

## Attaining Global Geopark Status

Aso was granted Global Geopark Network status in 2014 following a detailed scientific study into the geological, archaeological, ecological, and cultural value of the area.

Aso Caldera, measuring 18 km east to west and 25 km north to south, covers a total area of 380 km<sup>2</sup>. The caldera is the remains of massive volcanic eruptions that took place about 270,000 years ago. In the center of the caldera are the five peaks of Mt. Aso, including Nakadake, an active crater. Nakadake has repeatedly erupted since prehistoric times and continues to emit volcanic gases today, a reminder of Aso's volcanic past. Seismic activity of the earth's crust here has shaped the topographical, geological, and cultural features of the area we see today.

The Aso Geopark covers the caldera area, the outer slopes, and the outer rims of the caldera. A remarkable range of natural features can be found here, including multi-colored volcanic rock strata and fault lines. The geology and topography have had a profound influence on local culture. The Aso area is an area of great international importance. It is also the site of the historically significant remains of shrines such as the Shimo Shrine, Kokuzo Shrine, and Aso Shrine. These shrines are each associated with the volcano and the ways it has shaped everyday life. Visitors can gain interesting insights into how the mountains have shaped local culture through the ages.