region being made up of **FOUR** Geo-Areas.

As the Geopark showcases Hong Kong’s timeless and eerily beautiful landforms, a hiking trip is highly recommended as the best way explore the spectacular hexagonal volcanic columns in Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region when it is a fine day and the weather is stable (**For Hard Adventure Tourism**). On the other hand, a boat tour to the Northeast New Territory is suggested to those who would like to experience the traditional custom, and a variety of ecological and geological landscapes (**For Soft Adventure Tourism**),
The Geographical Layout of HK Global Geopark of China

3.32 The Unique Features of HK Global Geopark

According to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conversation Department of Hong Kong, there are a number of reasons that make HK Global Geopark deserve its name.

1. The widely distributed hexagonal rock columns in the Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region are globally rare geological treasures. In the Northeast New Territories section, various sedimentary rocks form beautiful landscapes of great scientific value.
2. The geopark has support from a broad range of HK citizens and non-government groups.
3. HK has relatively rich experience in nature conservation and science popularization.
4. Important parts of HK’s geological heritage have long been protected by legal regulations.
5. The Hakka Villages and fishing villages in the Geopark represent a valuable art of our cultural heritage. Thus, the ecology and cultural heritage in the geo-areas and adjoining neighborhood areas of the geopark enhance the travel experience of visitors.

The neighbourhood areas have been progressively revitalized with the extensive engagement of local communities in the geopark’s development.

3.33 The Objectives of Establishing HK Global Geopark

In general, HK Global Geopark aims to achieve the following objectives:-

1. Enhancing the sense of geoconservation in community.
2. Promoting regional sustainable development.
3. Improving the quality of nature tourism and increasing the enjoyment of both visitors and local residents in countryside activities.
4. Spreading earth science knowledge and increasing the public's conservation awareness.
5. Improving Hong Kong's nature-conservation policies and enhancing its international image.
6. Enhancing the international network of geoparks and serving as a platform for exchange between East and West and among global geoparks.

From the above, it is obvious that the ultimate aims and concerns of HK Global Geopark are all compatible and in line with the principles of sustainable adventure tourism. This fact justifies our belief that HK Global Geopark has great potential to be developed into an ideal sustainable adventure tourism destination.

3.34 The Opening and Re-naming of Hong Kong Global Geopark

Hong Kong Geopark officially opened on 3rd November 2009 and is one of China’s 183 national geoparks.

Then in September 2011 the park achieved global status when it was accepted as a member of The Global Geoparks Network (GGN), which is supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), at the 10th European Geoparks Conference in Langesund, Norway. Subsequent to its inclusion as a member of GGN, Hong Kong Geopark has officially been renamed and the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Global Geopark of China took place on 14th December 2011.
From right to left: With concerted effort, HK has transcended from a local to a national and then finally a world-class Global Geopark

3.35 The Significance and Benefits of Establishing HK Global Geopark

When The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) first proposed the Geopark concept in 1999, it has the following objectives in mind:

- To protect the geo-areas within the geopark through proper planning, management and legislation;
- To encourage the sustainable use of geo-sites for knowledge-transfer activities; and
- To promote geo-tourism and local engagement activities in the geo-areas and neighbourhood areas.

By establishing a geopark here in Hong Kong, we can not only promote the concepts of observation and education to the public but also foster sustainable adventure tourism development in both the geo-areas and the neighbourhood areas of the geopark.

And by joining the national geopark network has enabled Hong Kong to gain and exchange experience on preservation of valuable geological and topographical resources, promoting public awareness of earth science and foster the development of eco-tourism.

Most important of all, the economic benefits brought about by developing sustainable adventure tourism in the Geopark regions can provide incentives for the government to improve the infrastructures, like more roads, lamp posts for the locals. What’s more, development of adventure tourism can generate more businesses for the local vendors, which eventually benefits the whole community and improve the local livelihood in the long run.
During our site visits to the geo-sites within HK Geopark, we interviewed many local venders and they all agreed that the development of tourism had brought in more business and revenues to them.
Chapter 4:  
A SWOT Analysis of the Development of Sustainable Adventure Tourism in HK Global Geopark

4.1 Strengths

4.11) An Array of Geological and Cultural Heritages

Thanks to the distinctive history and location of the HK Geopark, a wealth of geological landforms and human landscapes has become attractive tourism assets that can be capitalized upon. As aforementioned, the whole HK Global Park consists of two main regions, namely

a) Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region (西貢火山岩園區) and
b) Northeast New Territories Sedimentary Rock Region (新界東北沉積岩園區)

with each region being made up of **FOUR** Geo-Areas.

