

GEOPRODUCTS IN GEOPARK NATURTEJO

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Geopark Naturtejo has a strong project centred in Geological Heritage with promotion and local economic development through geotourism. The European and Global Geopark networks to which Geopark Naturtejo belongs have common goals and exchange information and good practices developing common strategies. Geological Heritage must be protected and managed in sustainable ways and transnational networking of geoparks enables to enlarge the scale of the projects.

The Geological Heritage is a new socio-economic value that can and must be exploited by tourism. Geotourism is an emergent segment of tourism based on Geodiversity. Humans always travelled to see geological wonders, but only now there is a really chance in this sector. It is being created a new niche with new specificities and new contingencies that follow the general trends of tourism (like lodging and restaurants) but that also have its own trends.

To promote the local development through Geodiversity, Naturtejo Geopark encourages local companies to innovate, investing and contributing for the development of the local economy. These local companies that engage several sectors, such as restaurants, lodging or outdoor activities play a very important role developing the basis of each geotourist strategy. But a Geopark is a new concept of a special and privileged territory to remind the Earth, where we can combine Science and Development. Soon, in Naturtejo Geopark, some innovative products were born that are contributing actively for the growth of local economy and also to raise awareness for Geodiversity – the **Geoproducts**. These Geoproducts combine traditional products with new concepts and interpretations.

It is very important to understand that Geotourism is much more than Geodiversity. It is important to cover also biodiversity, history and culture, with the main propose of local development. The more high-quality offer diversity exists the more rich and appealing is the destination. Geoproducts must have an important role in geotourism projects. More than products they are strategies to raise awareness for Geodiversity, they are a different approach that provides new experiences to the geotourist at the same time that they promote the local development.

In Monsanto Village, “the most Portuguese village of Portugal”, sorrowed by granite boulders, there is the first GeoRestaurant - “Petiscos & Granitos” (meaning Dainty & Granites) presenting Boulders Soup or Marble Cake with the very traditional “Burlhões”, a sausage of goat and peppermint (Fig.1). This GeoRestaurant, a balcony for the landscape’ vastness, takes place in a traditional granite building in the middle of gigantic granite boulders, holding a natural “cave”, a perfect scenery to have a GeoDinner. Even in the bathroom you can find boulders in the wall and every wall are written with geological citations from famous Portuguese writers like José Saramago or Fernando Namora.



FIGURE 1: GeoRestaurant “Petiscos & Granitos”. **a** - Balcony over the Geopark landscape, **b** - terrace and “cave”,
c - Geo Bathroom, **d** - GeoRestaurant dishes.

Almost in the extreme of the Geopark there is Casa do Forno, a GeoBakery and guest house, perhaps the first in the world (Fig.2). The GeoBakery has a very busy traditional oven that cooks besides traditional bread, Trilobite and Granulite cookies. After seeing the fossils in their context in the Geopark trails, why not taste them? But to understand the geological history of the territory, Casa do Forno suggests “The Slices of Earth” (tectonic pizzas on the plate) and Orogenic toasts for all the Geopark episodes (Cadomian, Variscan and Alpine). Casa do Forno, the guest house, offers not only comfort and rest but also geotourist activities, such as water trails, mining routes and reconstitutions of the traditional episodes, such as the smugglers route made by the Portuguese for centuries by crossing the Erges River. Here it is possible to have a delicious GeoDinner where you can start with Salted Schist’s and finish with egg cream Cliffs.





FIGURE 2: “Casa do Forno”. a – Trilobite’s cookies, b - Slices of Earth (tectonic pizzas), c - pedestrian trails, d - live reconstitutions.

Another revolutionary concept concerning GeoMarketing was the company Trilobite.Aventura (meaning Trilobite.Adventure) with outdoor activities, such as pedestrianism, slide, rappel, climbing, in the quartzite rocks with fossils from Penha Garcia. An innovative Geoproduct was the paintball championship – TriloPaint. This common outdoor activity was adopted and transformed in a typical product from the Geopark. Trilobite.Aventura also manages a bar located near the Fossils Trail, in a traditional quartzite building in the medieval core of Penha Garcia village. In February 2009 the company celebrated its first anniversary with a GeoCake illustrating the suggestive logo of Trilobite.Aventura. This trilobite-moving based on the outstanding trilobite trace fossils from the Ichnological park of Penha Garcia was transformed in logo and is always present in the trilobite team uniform (Fig. 3) and company’s image.



FIGURE 3: a - Trilobite.Aventura anniversary cake, b - The Trilobites’ uniform

Incentivos Outdoor (Fig. 4) company arrived at the Naturtejo territory in the beginning of the Geopark project and always worked in order to prepare GeoProducts to the tourists that visit this specific territory.



FIGURE 4: Incentivos Outdoor activities. a - GeoKayak, b - “There is gold at the Foz!”, c - Pedestrian Trails leaflet for GeoTrekking, d - boat trip in the Portas de Ródão Natural Monument.

It is an outdoor company which runs the boat trips to the Portas de Ródão Natural Monument and the Neolithic Tejo Rock Art. This visit along the quartzite crests and deeply-incised Tejo valley meets not only the Geodiversity but also the important avifauna, the historical and archaeological heritage. Besides these traditional boat trips Incentivos Outdoor also endorses GeoKayak in Portas de Ródão, in the Tejo River, but also in the Zêzere River meanders. In Foz do Cobreão Schist Village the company promotes a panning for gold activity with the local community. This activity called “There is gold at the Foz!” recreates the gold mining activity coming from Roman times until the the 1st half of the 20th century. The visitors are invited to take off the shoes, enter in the river and look for gold nuggets. In this village, the company runs a restaurant, in a traditional schist building with tasty traditional food and local products. Incentivos Outdoor presents also GeoTrekking and GeoCircuitos (GeoTrails) Programmes.

