

New coronavirus response in Fossa Magna Museum

*Takahiko Ogawara¹, Ko Takenouchi¹, Yousuke Ibaraki¹, Takeo Kobayashi², Takuma Katori²

1. Fossa Magna Museum, 2. Itoigawa City Hall Geopark Promotion Office

Itoigawa Fossa Magna Museum is a core facility of the Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark. The museum opened in 1994 and was renovated in 2015. The museum's main exhibits are jade, limestone fossils, Itoigawa-Shizuoka Tectonic Line and formation of the Japanese archipelago. 90,270 people visited the museum in 2019.

The number of visitors in 2020 is 49.4% of the previous year's level (April to November), and the Fossa Magna Museum has implemented the following measures. (1) Corona prevention and three densification measures that allow visitors to visit the museum with peace of mind. (2) Development of a website that provides virtual tours of the museum and introduces the highlights of outdoor exhibits. (3) Introducing the museum remotely using Zoom and other tools.

Corona prevention and three densification measures at the Fossa Magna Museum

The following measures have been implemented at the Fossa Magna Museum: Prohibition of visitors from seven prefectures (April 8 to April 24, 2020). Temperature check and entry into the museum (April 8 to June 18, 2020; temperature check is ongoing). Temporary closure of the museum in response to the spread of infection (April 25 to May 30, 2020). Entry restricted to residents of non-Niigata Prefecture (June 1 to June 18, 2020). Stone appraisal service will be suspended (from March 9, 2020 to March 2021). The use of the Fossil Valley will be suspended (April 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020).

The temperature of each visitor was taken by a staff member using a non-contact thermometer when entering the museum. In order to solve this problem, the museum introduced an automatic temperature-taking device equipped with AI. This device automatically measures the body temperature of each visitor and calls for attention if the visitor is not wearing a mask.

Stone appraisal service is the museum's own promotion activity, in which visitors can bring in up to five stones and have their names appraised free of charge. As a countermeasure against the three densities of the corona disaster, the museum considered distributing numbered tickets and making advance reservations via the Internet or telephone. However, it has been decided to suspend these measures until the end of March 2021.

Therefore, the Fossa Magna Museum held an outdoor appraisal class (1,000 yen per class) during the summer vacation as an alternative to stone appraisal. For this event, we used the stone specimen kit "Hirokko" created by the Itoigawa City Tourism Association. Total of 16 workshops were held, with 122 participants from inside and outside the city.

Development of a website to introduce virtual tours of the museum and highlights of the outdoor exhibits

The Fossa Magna Museum was faced with the challenge of how to enjoy the museum when it is closed. In the fall of 2019, the Itoigawa Geopark Council conducted photography and virtual tours of the exhibition rooms using Matterport, a 3D model camera developed by Hokkaido Map Co. And a local cable TV station filmed a video of a curator giving a tour of the museum and posted it on the website.

Museum Introduction Using Zoom

Since the Corona disaster, the use of web conferencing systems such as Zoom has been developing rapidly. The Fossa Magna Museum conducted an online virtual tour of the museum using Zoom at the University Festival of the Faculty of Science of Niigata University (October 18) and the Chubu Block

Conference of the Japanese Geoparks Network (November 21). This was achieved by using a smartphone and a gimbal to connect to the Zoom conference room via a cell phone line. At the Chubu Block Conference, we not only provided a tour of the museum, but also broadcasted real-time indoor experiments and videos that we had taken in advance.

Virtual tours have the potential to make it possible to visit places that have been difficult to visit in large groups, such as conventional tours.

Keywords: Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark, Fossa Magna Museum, Countermeasures against new coronavirus infectious