The geological and cultural heritages of these two regions are explained as follows:-

A) Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region (西貢火山岩園區) and its Geo-sites

**FAMOUS GEO-SITE ONE:**

**Hexagonal Rock Columns at High Island (糧船灣) and High Island Geo-Trail (萬宜地質步道)**

The High Island Geo-Trail located at the high Island Reservoir can be regarded as one of Hong Kong's most popular geological sites as it is home to our most spectacular hexagonal rock wonders. Around High Island Reservoir, especially the **East Dam (東壩)**, volcanic rock composes neat arrays of giant hexagonal joint columns along the shore. Catching visitors’ eyes with striking angular facets, these giants are rare natural prodigies and invaluable geo-tourism resources that draw great interest.

These volcanic rock with columnar joints is actually a type of acidic rhyolite rich in potash feldspar and quartz phenocrysts. About 400 metres thick, these grotesque volcanic rock columns stand as high as 30 metres and first appeared some 140 million years ago, when volcanoes were still active! Whenever there was an eruption, great lava flows gushed out along with scorching volcanic ash.
They spread across the ground surface and formed lava layers. During the cooling period, the rock contracted very uniformly and gave rise to the marvelous hexagonal columnar joints seen today.

A Giant Pipe Organ – Po Pin Chau (破邊洲)

Just off the High Island is **Po Pin Chau** (破邊洲), another breath-taking attraction which offers stunning views of extraordinary rock formations. On there, you find a giant rock boulder that looks like a complete hill slashed into two by natural forces. Legend has it that the God grew angry one day and chopped the island into two halves. Geology enthusiasts will certainly cherish the opportunity to see towering rock stacks and fascinating hexagonal joints.
FAMOUS GEO-SITE TWO:
Memories of volcanic lava flows — Sharp Island (橋咀洲)

Another popular Geo-site in the Sai Kung Volcanic Rock Region is Sharp Island, which is a long and narrow trending island extending some 2,500 metres long and about 500 metres wide from east to west. Being the smallest country park of its kind in HK, this popular holiday destination offers lucid water, silvery sand and dreamy vistas of island reefs.

Among all its attractions, visitors can explore the main island by walking across a **spectacular coastal sedimentary landform called “tombolo” (連島沙洲)**, which is a sand levee that connects Sharp Island with a neighbouring site. The Sharp Island tombolo is about 250 metres in length and is flanked on both watersides by medium to fine grain sand and seashell debris, while the centre is coarse sand mixed with gravel. This natural tombolo is one of several tombolos found in Hong Kong. Similar terrain features can be seen in Pui O of Lantau and between Ma Shi Chau and Yim Tin Tsai. **The Sharp Island tombolo is amazing to visitors as it emerges only when the tide is low. When the tide is high, sharp Island becomes an isolated island again.**
Another natural wonder of Sharp Island is its extrusive volcanic rocks. For instance, on the beach, one can find **Volcanic Breccia** (火山角礫岩) and **Extaxile** (條紋斑雜岩), which are both caused by volcanic eruption 140 million years ago. Besides, one can also find boulders of **rhyolite** (流紋岩), which preserve lava-flow textures formed by lava, and some even have flow lines resulting from obstruction in lava flow.

Apart from Sharp Island, similar flow-banded lava can only be found in a few places like Yim Tin Tsai. Therefore, **the rhyolite lava of Sharp Island is living record of ancient volcanic eruptions and lava flows.**
And one shall never miss the chance to visit the most famous and fun-looking “Pineapple Bun Rocks” (菠蘿飽石) scattered on the beach. The stone is actually a rock formation called quartz monzonite (石英二長岩), of which its three component minerals namely quartz, feldspar and biotite give the rocks their beautiful light rosy colour.
Different bizarre rock formations

**FAMOUS GEO-SITE THREE:**
**Magnificent Sea Stacks of Ung Kong Group (甕缸群島)**

The Ung Kong Group consists of a number of islands namely Bluff Island (Sha Tong Hau Shan), or Ung Kong Chau, Basalt Island and Town Island. In the southern corner of this small island you can find the **four biggest sea caves in HK**.

Viewed from above, Bluff Island resembles a turtle with four legs stretched out wide. Lushly wooded slopes of the rounded hills roll gently down to scenic sandy bays. This is an ideal place to study rhyolite. Formations in clearly defined layers are prominent across the island, and along the wavy shores, huge blocks tower by the water. Fan Tap Pai in the south is one of the most breathtaking coastal rock scenes in Hong Kong. This huge sea cave cuts right through the island and it is just wide enough for a boat to sail past, making it an ideal place for a leisure sea expedition. Besides, Bluff Island is also a diving hot spot, with an increasing number of divers coming here to explore the mysterious ocean.
FAMOUS GEO-SITE FOUR:  
Spectacular joint columns–Ninepin Group/Kwo Chau Islands (果洲群島)

Located about 15 km southeast of Sai Kung Town Centre, the Ninepin Group comprises South Ninepin Island, North Ninepin Island and East Ninepin Island, and several islets.