There are also traditional products produced since a long time ago directly related with Geodiversity, such as the Ródão products that use the Portas de Ródão geomonument as a brand (Fig. 5).

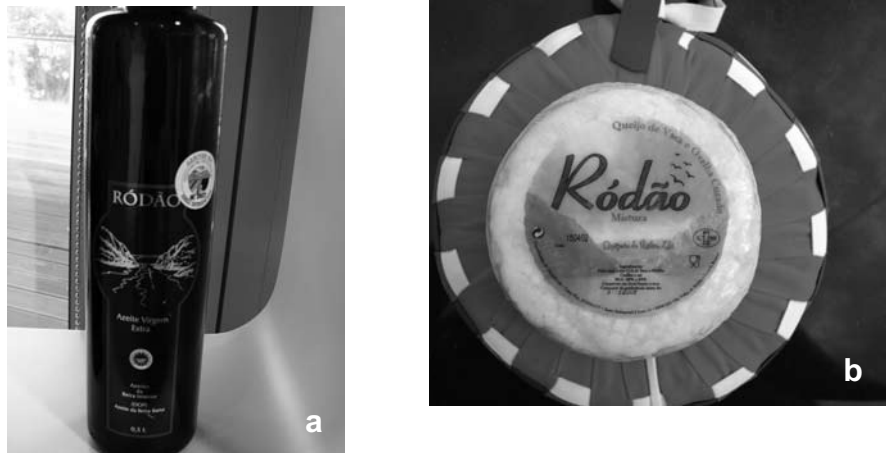


FIGURE 5: Ródão traditional products using the geomonument as brand. **a** – olive oil, **b** – cheese.

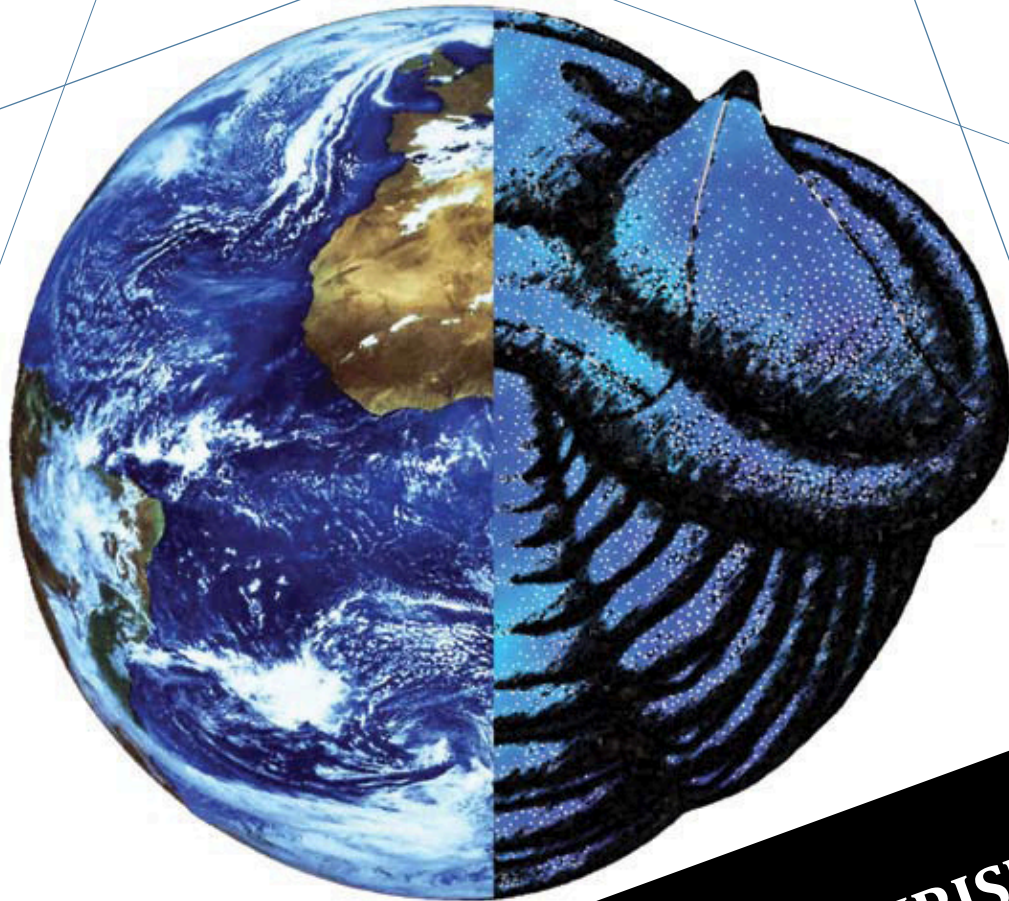
Every year Geopark Naturtejo promotes a calendar of GeoProgrammes, such as the GeoDinners or the GeoTrails, which has the acme during the European Geoparks Week (Fig. 6), all with Geodiversity as scenery and taking many public (social) and private (economic) institutions to get involved.

The sustainable local economy involves the creation of tourism backup infrastructures, namely lodging, restaurants, cultural animation, museums, exomuseums and interpretive centers and infopoints, outdoor activities and shops. It is important a good geotourism strategy with intervenients from different sectors of society. Geoparks need a strong commitment of the local community through local administration, local NGOs and local companies.

Naturtejo encourages new projects in the territory and promote them in its activities. This is as long-term project and very innovative because the geological features that have been always present in the region for the local people now can be economically exploited through new opportunities for business and sustainable explored for the benefit of people .



FIGURE 6: GeoTrails created for the BOOM Festival 2008.



NEW CHALLENGES WITH GEOTOURISM

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