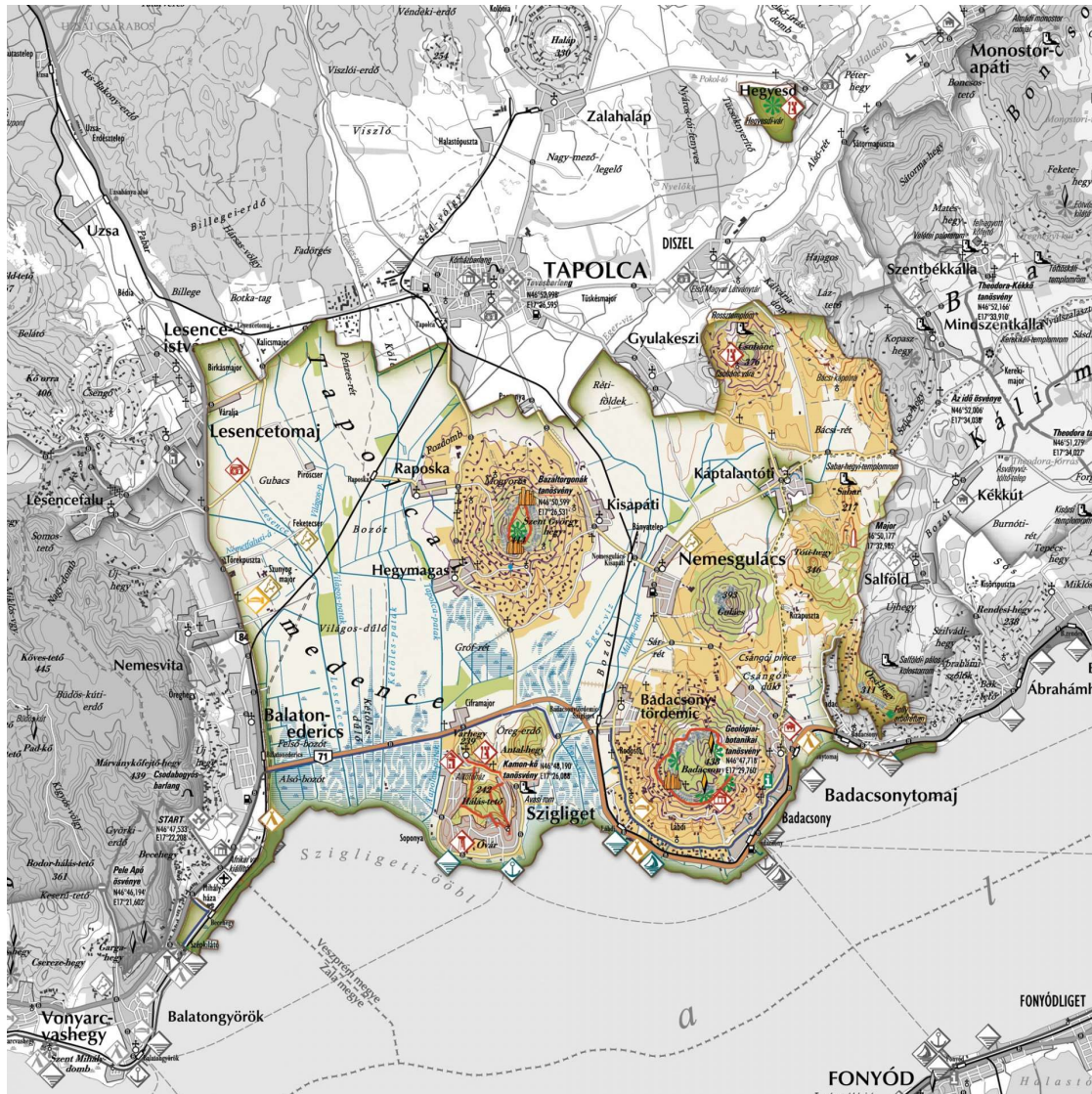


## Tapolca Basin and Region West-Hungary

For hundreds of years poets, novelists and painters have been calling the Badacsony and its vicinity the most beautiful landscape in Hungary. One of the greatest achievements of the Hungarian nature conservation movement is that the basalt quarries opened here in 1903 have finally been closed down. The famous playwright Ferenc Herczeg made powerful efforts in the Upper House in the 1920s to have them closed. A press campaign was also launched, but the last quarries were only finally closed in 1964. Those on the Gulács and Tóti Hills were abandoned at the end of World War II and in the early 1950s. The Szentgyörgy and Csobánc Hills are more fortunate: their basalt was not found suitable for building purposes, so there are only small wounds on their flanks.



