

GEOCENTRE AT GAMS



Figure A3.3 ▲
Exhibition hall at the GeoCentre Gams

The Nature Park Eisenwurzen, located in the Austrian state of Styria, is situated in the Northern Calcareous Alps. Geotourism has a long tradition in the area. As early as 1892 the Kraus Cave of Gams, one of the most splendid gypsum-bearing caves of Europe and the first one in the world with electric light, was opened to the public. In recent times, the adventure of experiencing 250 million years of Alpine history has given new impulses to tourism in the region, which has suffered from extreme depopulation in the past decades.

Scientists have been aware of the magnificent geology of the region since the early 19th century. The Anisian stage of the Triassic period has been named after a section of rocks close to the Enns River, which was called Anisius fluvius in Roman times. Geotouristic activities are the domain of GeoLine (www.geoline.at), the geological branch of the Nature Park. These comprise two permanent exhibitions: the museum of the Second Vienna Water Supply Line, which benefits from karstic springs in the area, and the GeoCentre of Gams, which provides an overview of the regional geology. The GeoTrail and GeoBike, a demanding bicycle trail, provide in-situ evidence of geological phenomena. This most powerful of all geological agents may be explored in the Water Park of St. Gallen and at GeoRafting, which combines science with adventure. The GeoWorkshop serves all activities related to the preparation of geological items.

The recognition as a member of the European Geoparks Network in 2002 has provided new momentum. Funded by the EC programme LEADER+, challenging geotouristic projects are established in all communities of the Nature Park. This will be an important step towards a sustainable development of the region.