

## **Geological Features for Geotourism in the Western Part of Sahand Volcano, NW Iran**

### **Abstract**

The NW part of Iran is particularly rich in geological features and formations defining its geological heritage, and attracts tourists worldwide. Most of NW Iran is located in a volcanic arc zone of Cenozoic age, including the Quaternary. The subduction of the Neo-Tethys ocean floor beneath the central block of Iran during the Cenozoic resulted in the formation of this zone. This geological setting has provided NW Iran with diverse natural geological features of high significance. Some of the main geological features include the Sahand Volcano, the Urmia Lake, salt deposits, travertine deposits, springs, limestone caves, tectonic structures and Cenozoic vertebrate fossils. This exceptional geodiversity together with the rich cultural heritage provides a valuable base for geotourism and geopark development, which is needed to diversify local economy and strengthen rural development. However, for tourism to be successful and sustainable, the planning and management must be based on up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the tourism resources, as well as on a holistic overview of the many facets of the geological and cultural heritage.