Subject to the relentless impact of strong wind and waves, diverse peculiar coastal landforms, including steep cliffs, sea arches and various strangely-shaped rocks are formed. Famous scenic wonders on North Ninepin Island include Cannon Rock, Moon Rocks and Big Stove Arch; and on South Ninepin Island include Stone Arch, Jacob's Ladder Cave, Backwash Cave and Y-shaped Cave.

Rocks of the Ninepins date back to the age of dinosaurs about 140 million years ago. It is believed that this group of islands were created by a major volcanic eruption which produced about 70 cubic kilometres of volcanic ash. **The outcropped volcanic rock with columnar joints of the Ninepins is a type of acidic rhyolite volcanic rock.** The columns may have a diameter of over 2 m, making them the largest in the area.
Why is the island called “Ninepin Islands” and “Guo Chau”?

The name "Ninepin" is inspired by an old British game similar to modern day bowling. When British seamen first saw the array of these islands, the familiar bowling game sprang to mind and they gave the group this colourful name. The Chinese name Guo Chau, meaning fruit island, is even more innovative. It is said that the Ninepin Group (Kwo Chau Islands) was originally called Guo Pun Chau which means fruit platter. It is so named because viewed from above, the group looks like scattered fruit from an overturned platter from heaven.

The famous Cannon Rock (大炮石)
b) Northeast New Territories Sedimentary Rock Region (新界東北沉積岩園區) and its Geo-areas

As its name suggests, the Northeast New Territories Region is different from its counterpart region in Sai Kung as it is mainly made up of sedimentary rocks (沉積岩). Its main geo-sites and attractions are introduced as follows:-

FAMOUS GEO-SITE ONE:
The Old Trees and Volcaniclastic sedimentary rocks in Lai Chi Wo (荔枝窩)

On the southeastern shore of Tolo Channel in the Eastern New Territories, a set of sedimentary rock strata are distributed around rural Lai Chi Wo and nearby coastal areas. Research has shown that this region has rather complicated geological setting and rock types. Clear and colourful laminated rocks, with large bent rock strata are some of the most interesting geological features like instinctive foldings, faults and bedding structures make Lai Chi Wo an ideal location for geological study.
Moreover, Lai Chi Wo is also famous for being a natural tree museum as according to records, it is home to more than 100 species of trees. Among the most famous ones is the “Hollow Tree” (空心榭) which is an autumn maple estimated to be over 100 years old. The tree got its name as the middle part of its trunk has been eaten by moths, resulting in more than 10 holes in the tree.

Another famous tree in Lai Chi Wo is the Five-Fingered Camphor (五指樟), which is century old and has a diameter of 3 meter. The tree once had thick branches that neatly arranged like five-fingers on a hand. Camphor trees have a lot of economic values as it is good material for making furniture. Their roots, fruits and branches can be used as medicines. The trunks and leaves contain camphor oil, which can be refined into insect repellent. Legend has it that during the Japanese Occupation, the Japanese troops chopped down many trees. When they threatened to chop down the five-fingered camphor, the villagers stood up and protected it with their lives.
The most famous tree in Lai Chi Wo is a White-Flowered derris (白花魚藤), which has grown into a sprawling network that it is impossible to trace its starting point. While some of the twists and coils are like a swinging seat in the air, some grow along the ground and around the mangroves.

Derris used to be popular among fishermen as the latter liked to use its juice to numb the fish and make them easy to catch on the water surface. However, as it may poison other marine animals at the same time, it has been banned for use for long.

The white-flower derris (above) and the Century old banyan tree (below)
FAMOUS GEO-SITE TWO:
Port island (赤洲) and Bluff Head (黃竹角咀)

As the Chinese name Chek Chau implies, Port Island is a place of red earth. The ground on the entire island is rust-coloured conglomerate and siltstone. This uninhabited island may seem lonely and barren, but the dazzling red terrain, with hills completely covered with reddish-brown conglomerate and siltstone, is the biggest fascination of Port Island.

More than 6 million years ago, robust lava and volcanic activities made most regions of Hong Kong become igneous rock terrains. When volcanic activities subsided, extended dry climate set in. Great temperature difference between day and night caused avalanches. Weathered rocks toppled down from the uplands and were quickly transported and deposited. Sand and silt arising from weathering were washed down by seasonal rainstorms to the alluvial plains where they settled. There, the ferric minerals within turned into iron oxide and bonded sand and other sediments to become a unique red sedimentary rock. Hot climate and the scorching sun aided release of iron in the sand and gravel. For this reason they were tinted red or rust in various intensities. Sediments of the alluvial plains and river channels eventually formed the red or coloured terrestrial clastic sedimentary rocks seen on Port Island today.

