

# **GEO-ROUTE IN EL GOLFO VALLEY (EL HIERRO, SPAIN) TO PROMOTE THE GEOTOURISM AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN A SMALL VOLCANIC UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

El Hierro island is located east Atlantic Ocean, is the most western and the smallest one of the Canaries. It is a subtropical recent volcanic island, and it possesses a rich and diverse volcanic and non-volcanic geoheritage. The last eruption was in 2011-2012 in the Mar de Las Calmas reserve marine, which is located in the south of the island. Currently, El Hierro is a Biosphere Reserve since 2000, a UNESCO Global Geopark since 2014 and more than 54% of its surface are natural protected areas. El Hierro receives thousands of visitors a year mainly motivated by diving and trekking, but the main geomorphological landscapes (giant landslides and volcanic rifts) are not very important for the tourists yet. We selected the El Golfo Valley (EGV) because it constitutes the most important topographical, geological and geographical unit of the El Hierro and it has the largest number of geosites of the geopark. The study area (EGV) is located in the north part of El Hierro which was originated by a giant landslide more than 100.000 years ago and then the depression was filled with several monogenetic eruptions and detrital deposits. Into the EGV is the most important human activity and economy of the El Hierro associated to the traditional crops and livestock and the exportation crops (banana, pineapple or avocado) generated a diverse rural landscapes and rich cultural heritage. In this sense, the main aim of this work is to identify, inventory and selected an important geotourism sites preserved, accessible and representative of the EGV heritage in order to promote its the local development through a geographical approach of geotourism with a coastal path that could diversification the economic activities in EGV. The selected and studied sites in this study include the geoheritage of the EGV (paleo-cliffs, ravines, taluses, sedimentary deposits, cliffs, beaches, cinder cones, hornitos, lava fields or coastal lava delta) and the rural elements (stone walls, "goronas", salines, crops or livestock). The geo-route has fifteen stops, a total path of 17.5 km and it can be done by car, but several stops can be done on foot. Along the itinerary it can be observed the diversity linked to the natural and cultural heritage of this recent volcanic landscape of El Hierro. For

all, the selection of these important geotourism sites could contribute to local development and the geotourism through the geo-routes for the coast of the EGV (Vulturmac-MAC2/4.6c/298).