

Experience a billion years of Earth's history

By Trudy Kelly Forsythe

Adventurers of all levels have a new, yet not-so-new, 2,500-square-kilometre playground to explore in southern New Brunswick. The first UNESCO-supported Global Geopark in North America, the Stonehammer Geopark was selected as the 77th member of the Global Geopark Network because of its extensive geological history as well as its vibrant human and cultural heritage.

“A geopark is about connecting people with the earth in a way that is meaningful to them,” says Gail Bremner, executive director of the Stonehammer Geopark. “For some that could be kayaking; for others hiking and for others by taking an in-depth tour with a trained geologist. It’s a way to have fun and learn a bit about how the earth literally shapes and impacts our lives.”

Incorporating more than 60 significant geological and fossil locales, including more than 10 sites that are accessible to the public, the range of geological and paleontological stories within the Stonehammer Geopark – a billion years worth – is internationally unique. With a landscape created by the collision of continents, the closing and opening of oceans, volcanoes, earth quakes, ice ages and climate change, the Stonehammer Geopark includes geological stories from late Precambrian time a billion years ago to the most recent Ice Age, and almost everything in between.

The result is a region where you can paddle an Ice Age river, zip over the world famous Reversing Rapids, touch marble more than 850 million years old, find the remains of 13,000-year-old marine creatures, explore river floodplains, walk in sea caves and on the ocean floor, hike volcanic rocks, discover Canada’s oldest fossil forest, see a 19th century lime-kiln quarry and even dine from a Stonehammer Geopark-themed menu.

For the independent traveler who likes to do it themselves, there are a number of self-guided tours available. Visitors can download maps, walking tours and fact sheets off the Stonehammer Geopark website in the download centre under the activities tab. And for those looking to get inside for a few hours a visit to the New Brunswick Museum’s ‘Our Changing Earth’ exhibit is a great way to learn about the province’s fossil stories.

It’s easy to see whether travelers are looking for a one-hour tour, a half-day experience or adventures that last a week or more, they really can find it all at the Stonehammer Geopark.

To discover more about the Stonehammer Geopark visit www.stonehammergeopark.com. To learn about geoparks in general visit www.globalgeopark.org.