Bluff Head, on the other hand, is famous for its inclined or vertical rock strata in different colours like grey white and rusty red. Indeed, geologists have confirmed that these rocks are the oldest rocks in HK.

Among its most famous rocks is the Devil’s fist (鬼爪), which stands on the coast stretching from the water to wave at passers-by when the tide is low. In fact, Devil’s Fist is sandstone which is folded to become nearly vertical. Weathering and erosion then occurred along the sandstone bedding, forming the shape of fingers. The bottom, after being constantly eroded by seawaves, has the shape of a narrow wrist.
The famous Devil’s Fist (鬼爪) looks like waving at the visitors on any boat trips.

FAMOUS GEO-SITE THREE:

The Serene and Picturesque Double Haven (Yan Chau Tong)

The Chinese name Yan Chau Tong is probably inspired by an interesting looking islet which takes the shape of a stone seal. To conserve the wildlife and natural features of this lovely area, Double Haven was designated a marine park in 1996 and is most famous for its six treasures, which resembles 6 kinds of old Chinese stationery.

Double Haven is a idyllic arcadia embraced by uplands. It owes its celestial tranquil setting to the surrounding hills. Although a whole network of small streams flow into Double Haven, they never cause any widespread flooding. Bestowed with such supreme qualities, it is no surprise that Double Haven astonishes every first-time visitor with her stunning beauty. That unique serene mood is simply unimaginable in bustling Hong Kong.
**Kat O (吉澳) and Ap chau / Duck Island (鴨洲)**

Within the Double Haven Geo-are are two other attractions, namely Kat O and Ap Chau.

Kat O is a small fishing village restoring the Hakka culture. One of its most famous attractions is its HinTau (Goddess of the Sea) Temple (天后廟) and Marriage Tree (姻緣榭).

As most residents on Kut O are fishermen, they have strong faith in the Goddess of the Sea and a temple is dedicated to her,
A Guided Tour to the Temple dedicated to the Goddess of the Sea

A statue of Goddess of the Sea seated at the temple blessing her worshippers
For the Marriage Tree (姻緣樹), legend has it that those who are looking for romance can have his or her wish granted by worshipping the tree and picking up a leaf of the tree here.

The century old Marriage Tree (姻緣樹) that promises to bring romance to the worshippers!
Ap Chau, or the Duck Island (鴨洲), on the other hand, is famous for its shape which resembles a duck. The natural arch, which is called the duck’s eye, is a must-see for visitors.

This is the Duck’s eye!
FAMOUS GEO-SITE FOUR:
Tung Ping Chau (東坪洲)

Tung Ping Chau is an island which is most famous for its geological feature of shale (頁岩). Indeed, the Tung Ping Chau shale is rated as the No. 1 rock in Hong Kong for the following reasons:

1. **Clearly defined bedding and distinctive sheet conformation**
   This is the most significant characteristic of shale. Every layer is 1 to 5 mm thick. Overlapping each other, the coarser-grained siltstone layers and the finer-grained mudstone layers have clear lamination and sophisticated structure. As a result of sedimentation over long ages, shale resembling a layered sponge cake emerged in the hypoxic, highly salt and still water.

2. **Attractive and colourful**
   Shale is usually made up of pyrite, geolite and augite. The vivid colours come from micrograined calcium, iron and magnesium particles that the rock contains. After formation, the rock was exposed to weathering and wave action, creating eye-dazzling plum, ochre, charcoal and bottle-green outcrops.

3. **Vague ripple marks**
   Close observation will reveal vague or faint ripple marks in every layer. We can thus infer that the rock was close to the lake surface or submerged in relatively shallow water at the time of formation. In such setting, even small ripples would leave detectable marks.

Different Shale Formations on Flat Island
FAMOUS GEO-SITE FIVE:
Ma Shi Chau

The 61-hectare Ma Shi Chau is made up of Ma Shi Chau, Yeung Chau, Centre Island and an unnamed islet to the northeast of Sam Mun Tsai New Village. Ma Shi Chau is the key site of Hong Kong's Permian Tolo Harbour Formation. Home to well-outcropped rocks, the island is an ideal location for studying strata, rock properties, sedimentation features and different geological compositions because here you can find faults and folds as well as deformed and displaced rock mass. The unnamed islet near Yim Tin Tsai, vegetated with dense woodlands, is a popular roosting ground for egrets and herons. Given such outstanding conservation value, the Ma Shi Chau region was declared a protected Special Area in 1999.

The Ma Shi Chau nature trail runs along the southeastern shore of the island. 1.5 km in length, this route presents 16 attractions which highlight local geological features. By observing the rocks on site and reading trailside interpretation plates, visitors can understand how tombolos and various rocks are formed, as well as natural phenomena like wave erosion, weathering and folding.

