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**GEOHERITAGE SITES IN FUJAIRAH, UAE:
EVALUATING THEIR CONSERVATION STATUS AND TOURISTIC POTENTIAL**

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ABSTRACT

The Emirate of Fujairah, UAE, boasts a remarkable array of geodiversity, encompassing features such as the carbonate rocks of the Hajar supergroup, the Semail Ophiolite, and Quaternary sediments. Recently, nature tourism, including geotourism, has been developing rapidly in Fujairah. Conservation of geoheritage sites is becoming ever more important, not only for the sustainable touristic use of these sites, but also to protect their scientific, educational, and cultural values. Nevertheless, to date, no systematic approaches have been applied to assess the touristic value of these geoheritage sites.

We compiled a list of geoheritage sites in Fujairah through literature review and discussions with regional experts, which were subsequently visited for an assessment of their condition conservation status. Furthermore, we organized a lecture and a field trip with nature tourism professionals to gain their insights on what makes geoheritage sites attractive from their perspectives. Using this data, we created a method to evaluate the touristic value of geoheritage sites.

Our findings reveal that most geoheritage sites in Fujairah are currently in an acceptable state of conservation, including a few key sites that are already under protection. However, a concerning trend of vandalism, including littering and graffiti, was observed at some others, demonstrating the need for proactive measures to mitigate the impact of geotourism to the protection of geoheritage sites.

Furthermore, our research identified the key characteristics sought by tourism professionals for geoheritage sites in this region, guiding future development. The new evaluation method highlights safety, accessibility, scenery, and logistics as the most important factors for the



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touristic values of geoheritage in Fujairah. The evaluation scheme helped identify the sites with the highest touristic potential from the list of geoheritage sites in Fujairah to guide future regional developments in geotourism.

Overall, this study sheds light on the *status quo* of geoheritage sites in Fujairah, their touristic potential, and the need to implement effective conservation measures. By fostering collaboration between relevant stakeholders, sustainable practices can be developed and implemented for Fujairah to harness its geodiversity and to bolster its touristic potential.

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