

GEOPARK-PROJECT

The aspiring Geopark Lauhanvuori Region lies approximately 300 kilometers North-West of Helsinki. The area consists of landscapes formed primarily during and after the Weichselian glaciation, in the course of the last 11 000 years. Geological features vary from steep-ridged eskers to supra-aquatic moraine and formations that resulted from post-glacial land-uplift/retreating water level. Striking for Finnish conditions is the 500 million year old sandstone that is exposed on Lauhanvuori. The whole area is underlain by a partially exposed crystalline basement, with parts of it at least 1860 million years old.

Lauhanvuori Region has long-reaching history in nature preservation; the National Parks were established in 1982 and in addition, Hämeenkangas has for decades provided a recreational area for locals and visitors alike. Lauhanvuori Region receives 80 000 visitors annually.

**The unique theme for the aspiring Geopark Lauhavuori Region is mire.**

The extensive mire systems can be enjoyed across the area. They are mostly in natural state or actively restored by Metsähallitus. For southern Finland, the mires provide unusually large areas of wilderness and quietness. The year-round experience at the mires is enhanced by rich bird-life. Kauhaneva-Pohjankangas National Park is one of the Ramsar areas as well.

Considering its natural values and the motivation found within the area for further development, Lauhanvuori region makes an excellent candidate as one of Finland's unique Geoparks.

**Lauhanvuori Region intends to submit application to UNESCO Global Geoparks in 2018**.

A large amount of actions are taking place in order to improve the area’s performance in the fields of geological, natural and cultural heritage and touristic services, to create a competent management structure and to improve the visibility of the Lauhanvuori Region as an aspiring Geopark.

To implemet all the actions we have had funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The funding has been granted by local Leader groups and the ELY Centres. As well as Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland and Natural Resources Institute Finland, all the municipalities of the region, Kankaanpää, Jämijärvi, Parkano, Karvia, Honkajoki, Siikainen, Karijoki, Isojoki and Kauhajoki provide financial support for the project.

Developing Lauhanvuori Region to a Geopark area needs both investing to the tourism infrastructure and promoting the geosites and their natural and cultural heritage.

[www.lauhanvuoriregion.fi/geopark/](http://www.lauhanvuoriregion.fi/geopark/)

More information:

international coordinator *Mirka Mäki-Kala*, Leader Suupohja, Finland

[mirka.maki-kala@leadersuupohja.fi](mailto:mirka.maki-kala@leadersuupohja.fi), +358 400 474 880