



# **NEW CHALLENGES WITH GEOTOURISM**

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## **GEOSCIENCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: TRAINING PROFESSIONALS TO DEVELOP EDUCATION PROJECTS**

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Geoparks are centers for instruction and diffusion in Earth Sciences. They are visited by people from different cultural levels and ages that search for knowledge and funny activities on Geology, Paleontology, Archaeology, History and Environment. Receiving heterogeneous public is a challenge. To satisfy interests ranging from simple curiosity to the science education and from new scientific research, it is necessary the presence of a professional who works in the interface between Education and Geosciences. To form professionals capable of executing the work described above, the University of São Paulo (USP) was the pioneering institution in Brazil to consider an undergraduate course in Geosciences and Environmental Education Teaching Degree (Toledo *et al* 2005). The course was created in 2003 and is the only one in which the main focus is the geosciences educator. This professional is able to provide a complex view of nature, especially with respect to the relationship between the history of life and the geological history of planet Earth. The course is based on lectures that address Geological and Environmental Sciences, allowing students to learn the strategies and applied methodologies of Geosciences Education using field activities and environmental studies applied to the environmental education (Compiani 2002). To Compiani (1996) geology knowledge is related to action of the society in nature and it permits social inclusion by means of science understanding, promoting a real perception of the world.

The organization of the first Geopark in Brazil - Araripe Geopark, in 2006, known by the fossil assemblages and preservation, requires a professional with a new profile. This person must be able to work with the public, developing research, teaching to other professionals methods for working on Environmental Sciences, especially in local scope. Such an action contributes for spreading the culture on the environmental heritage represented by the Geoparks and in the awareness on the importance of preservation of the natural resources. The creation of the Araripe Geopark and the perspective of more other four geoparks, brings an excellent perspective of regional development for Brazil, for which USP can contribute through the formation of specialized professionals.

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