



GEO-stories of our places and people: Benquerenças

Next to Castelo Branco, touching its industrial area there is an unexpected group of small villages, between gardens and woods: Benquerenças. The plain of shales and sandstones, cut by Corgas coming down to Ribeira da Líria and the Ocreza Valley, land that has given bread and today is filled with forest and woods, seems to want to hide these villages that depend on the daily come and go of the people who work in the city. The rocks are very old and tend to tell stories. Looking like a common shale that is more of the same in the region, garnishes however with vertical folds clearly visible on the main road that crosses the parish and access to Castelo Branco, at South and North. In this scientific important geosite the mud and sand seabed was raised and deformed in the newly opened ocean, the Rheic, of which there is nothing left but these rocks, later composing Pangaea mountains and erected by tectonic surveys in the Iberian Peninsula.

The metamorphic landscape are here particularly pleasant over a vast part of the Ocreza River, which begins a bit upstream the bridge of Taberna Seca and gets strongly linear, certainly through faults that undermined the bedrock. In the deep valley, not surprisingly we have mills, some with beautiful architecture to support the rising waters. Mills are also abundant in Ribeira da Líria. In Maxiais and Benquerenças, de Cima and de Baixo, lived, not many years ago, about 720 people. Other place remains, Azinheira, today without anyone, with an important schist traditional architecture legacy, classified as Municipal Interest and waiting for its touristic value, or as "Village Museum", opened to the city and its schools. The Fountain Route, a marked trekking with 10 km, allows the visit to some of the water heritage in these villages. Yet, there is room for touristic development based on the paths, some very old as Via das Ferrarias, perhaps Roman. MTB enthusiastics come to Benguerencas to see a vast corrugated schist territory with 62,03km2, trough the "shepherds path", searching for the contact with Ocreza valley, a place to explore from a nature tourism point of view, also seasonally across the river wild waters. In Maxiais, land where crop production has been attempted in times of the New Regime, now grow different cultures, more adapted to climate changes which are transforming the local green landscape. The Cleaning and Processing Centre of Prickly Pear allows taking advantage of all products extracted from this cactus, thus contributing to local economy diversification.

Bilbiography

BELO, J.A. (1985). Benquerenças no espaço e no Tempo. Ed. Autor, 172p. ROMÃO, J. & RIBEIRO, A. (1992) – Thrust tectonics of sardic age in the Rosmaninhal area (Beira Baixa, Central Portugal). Comunicações dos Serviços Geológicos de Portugal, 78(2): 87-95.

> The editor Carlos Neto de Carvalho Scientific coordinator Geologist

Cover: (Projecto Objectiva: Geopark)



MONTHLY ACTIVITIES



4 January – Planting trees at Monte do Trigo – CNAE of Idanha-a-Nova by students from EB1 of Monsanto. This activity was attended by 12 students from the primary school of Monsanto, one teacher and one assistant. They visited the plant nursery in Monte do Trigo, and then planted some trees. This activity was supported by Naturtejo Geopark and the Scouts Association of Idanha-a-Nova (CNAE). It was aimed to preserve and raise awareness for the natural heritage conservation, important not only for the environmental and ecological ecosystems balance, but also under the economic and social point of view. The monitors were Hugo Oliveira and a technician from the CNAE.

11 January – 1st field trip of the Rivers Project. A 30 students of the 8°B from the School Group José Silvestre Ribeiro in Idanha-a-Nova participated in the field trip that allow them to value the importance of Ponsul River, monitoring a section of 500m of the river, adopted by their class. Students developed some practical activities of environmental education, such as measuring the water flow, pH, temperature, determined the degree of water turbidity and also identified different animal and plant species. The Rivers Project seeks to involve the civil community promoting the sustainable development at local and regional level, as well as a mean of education for citizenship. The field trip was led by a local trainer and Hugo Oliveira.