Tapolca Basin, map – [magnifies](#)

The monadnocks are peculiarly shaped results of the volcanic activity towards the end of the Pannonian Age. At the edges of the Csobánc, Szentgyörgy and Badacsony Hills, which from a distance resemble coffins, typical formations of solidifying basalt: the basalt columns can be seen. The most beautiful examples are the Stone Gate of Badacsony and the basalt organs of the Szentgyörgy Hill. At the slopes of Badacsony, huge rock-glaciers and block fields are to be found, where the large-leaf linden and the mahaleb cherry forest can just establish themselves. The picturesque cones of the Gulács, Tóti and Vár Hills resemble sugar loaves.

The basalt mountains of the area are not only unique and picturesque geological relics, they are also the habitat of many rare plants and animals. In addition to the natural values it is worth to mention the vineyards dating back to the Roman times, the architectural relics of the hills and villages: ruins of castles, churches, palaces, as well as the relics of popular architecture.

Several botanical rarities live in the extreme climatic and geological conditions of the basalt mountains. The abundance of the yellow golden alyssium on the rock and quarry sides is picturesque. A unique acidophilic ash-beech forest occurs on the rocky escarpments of the Badacsony; in its beech forests we find cyclamen, while in the hornbeam-oak groves hepatica, black bryony, broomrape grow. On the sunny rocks of the Szentgyörgy Hill a small population of Cheilanthes marantae (unique in Hungary) blooms, with caterack and Lumnitzer carnation. Several local subspecies of sorbtrees find habitat in the unavailable rock cracks. The flower stock of Csobánc is enriched by Pulsatilla grandis, Saxifragas and lilac. On the top of the Tóti Hill a picturesque flower field is situated: Orlaya grandiflora mixed with iris, Pulsatillas and Caryophyllaceae. In the cracks of the basalt columns the small scrubs of Cotoneaster matrensis line up.

At the eastern edge of the area on Permian sandstone the calluna provides a red flower carpet at the end of summer; on the rocks juniper and yellow hawkweed species bloom. On the plains, remains of ancient marshes contain several botanical rarities. At Raposka we find marsh gladiolus and orchids; next to Káptalantóti there is a habitat of the 1 m tall and odorous large pink (that occurs less and less), accompanied with the blue flowered marsh gentian.

On the rocks and in the forests of the basalt hills several rare birds nest: raven, red footed falcon, rock bird etc. In the reeds below the Szigliget Hill the protected greylag goose breeds. The ruins of the forts of Csobánc and Szigliget, the lavishly rich Tarányi Cellar from 1780, the Lengyel Chapel (1760), the Szigliget Castle and manor, the cellar of Flórián Szabó at Rókarántó of Szigliget, richly ornamented in popular style, the chapels on the vineyard hills (Csobánc, Kisapáti, Badacsonylábdi), the nicely carved crucifixes at the crossroads, the ruins of churches (Csobáncszegi, Szigliget-Avasi, Káptalantóti-Sabar Mountain), the dignified manor of Róza Szegedy on the Badacsony, are all precious relics of Hungarian architecture and history.

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### About the Lake Cave

A **tortuous cave system** is hiding **under the streets and houses of Tapolca**, a little town not far from Balaton. In the **strictly protected cave**, which was discovered more than 100 years ago, the **visitors can make a unique boat trip on the lit, bluish water of the underground lake**. The **temperature is about 18 °C in the cave all year round**. Thanks to the **new lighting system**, the Lake Cave awaits visitors with more beautiful lights and view than ever.

Those who are interested in **the secrets of the underground world** are invited to an **exciting boat trip under the streets of the town**. A **new visitor centre opened** next to the cave with a unique exhibition on the wonderful world of karst regions. The mysterious world of caves is interpreted by special attractions in 10 rooms. Children can crawl in the adventure cavern while the sensory abilities of adults are challenged by the „feel the rocks” game.

Palaeogeographic paintings introduce the wildlife of past epochs. We ourselves can go on an underground expedition by watching 3D photos and the film. Karst water, the exotic artist of nature creates magnificent shapes out of limestone. From the tower karst of South China, through the empire of dripstones we arrive to the caves of Tapolca, the crystal world of fragile beauty. Lava tube caves and ice caves, tropical palaeokarst and many other attractions await you.