The Tombolo (連島沙洲) at Ma Shi Chau
4.12) Proximity to Downtown District

Officiating at the Opening Ceremony of Hk Global Geopark, Mr Tsang commented that the designation of the Hong Kong Global Geopark was not only a worldwide recognition of our significant geological heritage but that “the uniqueness of our Geopark not only lies in its geological features, but also in its proximity to our metropolitan area.”

Thanks to the nearness of these sites are to the city, visitors can easily reach them for a pleasurable and educational outdoor experience with little travelling time.

4.13) The Protection Area Systems of HK Global Geopark

With a history of more than millions of years, it is understood that the geo-heritages and landforms are delicate and fragile. Once any damage is done, it is irreversible. For the sake of providing proper protection for both these geo-sites and also public safety, a Protection Area System is adopted.

Under this system, the HJK Geopark is divided into three areas, namely

i) Integrated Protection Areas
ii) Special protection Areas
iii) Core Protection Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protection level</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Protection Areas</td>
<td>High carrying Capacity and comprehensive tourist facilities that make it ideal for tourist visits.</td>
<td>Sharp Island, Tung Ping Chau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special protection Areas</td>
<td>Basic visitor facilities and are more suitable for science popularization programmes</td>
<td>High Island Reservoir East Dam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Protection Areas</td>
<td>For protection of important geological heritage and prevent accidents due to strong winds, visitors are not encouraged to land in these places. Sightseeing only suitable on boat tours on calm summer days.</td>
<td>Ninepin Group and Bluff Head</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As visitor facilities are provided for the public in the areas suitable to be open to the public, whereas the most fragile areas are not accessible to them, this can ensure the safety of the visitors and also sustainability of the geological heritage.

4.14 The Accredited Geopark Guide (A2G) and Recommended Geopark Guide (R2G) Systems

With a view to maintaining the standard of geotours, geopark guides and the international image of Hong Kong Geopark, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) has established a Geopark Guide Accreditation System to raise the standard of geopark guides. Indeed, only geotours led by accredited geopark guides will be recognised as quality geotours in Hong Kong Geopark. Geopark guides accredited by the TIC are called Accredited Geopark Guides (A2Gs). Before being qualified as an A2G, applicants can take another examination and first become a R2G (Recommended Geopark Guide).

For both examinations, interested applicants must support the UNESCO geopark concepts, possess basic knowledge of geodiversity, biodiversity, geoconservation and geopark concepts, and have a thorough understanding of the principles, management and geological information of Hong Kong Global Geopark of China,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Course Attendance requirement</th>
<th>Qualifying Examinations</th>
<th>Reassessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accredited Geopark Guide</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Onsite presentation (1 hr) and Simulated Practical Examination (1 hr)</td>
<td>Every three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Geopark Guide</td>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>Interview by R2G Assessment Panel and field assessment</td>
<td>Biennial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, both A2Gs and R2Gs are subject to disqualification if they fail the reassessment, or they have been confirmed to have acted against R2G regulations.

These two assessment systems tremendously help ensure the quality of the Geo-guides and thus maintain the sustainability of HK Global Geopark.
4.2 Weaknesses

4.21 Low Accessibility of some of the Geo-sites
It is true that for the sake of sustainability and safety concern, not all areas of the HK Geopark are open to the public. And there are areas that are only accessible by boat trips or simply inaccessible by public transport, e.g., the Port island. Thus, the popularity of the Geopark is affected.

4.22 Unattractive Profitability for Local Tour Operators

While the adventure tourism activities at the Geopark region can bring in more visitors and benefit the local communities, this is mostly true on weekends but on weekdays, the geo-sites remain quiet with only a few visitors and vendors find it hard to sustain profitable business on those days.

Visitors are queuing up in Sai Kung for boat trips taking them to explore the HK Geopark. But booming business can only be found at weekends
4.3 Opportunities

4.31) Strong Support from the Government

4.311) Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

i) Efficient Managing and Close Monitoring
Being the chief governmental department in charge of the operations of HK Global Geopark, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department endeavours to keep the Geopark in good shape through efficient managing and close monitoring. For instance, informative display boards explaining the geological formation of different landscapes and reminders to visitors are easily found.

Besides, via its official websites, the department keeps the viewers updated with the latest information about the park.
Thanks to Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, clear signage is provided for visitors on how to conserve the natural environment.

On top of the above, the Department also manages i) Geopark Visitor Centre and ii) HK Volcano Discovery Centre so as to promote Geo-education to visitors.

i) Geopark Visitor Centre
Geopark Visitor Centre, located in Sai Kung, is a 140 squaremetre visitor centre that gives a fascinating overview of the area’s geographical history through displays of samples, information panels, videos and interactive media.

