



Cities on Volcanoes 9  
November 20-25, 2016  
Puerto Varas, Chile



*'Understanding volcanoes and society: the key for risk mitigation'*

## **IUCN Volcano Thematic Study: The need to revalue volcanic landscapes to ensure their future protection.**

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The conservation of geological heritage (geoheritage) is important for preserving not just the natural values of sites around the world, but also for the cultural and socioeconomic values that have emerged over time in places as a result of interrelations between geology and society. The World Heritage Program, Global Geopark program and Man and the Biosphere Program, all seek to ensure geoheritage protection across every continent of the globe.

Volcanic landscapes are among the most recognizable protected areas of each of these three designations. Recently a review of the 2009 Volcano Thematic Study on World Heritage Volcanoes (Wood, 2009, *World Heritage Volcanoes*, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 70pp) was undertaken in response to concerns that volcanic properties were 'overrepresented' in such designations.

An initial review of the current volcanic property listings highlighted four key results.

1. Many of the properties already inscribed did not contain what many volcanologists might consider being volcanic geology of 'outstanding universal value' representative of the 'best of the best' of volcanic features.
2. That volcanic sites had historically been nominated for their broader natural or ecosystem value.
3. Several recent inscriptions had been made based on cultural values alone.
4. Many of the worlds most iconic, famous and revered volcanoes are absent from the current lists.

Together these results suggest that in order to capture true outstanding universal value in regard to volcanic landscapes across the world, the inclusion of both further cultural heritage sites as well as some of the missing iconic volcanoes have the potential to substantially increase the 'overrepresented' inventory further still. However, to fully represent outstanding universal value in volcanic heritage, we need to ensure our selection criteria is representative of the value systems of volcanic communities around the globe and the meanings and significance they give to volcanoes.