### EXHIBITION ROOMS, ATTRACTIONS:

- Dripstone Room
- Cave Divers' Room
- Bat Room

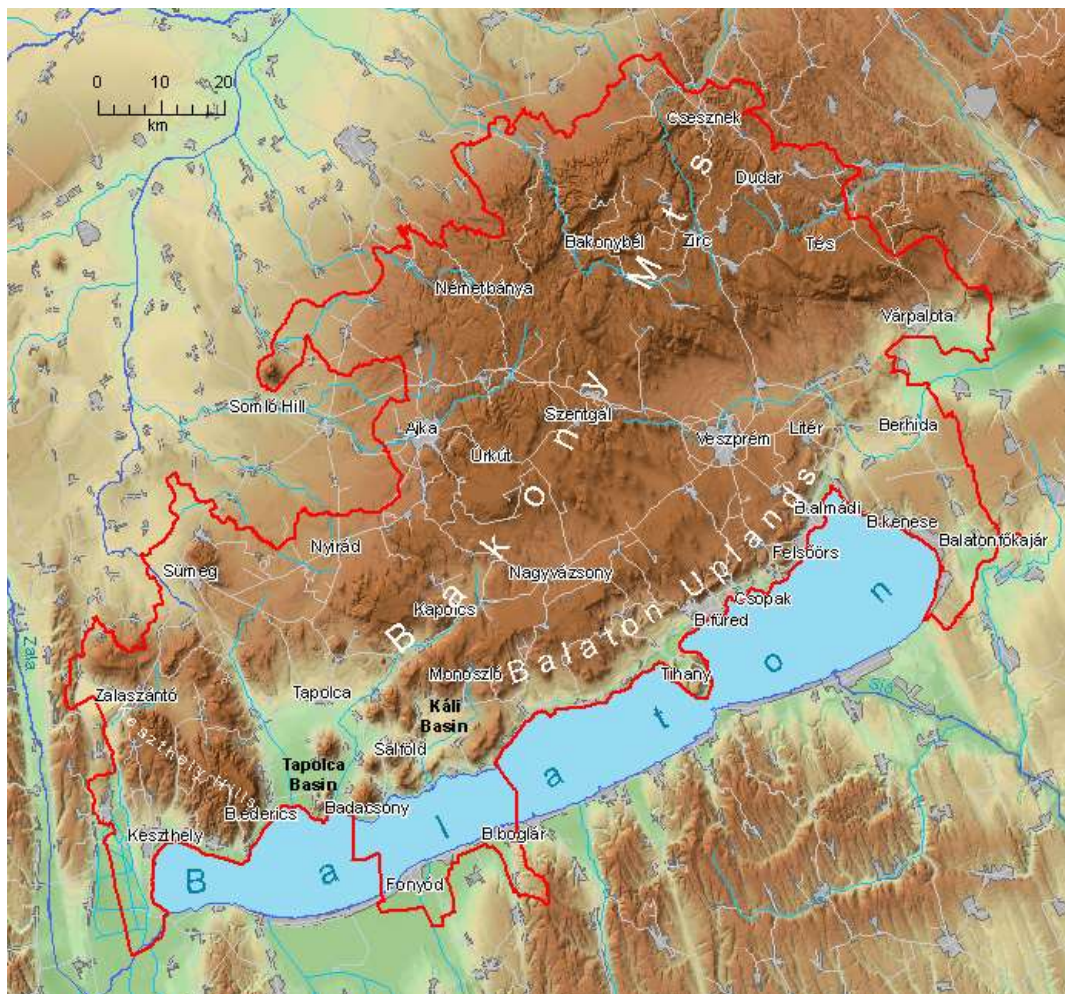
- Geopark Room
- Prehistoric Room
- Palaeokarst Room
- 3D Movie Room
- Boating in the Cave
- Playground
- Climbing Wall

The **new visitor centre** opened next to the cave in January 2015. The **visitors pay the entrance fee at the entrance area of the visitor centre** and approach the cave through the new building.

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### Where can you find Bakony–Balaton UNESCO Global Geopark?

The more than **3200 km<sup>2</sup>** large area of the geopark is characterised by numerous geological and geomorphologic assets that are outstanding, thanks to their scientific and educational significance as well as to their aesthetic value. The area of the geopark is situated **near Lake Balaton**, in the region of **Balaton Uplands and Bakony Mountains**. It comprises the area of the **Balaton Uplands National Park**, except the Kis-Balaton geographical unit. It also includes the **High Bakony Landscape Protection Area**, the **Somló Landscape Protection Area** and the **vicinity of Fonyód town** on the southern shore of Lake Balaton.



