

Geopark Idrija - thematic trails

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Idrija Municipality has extremely rich geological history, which we wish to present to broader public with the project Geopark. By attractive and popular presentation of the heritage, we will encourage naturalistic education of all generations and increase the interest for visiting the future Geopark. On the basis of the inventory of geological heritage in Idrija Municipality we organised some thematic and school trails on our well-known cyclist and tracking trails. Thematic trails include geological, morphological and hydrological as well as botanic, zoological, tree and other natural particularities. The trails are suitable for a wide range of visitors: school groups, families, mountaineers, cyclists and also as a field work for students of natural science.

The main thread of the Geopark is one of the oldest mercury mines in the world as the main factor in formation of Idrija town's history. Antony's main road, the oldest part of the mine, was renovated in 1994 and is now open for visitors. This 300 m long gallery, dug in 1500, was used as the main entrance for miners to the cave and back for almost half a century. The Idrija Municipal Museum offers a rich geological collection of minerals and fossils from Idrija and Cerkljansko region. The visitors have the opportunity to observe the story about the origin of the mercury ore deposit in the Mine Geological collection near the Francis's shaft, however there are numerous historical and technical monuments in the town, devoted to mining.

From geographical aspect, the area of Idrija is placed at the crossing of two gigantic mountain ranges: the Dinaric Mountain Range and the Alpine range. It is precisely this crossing, which enables exceptional natural phenomena – various minerals discovered in remarkable stratigraphic sections, different tectonic phenomena and mineral and fossil deposits. Water is also extremely important, since it contributes to the variety of the terrain with numerous sources, running waters and Karst features. Due to the complexity of the terrain we organised several thematic units, represented in various thematic trails through the whole area of geopark. The total length of all thematic trails is approximately 70 km.

In the proximity of the town a visitor has the opportunity to observe all minerals forming the terrain of Idrija - from the oldest carbon slate-pits, formed almost 300 million years ago to the youngest Paleocene-Eocene flysch, being "only" 55 to 35 million years old. The terrain has a typical over - thrust structure, where minerals are thrust one over another in such way that older minerals often cover younger ones. The trail concludes with a remarkable view on the famous Idrija fault, which is one of the most important faults in the Southern Alps, visible also on the satellite pictures.

The next thematic trail leads us to a stirred terrain of the Zgornja Idrijca Landscape Park. Besides the geological profiles the trail along the Idrijca and Belca River offers some marvellous gorges, water-falls and sources of excellent drinking water. Here the visitor can calm down, take a deep breath and admire the nature or observe numerous technical and historical monuments in the natural park, mostly related to mining.

Hikers, mountaineers and cyclists can find especially attractive thematic trails, connecting small villages and distant farms on tablelands. The Karst tableland is covered with sinkholes, dry small valleys and various swallets, which give this region its typical appearance.

If we climb up to the mountain tops, the views on the Julian Alps in the North and Southwest to the Adriatic Sea will repay all our effort.