Global Geotourism Perspectives

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Geotourism and Geoparks in Brazil

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Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited, Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ
http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com

Design and setting by P.K. McBride

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Introduction

This chapter explores geotourism in Brazil by examining past activities and considering the potential for new geoparks. It includes recommendations to develop geotourism in suitable areas and presents examples of geological heritage interpretation.

Brazil is among a number of South American countries to have experienced a significant increase in tourists since the mid-1990s. In 1995 international tourists numbered 2 million, but by 2007 this had increased to 5 million (UNTWO, 2008). Tourism is now an important sector of economic development. By prioritizing tourism, Brazil is following two global trends: tourism directed at the international market; and an increase in specialized tourism, focusing on a growing interest in nature and the preference for better protected environments.

In the mid-1990s, Brazil had few geotourism projects and limited suitable infrastructure or trained professionals. The sector has improved since the Ministry of Tourism was established in 2003, facilitating the strategic development of national tourism through the creation and implementation of public policies. However, in spite of the efforts of the government and private enterprise, there remains a need for investment in new products and there is much still to be done by these two sectors in terms of offering quality tourism products. This, combined with appropriate access and infrastructure, will attract further tourists. Once this is achieved, in conjunction with planning, it will be possible to take advantage of the great geotourism potential of Brazil.

Geoparks and geotourism in Brazil

Brazil has only one geopark[1] acknowledged by UNESCO – the first of the southern hemisphere and the Americas. The Araripe Geopark (Figure 10.1), established in Ceará in 2006, has nine units (geotopes) and fits well into the Global Network of Geoparks. It is of great interest, demonstrating significant geological

features and evidence of life dating back 110 million years. The area has one of the most important fossiliferous deposits in the world – the fossils of the Santana Formation[2] – which provide evidence of the evolutional history of the Earth. These deposits display the rich fauna and flora of these ancient environments, with both aquatic and terrestrial elements exceptionally well preserved.

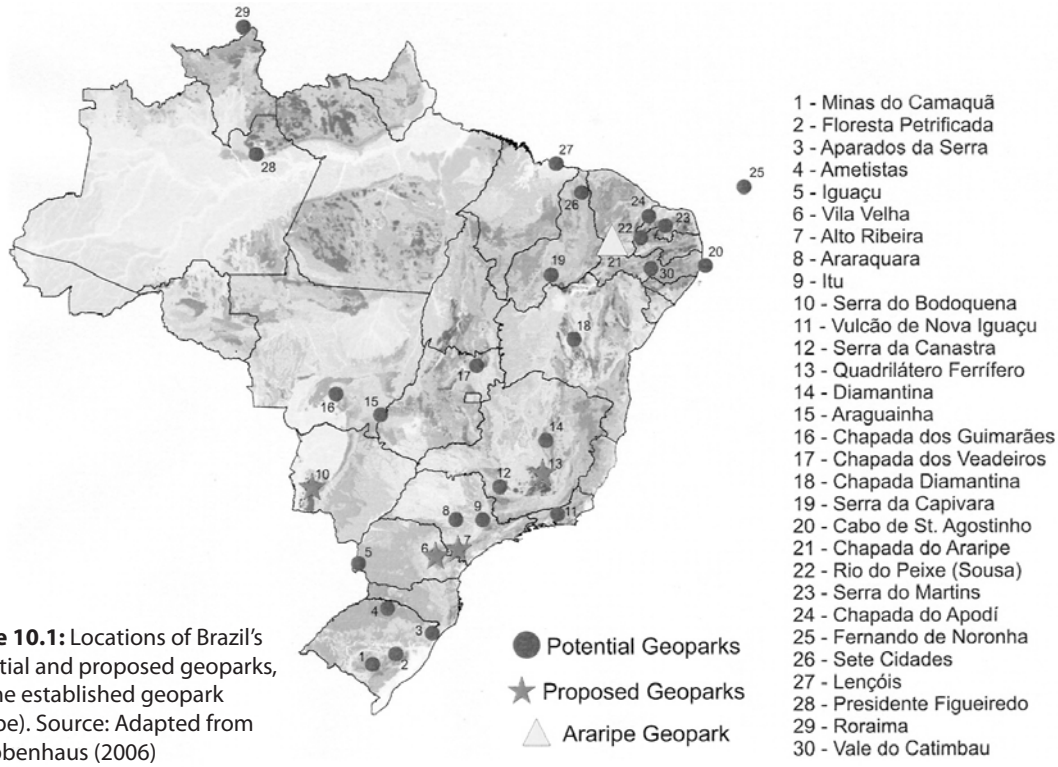

Figure 10.1: Locations of Brazil's potential and proposed geoparks, and the established geopark (Araripe). Source: Adapted from Schobbenhaus (2006)

Guimarães *et al*. (2009) report on other areas of Brazil where work has been directed into developing future candidates for the Global Network of Geoparks. These are as follows:

- Campos Gerais area of the State of Paraná: this region has a rich geodiversity and geological heritage, including: Devonian marine fossils (invertebrates of the Malvinokaffric Realm and ichnofossils such as *Cruziana*, *Rusophycus* and *Planolites*); a great number of stratotypes from paleozoic units of the Paraná Basin (one of the principal intracratonic basins of the South American Platform); and a very well preserved record of the Gondwana glaciogenic features of the Permo-Carboniferous Age (diamictites, striated pavements, dropstones) (Guimaraes *et al*., 2008). Geomorphological heritage is also well expressed, with tectono-magmatic controlled canyons (Cretaceous dyke swarm, faults and fractures related to the South-Atlantic opening), high escarpments, and an example of a quartz-sandstone regional karstic landscape with features like ruiniform relief, underground segments of water streams, and sinkholes.