Brightly colour-coded signage directs visitors to the centre’s various galleries while providing an eye-catching contrast to the natural hues of the rocks on display. The colours are repeated in maps and information panels. Display units, meanwhile, are custom-made from glass and acrylic, with some
incorporating a small hole allowing visitors to reach in and feel the texture of rock samples. The displays are also spotlighted to allow for thorough visual examination of their distinct characteristics.

Meanwhile, life-size rock formations are interspersed throughout the centre to offer yet more highly textural focal points, and reinforcing the galleries’ themes of “Getting to Know Our Planet Earth” and “Geological Evolution of Hong Kong”.

ii) Volcano Discovery Centre

The Volcano Discovery Centre at downtown Sai Kung tells the story of ancient volcanoes in Hong Kong and how they shaped the landscape over the last 100 million years. The Centre also introduces the volcano types, their eruption styles and the formation of hexagonal rock columns. Rock specimens produced by different types of volcanoes are displayed which are collected around the world. The method to explore the volcanic history is also explained. As the Centre is to be established at the gateway to Hong Kong Geopark, it serves as a convenient starting point for visitors.

Address: Sai Kung Waterfront Park

Enquiry : (852) 2394 1538
4.312) HK Tourism Board
Extensive information about HK Global Geopark can be accessible on HKTB’s website. What’s more, information leaflets are available totally free of charge at each Tourist Information Centre.
4.313) HK Post
As a collaborative effort to promote HK Global Geopark to both the local citizens and foreign visitors, HK Post, the official Post Office of HK, has designed and issued a set of colourful stamps and first-day envelopes in commemoration of the establishment of HK Global Geopark. The product became a hot collection item and successfully helped to spread the message of HK Geopark to every corner of the world.
4.32) Strong Local Participation by the Local Communities

According to the Global Geopark Network, one of the requirements of being a member of the Global Geopark Network is that a geopark should encourage public or private partnership proposals from the community to support the sustainable development of the geopark. In this regard, we see Hong Kong Geopark far exceeding the set requirement.

**Example One: the Funny Oral Heritage told by 80-year-old “Yee Poh” (姨婆)**

Being an 80-year-old indigenous inhabitant of Kut O, a remote small island which is part of HK Global Geopark, ‘Yee Poh” works not only as a caretaker of the Temple dedicated to the Goddess of the Sea but also as a voluntary local tour guide introducing the local customs to the visitors. Her explanation of the rich cultural heritage of the island and strong sense of commitment impressed not only ordinary visitors but most importantly, the experts of UNESCO during their visit for the assessment of HK Geopark.
Yee Poh explaining to the visitors how she received and explained the cultural assets of Kut O to the assessment staff from UNESCO many years ago.
Interesting Folklore Stories about Kut O

Do you notice that the Gods of the Door and God of Fortune look a bit different from traditional ones?

And why is the God of Fortune holding a vegetable in his hand?

According to ‘Yee Poh”, the “Gods of the Door” stuck on the door of the temple dedicated to the Goddess of the Sea look different from the traditional ones. It is because the paintings were actually done by the Nepalese soldiers upon the order of the British Government. As the Nepalese soldiers did not know how the Chinese Gods looked like, they painted long nose and big eyes on the face of the Gods of the Door, which eventually gave them a foreigner’s look.

As for the case of the God of Fortune, it was because the sound of “fortune” is similar to that of “vegetable” in Chinese. When the Nepalese soldiers were asked to do a painting of the God of Fortune for the islanders, they mistook it for “God of Vegetable”.

All these funny folklore stories and cultural assets make attractive soft adventure tourism attractions.
Example Two: The Story of the Catholic Volunteers at Yim Tin Tsai （鹽田梓）

Local participation is also evident in Yim Tin Tsai, another island within the HK Global Geopark region, with a group of Catholic volunteers endeavouring to revive and sustain its tradition of salt-making.

Story had it that the island was first settled by members of the Hakka clan during the 19th century and it got its name because a large area of it used to be salt field. As time went by, the majority of the earliest inhabitants became Catholics as they were impressed by the expatriate missionaries, whose tall heights and foreign looks helped scared away the fierce pirates.

Built in 1890 in Italian Romanesque style, the current St. Joseph's Chapel built on Yim Tin Tsai is declared a Grade III historic building by HK government and even received an Award of Merit as part of the 2005 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards.

To sustain their ancestors’ past tradition of salt-making, a group of indigenous inhabitants organized guided tours introducing the heritage and demonstrated how salt was made in early times.
Historical salty fields at Yim Tin Tsui
Process of self-making
Example 3: The Two Fung Ying Sin Koon Geo-heritage Centres
(蓬瀛仙館地質教育中心)

Thanks to Fung Ying Sin Koon, a Taoist organization, two education centres are built in Lai Chi Wo and Kut O, which helps sustain the geological heritage of the HK Geopark.
Different exhibits at Geoheritage Centre
4.33) Strong Partnership with Global Geoparks Network

As part of efforts to enhance the sustainable development of geotourism, geo-education and geoheritage, Hong Kong National Geopark has established partnership agreements with eight geoparks, namely:

1. Global Geopark Bergstrasse-Odenwald in the southwest of Germany
2. Kanawinka Geopark in Australia
3. Yangdanshan Geopark and Wudalianchi Global Geopark, both in China
4. Itiogawa Geopark in Japan
5. English Riviera Geopark in the United Kingdom
6. Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark in Northern Ireland and
7. Lesvos Global Geopark in Greece.