18 to 22 January – UNESCO Geoparks in the International Tourism Fair of Madrid. FITUR is an important event which marks the beginning of the touristic year and where the main tendencies are defined, this year with 62.500m2 and 9672 exhibitors from 165 countries. Naturtejo Geopark as usual coordinated once again the participation of UNESCO Geoparks together with the Spanish Geoparks, Villuercas Ibores Jara, Sobrarbe and Basque Coast, aiming to put UNESCO World Geoparks brand in the international touristic map. This year, with a bigger stand, Naturtejo Geopark presented the territory, services and Geoproducts and promoted its events. In a period of high global insecurity, Naturtejo Geopark stands as a safe destination, where tourists can plan their own trip, a la carte, with experiences, emotions and close contact with authenticity, in peculiar geodiversity. In the days dedicated to professionals, several touristic programmes were consolidated with Spanish tour operators, established new partnerships with travel agencies and tour operators. United Nations, through World Tourism Organization, chose FITUR to launch the World Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, attended by around 70 Ministers of Tourism and high figures of world tourism sector, and also with the participation of Nickolas Zouros, President of Global Geoparks Network that is gold partner for the year celebrations. Spanish Geoparks coordinated a press conference about UNESCO Geoparks destinations and presented a promotional booklet about Geoparks in Spain. In 2018 FITUR will bet on a new section specialized in Festivals Tourism.

23 and 24 January - **Training Course for technicians and tourism entrepreneurs in Naturtejo Geopark.** This initiative was planned by Naturtejo Geopark in close partnership with the Municipality of Penamacor open to all the technicians and tourism entrepreneurs in the territory. The training course, theoretic and practical, was a success with 24 participants. On the first day, the trainers Mariana Vilas Boas and Manuel Catana talked about touristic information of the Geopark. This was aimed to understand the concept of Geopark, recognize its benefits to the territory, know the Naturtejo Geopark territory and its values, promote Geodiversity and Heritage interpretation in the tourism and business activities and develop tracks, tours and touristic thematic products. On the next day, the subject was Perspectives and opportunities for touristic development in the context of Naturtejo Geopark, seeking to raise awareness for the importance of the international brand "UNESCO Global Geoparks", introducing the capabilities of Naturtejo Geopark, as development factors, recognizing the benefits of Naturtejo Geopark to the territory and enabling technicians from different areas within the geological heritage as scientific, cultural, economic and educational resource and developing skills in the Geotourism area, valuing the Geoproducts, as territory differentiating products and allowing the exchange of experience amongst Municipalities and networking.

This initiative shows its extreme importance, as the participations prove, as well as their origins (Penamacor, Idanha-a-Nova, Oleiros). Bearing this in mind, future training courses about the Naturtejo Geopark should be promoted in the other Municipalities enhancing the access to Geopark information and strategy to sustainable development, aimed to a wider number of local actors. At the end, each participant received a participation certificate.



27 January – Training Course for teachers "Naturtejo Geopark – UNESCO Global Geopark as educational resource". This training course was aimed for middle and high school teachers, and received 30 teachers from various education and grade levels, mostly from schools within Naturtejo Geopark territory. The course had 18 hours of training, theoretical-practical inside, field trip and practical session, in classroom, to present and discuss the educational resources designed by the trainees. The trainers for these actions were José Brilha, from Minho University and Manuela Catana. This action is integrated in the Educational Programs of Naturtejo Geopark 2016/2017 and the Training Plan 2016/2017 from Centro de Formação da Associação de Escolas do Alto Tejo (CFAE) and organized by the Educational Service of Naturtejo Geopark in partnership with Minho University and the Earth Sciences Institute. The first session was theoretical-practical, took place in Escola Secundária Nuno Álvares high school, and the topics included: geoconservation, geodiversity, geological heritage, geosites, UNESCO Wold Geoparks and Education for Sustainability. The next sessions are on 3rd and 18th February and 10th March.



27 January – Naturtejo Geopark in the I Terras de Cavaleiros Geopark Conference. Terras de Cavaleiros Geopark held its first conference in Macedo de Cavaleiros about "Humanizing Tourism". With several specialists invited, national and foreign, was attended by Carlos Neto de Cavalho, who presented the touristic offer in Naturtejo Geopark, as well as tourism strategies in the territory.



29 to 31 January - Smoked sausage Festival in Aranhas. The Smoked Sausage Festival took place in the village of Aranhas, in Penamacor Municipality, highlighting one of the most premium products from Beira Baixa, the smoked sausage. This event aims to gather local January traditions, as pig slaughter, with premium products, affirming knowledge and flavours of Aranhas. The event held traditional music, gastronomic demonstrations, street entertainment and the traditional singing (Cantar as Janeiras). But the most waited moment is the smoking sausage Procession by the village streets. This festival had the Naturtejo Geopark support.



