

SICSS2011 ABSTRACT

Conception of a good-practices guide to the nature based tourism in the Azores (Portugal)**Pierre Laulhe^{1,2}, D. Caetano², D. Estima^{1,2} & M. A. Ventura¹**¹ CIBIO-Azores and CCPA; Universidade dos Açores, Ponta Delgada, Portugalplaulhe@uac.pt; mateus@uac.pt; destima@uac.pt² Associação Amigos dos Açores, Ponta Delgada, Portugalamigosdosacores@amigosdosacores.pt

Azorean archipelago, located in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean, is packed with natural treasures well known in most parts of the world. In order to preserve them, the Portuguese government has set up a net of protected areas in all nine islands of the archipelago, known as "Island Parks". Within these protected landscape we find Natura 2000 network, built upon two EC Directives: the Habitats and Birds Directives.

Apart from a strict conservation objective, Natura 2000 is supposed to provide some sort of income to local communities, a goal that can be achieved through tourism. But tourism and conservation can collide unless the activities practiced in those areas, follow a set of rules aimed at its preservation.

Because tourism usually has impacts upon the environment where it is practiced (e.g. soil erosion, habitat destruction, pollution), more and more tourists become sensitive to environmental protection. Tourism of Nature and Ecotourism are growing sectors within Azorean tourism. Thus, our main concern is to build a field guide of good-practices, to the touristy activities practiced in the protected areas of the Azores.

We will present, in pocket guidebooks, all out-door activities that can be practiced on the islands, and where they may occur within each island. According to location, rules and good practices will be explained. A parallel will be established between them and biodiversity conservation. As a result, tourists will be informed about potential dangers to endemic fauna and flora, and be aware of how to protect them by respecting those rules. Two different guides will focus marine and terrestrial activities. The marine guidebook will refer to ludic fishing, snorkeling and scuba-diving, while the terrestrial one will resume the existing trails, speleology, bicycle and climbing.

Azores are on the way to have their own guidebook where environment, biology and tourism are mixed together. With, on one hand, its scientific soundness and on the other handy aspects, this guide provides clues to appreciate outdoor-activities' and beautiful places' true worth.