As exchange of expertise and interaction is frequent among the sister geoparks, in 2009, Hong Kong Geopark became a National Geopark and in 2011, it was accepted as a member of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) and renamed “Hong Kong Global Geopark of China”.

Around 40 students from Sweden visited HK Geopark for a meaningful exchange in March 2015, thanks to the Global Geopark Network!
4.4 Threats

4.41) Conflicts between Geological Conservation and Urban Development

Some indigenous residents living around the Geopark areas see property development or selling their land as a good way to gain personal profit, thus conservation, which implies a ban on property development for their own use, means a loss of their personal interest. Arguments thus occur.

Residents of Lai Chi Wo voicing their discontent towards planned conservation
4.42) Re-assessment of the Global Geopark Status

The accreditation of Global Geopark is not a permanent one but has to be re-assessed every four years. In case the number of visitors or the management of the Park cannot meet the requirement, this Global status may be cancelled.
Chapter 5: How the Business Sector Helps develop HK Global Geopark into a Sustainable Adventure Tourism Destination

5.1) About L’Hotel Island South – The First Geopark Hotel in Hong Kong

Located in the southern district of Hong Kong island, L’hotel Island South is the latest development of the Chinachem Group, one of the largest private development companies in HK. Aiming to provide today's global travelers with affordable luxury, this 37-storey hotel with 432 spacious and design-led guestrooms provides complimentary Wi-Fi internet connection and an array of other advanced technologies.

Despite the above, what makes Island L’ Hotel Island South stand out from its counterparts is its strong commitment in promoting green tourism to its visitors. Realizing that green tourism has developed into a new force in tourism industry in recent years, L’hotel Island South is pleased to become the venue partner of Hong Kong National Geopark and the first Hong Kong National Geopark hotel. Indeed, evidence showing its endeavour to fulfill its corporate social responsibility are prominent.

As Ms. Sylvia Chung, General Manager of L’hotel Island South commented, “Our hotel and Geopark share the same vision of being eco-friendly and preservation of nature scenery. Being a Geopark hotel, we are committed to geoconservation and facilitate the promotion of Hong Kong National Geopark bringing in quality products and services to travellers from all over the globe, in supportive to the development of green tour in Hong Kong tourism industry.”

Evidence 1: Rendering Hearty Hospitality to UNESCO Experts at HK Geopark’s Opening Ceremony

On December 16, 2011, the Opening Ceremony of the Hong Kong Global Geopark of China was held at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.

Being the first Hong Kong Global Geopark hotel, L’hotel Island South was honored to provide hearty hospitality to special guests from overseas and the Mainland who came to join the Opening Ceremony. Representatives of sister geoparks from different parts of the world, Mainland and overseas geological experts including Dr Marie-Luise Frey and Mr Richard Watson, representatives of the Global Geopark Network (GGN), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) were impressed by the hearty hospitality and accommodation rendered by the staff of this first Geopark Hotel in HK.
In the following visits, the Hotel also provided outside catering services and hearty meals for the enjoyment of the Geopark visits.

(above)
Mainland and overseas geological experts from ENESCO were warmly welcomed by L’hotel Island South
L’Hotel Island South provided catering services for the assessment staff of UNESCO in the following visits.

Evidence 2: A Geopark Ambience Created by the Hotel’s Exterior and Interior Design

To highlight the theme of HK Global Geopark, the exterior of the hotel is specially designed as it looks like rows of seaways in the sea. Inside the hotel, decorations and modern art pieces which recurs the theme of Geopark can also be seen at the lobby and other public areas.
Evidence 3: Geopark Information and Video Display at the Hotel Lobby

Just at the Hotel Lobby, a video booth is set up showing the magnificent views of the eight geo-sites of HK Geopark. There is also a glass showcase displaying different species of rocks information. What’s more, information leaflets about HK Geopark are available for visitors’ easy reference.
Evidence 4: Designated guestrooms decorated with Geopark elements
To recur the theme of Geopark, designated guestrooms are decorated with fossil displays and “Geofolks”, the mascot of HK Geopark.
Evidence 5: Geopark videos showed on in-room TV Channel
In every guestroom, a TV set has been installed with an in-room geopark channel. Visitors can therefore learn more about the geological heritage of HK Global Geopark.

