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sai kung

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THE REALLY USEFUL MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2009

LOOK UP!
Aerial Photos
of Clearwater Bay

Snake alert!
Pythons in a squeeze

132
festive things
to **Do**

Dear Santa...
All I want for Christmas

The big quiz
How well do you know
Sai Kung?

Marina Cove
Step through
the barrier



Geo-tastic!

Turns out Sai Kung has some smashing rocks, but are they any fun? One family visits the new Geopark to find out.

Meet the Dickens. A Sai Kung family with intrepid genes, they headed out to the Geopark soon after it opened last month to check out our world-class geo-heritage. "I think WOW sums it up," said mum, Helen Brighton. "The kids [Aidan, 12, and Millie, 9] were amazed when they understood that they were standing in what was once a volcano. We all want to go again."

The Geopark is spread over 49 square kilometres between the Ninepin Islands and Tung Ping Chau. The Dickens visited one of the world's largest formations of hexagonal columnar jointing, just a hop, skip and a jump from the town centre: hop onto a no.94 bus to Pak Tam Chung country park gate, skip into a taxi to the East Dam of the High Island Reservoir (about \$70), jump out the other end. Easy!

Like the Giant's Causeway in Ireland, the buckled hexagonal columnar jointing is "magnificent" and there's plenty of signage to explain just how it came into being (a 140 million-year-old collapsed volcano: "I feel like an expert after reading the signs," Helen said). There's a viewing point on the dam and you can walk down to get an upclose look. "There were quite a few people around, probably because the weather was good and it had just opened. But it's a big area, so even if there are lots of people it doesn't feel busy," Helen said.

Of more interest to Aidan and Millie was rock-hopping to a nearby cave. "The cave was fantastic. Standing inside and climbing over the rocks to get to it was the best bit of the day - and they were amazed by the dam."

When the family go again, Helen said, they'll go early and leave time for the half-hour hike to Long Ke beach ("just a bit of a hill"), which is sign-posted from the East Dam pagoda.

Also easily accessible from Sai Kung and now part of the Geopark is a tombolo (a spit of deposited rocks and sand joining two islands) linking Sharp Island to Kiu Tau. Reached by kaido from Sai Kung, the ferry can drop you off at Kiu Tsui beach. Make use of the barbecue pits while you wait for the tide to drop low enough to stroll across the rocky tombolo.

Other local sites require a boat. Once afloat, you can visit the hexagonal columns of the Ninepin Islands – look for the "face" in the rocks - and the caves and stacks of Basalt, Bluff and Wang Chau islands, some of which are navigable by kayak. Then chill on the beach at Bluff, or head over to Pak A for a slap-up seafood meal.

Who says geology is boring?

Geopark highlights include (from top) the caves and arches at Wang Chau, the hexagonal columns at Po Chin Chau, and further afield, beautiful Tung Ping Chau. Below: The Dickens on tour.



Pictures: Helen Brighton

Pictures courtesy of the Association of Geoconservation, Hong Kong