IMPACT OF GEOPARK IN MEDIA

TV & Radio

6 January – (TSF à Mesa) – Regional flavours in adufe's land

Newspapers & www

January (Ambitur) – Naturtejo Geopark – History and Geodiversity Landscapes January (Raiano) – Strasbourg surrended to Portuguese Christmas 14 January (Vortex Mag) – Penha Garcia and Monsanto, among the 30 stunning locations in Portugal you must visit before you die 18 January (Povo da Beira) – Naturtejo Geopark celebrates the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 18 January (Povo da Beira) - Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development – Naturtejo Geopark prepares activities 20 January (Marketeer) – From this publisher comes out only limited editions 26 January (Gazeta Rural) – Naturtejo Geopark celebrates in 2017 the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

27 January (BusinessInsider.com) - 19 charming small villages



PROMOTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC







GEOPARK NATURTEJO DA MESETA MERIDIONAL - UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK - E-MAGAZINE



PROMOTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC



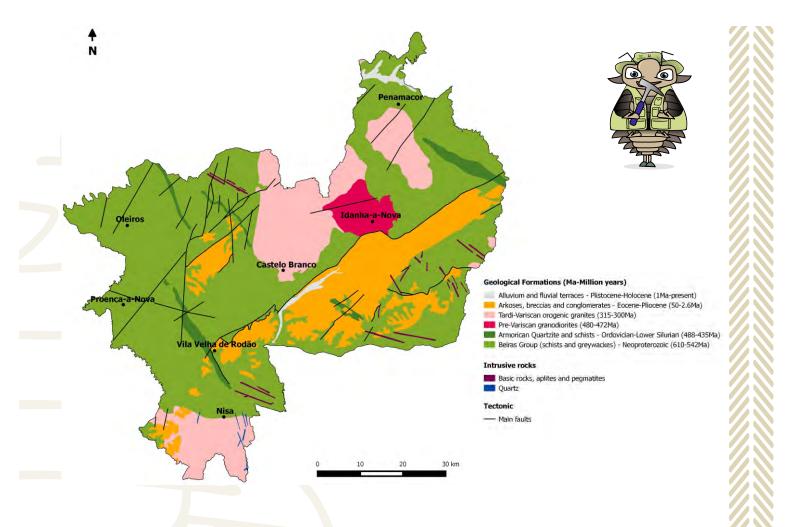


Visit Naturtejo Geopark in:

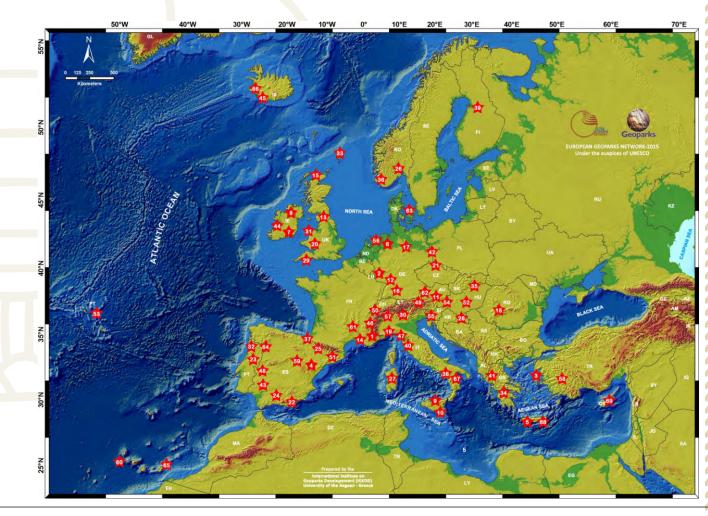
You



GEOPARK NATURTEJO DA MESETA MERIDIONAL - UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK - E-MAGAZINE



Geoparks: Geology with human face



Edition - Geopark Naturtejo, 2017 Coordination - Carlos Neto de Carvalho Texts - Carlos Neto de Carvalho, Joana Rodrigues, Mariana Vilas Boas, Manuela Catana, Município de Penamacor Photos - Carlos Neto de Carvalho, Joana Rodrigues, Manuela Catana, Blog Mata Aranha, Geopark Terras de Cavaleiros Clipping - Alice Marcelo e Carla Jacinto Design - Layer [Design and Print Studio] Translation - Carla Jacinto Editing - Joana Rodrigues