Evidence 6: A Tailor-made “Geo-licious” Menu and Cooking Class

Most interesting of all, a Geopark themed menu, named “Geo-licious Menu” has been specially designed to accentuate the theme and enhance the ambience of Hong Kong Global Geopark. Moreover, a cooking class was launched to introduce the geopark concept to children.

Mr Sidney Chan, the Executive Chef of L’Hotel Island South, explaining the different Geo-licious dishes to us

Lava in Volcano – Stewed Goulash in Rye Loaf
Deep-fried Prawn – Imitating the sea arch of Duck’s Island

Chocolate Mousse – Imitating the hexagonal rock columns

Thank you, Chef Sydney!
Geo-licious Menu offered by L’Hotel Island South
Transforming the spectacular hexagonal columnar rock covers the whole Sai Kung area to a mouth watering dish - “Tuna Pyramid with Apricot Sauce.”

The “Chocolate Mousse Mille Feuille” shows the layered of sedimentary rock which made up Tung Ping Chau.
Evidence 7: The offer of a Geopark Accommodation Package
5.2) How the Financial Sector Helps - Floating Museums Run by Bank of China

By internal redesigning and showing well-selected exhibits like rocks and fossils, the Hong Kong Geopark, with the sponsorship from Bank of China, turns two cruise boats into floating kiosk to disseminate the message of geo-conservation to people visiting geopark at Sai Kung and Northeast regions.
5.3 Restaurateurs Operating Around the HK Global Geopark

Apart from L’Hotel Island South, other business sectors, like catering industry, are eager to commit in partnership programmes with HK Geopark. For instance, some restaurants have joined hands to create some geological dishes for visitors, in a way to enrich tourists’ experience, as well as enhancing local economy. Besides traditional Hakka dishes at Kat O Village, some new winter’s geo dishes are now also available at restaurants of Sai Kung Town.
Traditional and Geo Gourmets from Local Restaurateurs

Seafood in Glacier (Ice-cold Fresh Abalone) from Sing Kee

Crispy Dinosaur Eggs (Deep-fired Fresh Scallops) from Sing Kee
Streamed Lava / Cooling Lava Flow
(Deep-fried Crispy Tofu)
from Sing Kee

Garden View (Roasted Pork Belly)
from Hung Kee

Golden Column (Deep fired Cuttlefish
Feelers from Hung Kee

Stir-fried Prawns with Japanese Pepper
Sauce
from Hung Kee
Hand-made Cuttlefish Balls
from Yik Man

Steamed Dried Squids with Small Salted Fishes from Yik Man
Stewed Fish Air Bladder with broth from Yik Man

Traditional Hakka Dishes from Yik Man

Supporting Restaurateurs

Chuen Kee Seafood Restaurant
Hung Kee Seafood Restaurant
Sing Kee Seafood Restaurant
Tung Kee Seafood Restaurant
Yik Man Restaurant

Tasting the delicious Hakka dishes in Kut O.
Chapter 6: Our Suggestions

Putting the above SWOT analysis into full account, we have come up with the following suggestions:-

1. **Stepping-up Collaboration between the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, HK Tourism Board and Tourism Sector**

   While partnership programmes engaging the community, social enterprise or even hoteliers are evident, HK Tourism Board and AFCD can further strengthen its marketing effort in promoting HK Geopark by joining hands with airlines like Cathay Pacific or Dragonair or Cruise companies like Star Cruises.

   For instance, videos showing the spectacular landscapes of HK Geopark can be played to the airline or cruise passengers during the flights or voyages. Similar videos can even be shown at the Executive Lounge before departure. We believe that the stunning views of the geological formations can capture the attention of the visitors and they will be eager to see them in person in HK.

2. **Re-launching of the Geo-park Souvenirs**

   When HK Geopark was first opened, a series of souvenirs have been designed and distributed for promotion purpose. But after a few years’ time, they have all gone out of production. Indeed, these souvenirs could be re-launched and distributed to tourists as a welcome gift, which may in return, arouse their interest in exploring the Geo-park.

3. **Setting up of a Quota System for the Maximum Number of visitors Admitted to Geo-park each year**

   The strange rock formations in HK Geo-park have experienced millions of years of changes. Once any damage is done, it is irreversible and the Geo-park cannot be sustained. In order to protect and conserve the geological heritage of HK Geopark, the number of visitors should be closely monitored. Just like the case of Mai Po Nature Reserve, a quota system can be set up to make sure the number of visitors will not exceed the maximum carrying capacity of the destination.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

In conclusion, HK Global Geopark of China has great potential to be developed into an ideal destination for both hard and soft sustainable tourism and it is evident that different stakeholders, including the local communities, the business sector and the government are joining hands together towards the same goal.

References

http://www.geopark.gov.hk/


Apple Daily, 18, April 2015