

GEOMONUMENTS AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE NATURTEJO AREA: THE NEXT BIG THING

C. NETO de CARVALHO

Geology and Paleontology Office, Centro Cultural Raiano, Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal
E-mail: paleo@walla.com

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Naturtejo is a company with the aim of promoting the economical development based on tourism. The districts joined in Naturtejo, Castelo Branco, Idanha-a-Nova, Nisa, Oleiros, Proença-a-Nova e Vila Velha de Ródão, have a total area of more than 4600 km². In this vast region, characterized by a cultural heterogeneity justified by natural and historical criteria, the geology can be a standardizing component, since the geological evolution was controlled here, *grosso modo*, by the same principal stages which molded the landscape. It is for the need of territorial standardization that Geology is acclaimed, without precedence at national level, as anchor theme in a broad scale economical project already in an implementation stage. As an area with historical low level of economic development, Naturtejo has today one of the most genuine culture traditions as well as natural and historical-archeological heritages. Low level of human impact over the nature is evident by the existence of the International Tejo Natural Park. To this offer is added the Geology as Naturtejo's strong bet towards Cultural Tourism, a kind of tourism that allows the visitor to read the landscape in all ways he wants. It is the quest for originality Naturtejo seeks for a sustainable tourism: Geology has the explanation for most of the natural phenomena that enrich the landscapes, some until now neglected (granite morphologies or ancient mines) or admired by their obscurity (Penha Garcia ichnofossils, Portas do Ródão gorge or Conhal do Arneiro Roman gold mine), allowing conservation and enjoyment measures. Moreover, regional Geology interacts with other cultural features such as settlements evolution and building, traditional economic activities or popular religion. From this link between a diversified Geology, with local to international important geomonuments, and several multidisciplinary components of the Naturtejo cultural patrimony emerged the project to candidate this area to the European Geoparks Network, based on three basic premises: inventory, conservation and promotion. Only with an accurate knowledge of the geological heritage will it be possible to program the protection of endangered geotopes and the management of tourism promotional strategies, purposing tourist packets, thematic routes...

Actions undertaking are the protection by municipal laws of the Penha Garcia river gorge and Ponsul fault roadcut (Idanha-a-Nova), granite forms in Serra da Gardunha (Castelo Branco) and the silicified tree at Perais (Vila Velha de Ródão), the classification of Portas do Ródão gorge (Vila Velha de Ródão and Nisa) as national Natural Monument, the implementation of *geotrails* in several places, the opening of the Quarryman Museum at Alcains (Castelo Branco) and the Geomining Museum at Segura (Idanha-a-Nova).

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Abstracts



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