

Presentation of the International meeting on the Ediacaran System and the Ediacaran-Cambrian Transition. Guadalupe, Extremadura, Spain, October 17-24th, 2019

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The Villuercas-Ibores-Jara UNESCO Global Geopark is honoured to host the International Meeting on the Ediacaran System and the Ediacaran-Cambrian Transition (IMECT) in the locality of Guadalupe.

The Geopark's concept was born in 2000 in four European countries and rapidly expanded throughout Europe and Asia. In 2015 UNESCO approved the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme, as a result of which, 147 geoparks from 41 countries have been recognized up to now.

Geoparks are demarcated territories where distinctive geological features of international value have been certified by the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS). In them, society must be involved in the processes of conservation, education, social awareness and sustainable development. For this reason, geotourism initiatives have been especially promoted. In addition, geoparks maintain an active cooperation network that is especially useful to promote progress that is surveyed in quadrennial revalidation processes. These assessments are carried out by international experts and discussed by the UNESCO's Council of Global Geoparks.

The Villuercas-Ibores-Jara district brings together a diverse geological heritage. Its sedimentary strata range from the Ediacaran to the Silurian and its Appalachian relief is recognized in the Spanish Law of Natural Heritage and Biodiversity, as one of the Spanish geological features of international relevance. The palaeontological record offers witnesses of Ediacaran life with the most spectacular *Cloudina*-bearing reef exposures of Europe located within the Geopark. Finally, among the most noteworthy geological highlights of the geopark are the karstic formations of the Castañar cave with a wide diversity of speleothems, being one of the few geological Natural Monuments of this region. This heritage, used by society in its sustainable development strategy, led to membership in the Global Geoparks Network in 2011 and recognition by UNESCO in 2015.

After eight years of intensive work about fifty sites of geological importance, named geosites, numerous geological itineraries have been described within the Geopark, which have been linked to the important natural and cultural heritage of this area. The Geopark has more than seventy collaborating companies, some twenty educational centres and nineteen attached municipalities, as well as numerous civic organizations that participate in its development. Many of the companies are dedicated to geotourism, a form of natural

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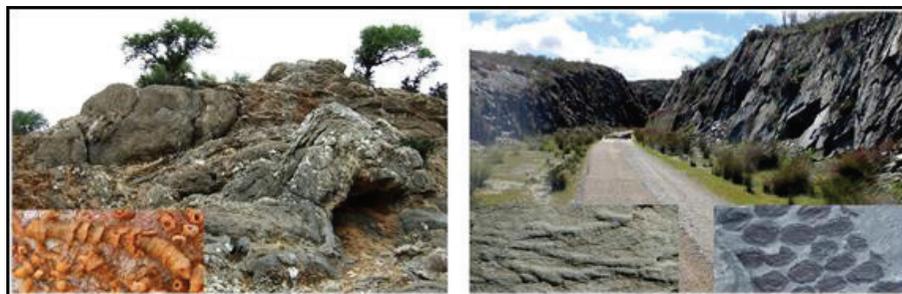
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tourism that requires a guide for the interpretation of geosites. Others are producers of olive oil, wine, cheese or sausages, which, in turn, have opened possibilities for tourism.

Particularly in education, the geopark excels in promoting knowledge of the geological heritage to the society and students. The fundamental premise is that a population that understands and loves its heritage participates in its conservation and sustainable exploitation. In addition, the dissemination of geology as a popular science helps people to understand many of the complex processes of the planet in which we live. Schools maintain an annual programme of activities linked to the geopark that culminates in May, when they participate together in a geopark day celebration for the educational community. During that day, an exchange seminar allows each school to share its learning experiences and activities.

Working with business companies and schools results in applying scientific knowledge to society. The messages are conveyed to the public making use of educational tools, scientific dissemination or tourist interpretation. Regardless of their complexity, the stories are based on scientific knowledge. To this aim, the geopark is assisted by an educational and scientific committee that brings together some twenty experts in various geological disciplines and other complementary fields such as biology, agricultural engineering, education and art, geography and tourism. These people, who come from the University of Extremadura and other Spanish universities, research institutes and companies or educational centres¹, set objectives for new studies in the geopark and new materials and interpretation resources. Their contributions also include the idea of organising this international meeting within the Villuercas-Ibores-Jara UNESCO Global Geopark.

We hope that the geopark can inspire in all participants the best mood to contribute and share knowledge. From these Ediacaran and Palaeozoic mountains, the wind always comes down with new ideas blowing into our brains. So may this invitation go to the success of the international meeting and our best wishes for a cheerful stay in Guadalupe.



Organizing Committee

- J. Javier Álvaro - Instituto de Geociencias (UCM/CSIC) Madrid
- Sören Jensen, Teodoro Palacios and Mónica Martí Mus - Universidad de Extremadura, Badajoz
- José María Barrera Martín-Merás, Javier López and Iván Cortijo - Villuercas-Ibores-Jara UNESCO Global Geopark

Additional assistance during the post-conference field trip

- Ulf Linnemann - Senckenberg Naturhistorische Sammlungen, Dresden
- Agustin Pieren Pidal - Universidad Complutense, Madrid.

¹Sponsorship

Villuercas-Ibores-Jara UNESCO Global Geopark	
International Subcommission on Ediacaran Stratigraphy International Subcommission on Cambrian Stratigraphy	
Universidad de Extremadura	
Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Spanish Research Council)	
Instituto Geológico y Minero de España (Spanish Geological Survey)	
Sociedad Geológica de España (Spanish Geological Society)	