## What are the goals of the Geopark?

The prior mission of geoparks is to **protect** and **interpret** our rich geological and geomorphologic heritage, with the **involvement of local people and communities** and by launching **geotourism activities** and **educational, awareness raising programs**. The leading organisation of the geopark and its partners join in activities regarding **geological education** and **research** and also do their share of the **management of geological assets** (e.g. clearing of geological key sections, creating nature trails).

Via sustainable geotourism, a geopark with an area of optimal size is able to **serve local economic development**. An important task of the geopark is to **promote local handicraft products** as well as **local and/or organic food**. By virtue of the introduction of the name (logo, etc.) of Bakony–Balaton Geopark as a **trademark** of high-quality, the inhabitants of the area will get the chance to develop products and high-level services conducted on the values of sustainable development.

## Organisation

The Bakony–Balaton Geopark name stands not only for an area but also for an organisation. The **leading** organisation of the Geopark is the **Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate**, within which the **Bakony–Balaton Geopark Group** works directly on the Geopark programme. Several experts of the Directorate also participate in fulfilling tasks in relation to the geopark. The Directorate aims at involving institutions, local governments, schools, communities, service providers and individuals that operate or live within the geopark and identify themselves with the goals of the geopark. These stakeholders work as **Bakony-Balaton Geopark Partners** within the organisation of the geopark.

## Activities

The geopark provides a **rich geotouristic offer** to a wide spectrum of people who are interested in the geological processes and the spectacular geological phenomena of the geopark. The Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate – the leader of the Bakony–Balaton Geopark organisation and also the owner of this trademark – lays great emphasis on the interpretation of geological heritage by way of its **sites that interpret a geological theme, its nature trails, guided geotours, guided nature tours and its open-air school programs, including geocamps**.

Since 2009 the Directorate has continuously organised **geotour-guide training courses** on the area – in cooperation with civil organisations, such as the [Pangea Cultural and Environmental Association](#), [Bakonyalja Barátai Association](#) and [Forrásvíz Nature Environmental Association](#). This way local individuals, service providers and communities have the chance to widen their touristic offer with this new, sustainable approach.

The 15 **Multi-Purpose Microregional Associations** of local governments, operating on the area of the Geopark and the **Directorate** concluded a common **cooperation agreement** in 2011, **defining general tasks** in relation to the geopark's goals. Based on this agreement, many local governments and the Directorate have worked together on **renewing and maintaining the geological heritage sites** and the infrastructure that helps their visitor friendly interpretation.

The European Geoparks Network celebrates geoparks every May, in the framework of the **European Geoparks Week**. To follow this tradition, the Bakony–Balaton Geopark organises **many geo-programmes during this time period** since 2012. Geotourists can join **geotours** provided by trained geotour-guides, a **photo exhibition** on the cultural assets of the geopark is exhibited at several locations. Two colleagues of the first Hungarian and Slovak European and Global Geopark, the **Novohrad–Nógrád Geopark** presented their geopark during the European Geoparks Week in 2012 for two days in the Lavender House Visitor Centre, the Eastern Gate of Bakony–Balaton Geopark, with an exhibition, a short film and local products. Next year our guests came from **Papuk Geopark**, Croatia and they represented their geopark also in the Lavender House visitor centre.

The **Bakony–Balaton Geopark Contest – „Our Geopark”** has been organised annually by the Directorate since 2008. About 250 **primary schools** operating in the geopark receive the announcement and many teams of two students participate in the contest every year. The aim is to make students get closer to the geological heritage that surrounds them, to gain useful knowledge about them and to make students aware of the importance of protecting them. Almost 30-70 teams participate in the contest annually and the best 10-17 teams can take part in the final turn of the event, including a field trip and oral presentations by the teams.

**Educational geopark days** are organised by the Geopark Group, National Park Directorate's colleagues and local communities since 2012: these outdoor activity days focus on schoolchildren and kindergarten children and provide a joyful opportunity for the young to get acquainted with their local geological heritage.

**Geocamps** are excellent occasions for school groups to spend a few days in nature and learn about the geological processes that have shaped the landscape. While participating in these programmes, children enjoy the impressive and spectacular landscape and they build up a relationship with the landscape, the "inactive" rocks and caves and other geosites. Moreover, they realise how important it is to preserve them for the present and for future generations.

The acknowledgement "**Geosite of the Year in Bakony–Balaton Geopark**" has been given to a certain geological site within the Geopark since 2013 in order to provide regional recognition not only to the exceptional value of the geological heritage of the site but also to acknowledge the activity of the local community in relation to that site (e.g. renovating voluntarily a geotrail, promoting the site by including it into local events, or helping the Geopark organisation during a an educational geopark day at the site) and also the cooperation of the stakeholders.

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