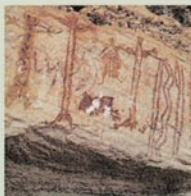




**SERRA DA
CAPIVARA
NATIONAL PARK**

**Inter-American Development Bank
Atrium, June 14-August 4, 1995**

2 Prehistory



Archeological digs in the park have brought to light important information about the early peoples of the Americas, showing that, contrary to what was believed before, human beings appeared in South America much earlier than 30,000 years ago.

Excavations, core samples, and collection of surface remains tell us a great deal about the populations that occupied the region at least 60,000 years before the arrival of European colonists.

Excavations in Toca do Boqueirão da Pedra Furada uncovered remains that go back 48,000 years, according to the Carbon 14 method used to date them. Seventeen-thousand-year-old paint remains were discovered that are probably the first expressions of prehistoric American art. Boqueirão da Pedra Furada is now considered one of the oldest and most important archeological sites in the Americas.

After the Pleistocene era, hunter-gatherers remained in the region, adapting themselves to the changes in climate. More people inhabited the park 8,000 years ago than live there today. They made most of the paintings that have been found.

By 9,200 years ago, these people had learned to polish stone into weapons, as the hatchet found in Toca do Sítio do Meio shows. The oldest known example of ceramics in the Americas, dating back to 8,960 years ago, was found in the same area.

From three thousand years ago, several groups of potters and farmers had shared this land until they were wiped out by white settlers.➤

3 Cultural Patrimony



When human beings first arrived in Serra da Capivara about 60,000 years ago, they found lush tropical forests and savannahs teeming with wildlife. These prehistoric people left behind them paintings and rock carvings of animals both extinct and still alive today. They also depicted their every-day life, rituals, and religion.

Over 12 centuries, design and painting techniques evolved, allowing us to follow the people's artistic and cultural development through their paintings and carvings. Distinct techniques define successive styles.

There is a strong narrative sense to this art. The dances depicted transmit a sense of dynamism and rhythm. Hunting scenes show the variety of animals that existed and the custom of hunting in groups when pursuing dangerous creatures like the jaguar.

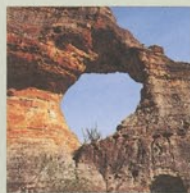
Sex was also a favorite theme, and violence was represented as well. In some scenes, captives appear to be bound to posts and beaten. In others, groups are locked in battle.➤

4 The Region



Cattle ranchers came late to southeastern Piauí. They wiped out the indigenous groups that had sought refuge in the region. These newly arrived colonists tried to adapt to the difficult climate the agricultural methods they had found effective in areas with more rainfall. As a result, the population gradually grew poorer and suffered hunger and malnutrition. In times of drought, they drilled wells to reach the salty groundwater. Lack of basic education and health services worsened their situation.➤

5 Topography and Climate



Serra da Capivara National Park covers 129,140 hectares. Its circumference is 214 kilometers. The park is situated at a geological frontier and encompasses three contiguous land formations. To the west lie sandstone mesas. In the center is an escarpment, one of the most important elevations in the northeast. To the east is a vast, eroded plain covered by sediment. This distinctive topography has allowed diverse ecosystems to develop side-by-side.

The average annual temperature is high at 28° C (82.4° F). June is the coolest month, when the temperature averages 25° C (77° F). The hottest part of the year corresponds to the beginning of the rainy season, when the average temperature reaches 31° C (87.8° F).

The rivers are seasonal. The most important is Piauí, one of the tributaries of the Parnaíba River watershed.

The area's climate underwent a very clear evolution. Until about 12,000 years ago, the region had a damp, tropical climate and was covered by forests. The level of rainfall then began to decline, and the current semiarid climate settled in some 10,000 years ago.

6 Living Things



Flora Two distinct seasons—the wet and the dry—transform the landscape of Serra da Capivara. The park is covered by *caatinga*, vegetation typical of the semiarid northeast. Most species are deciduous and lose their leaves during the dry season. No sooner have the first rains begun to fall than the leaves and flowers sprout, and the once-desolate countryside explodes in greens and other colors.

The park is home to an profusion of spiny plants, of vines, of cactuses and bromeliads. The grass cover and this herbaceous tapestry are affected by the degree of dryness, the type of soil, and, above all, by the presence of man.

Fauna Over-hunting has decimated the park's wildlife. Rodents, however, abound, especially the *mocó*, a species of guinea pig. There are also four kinds of armadillo (*tatu*), one of which is in danger of extinction. Great anteaters are also found, although they are rare, but the small anteater is fairly common. The park is home to saki monkeys, capuchin monkeys, and howler monkeys. Jaguars, wildcats, wild boars, and deer are now seen more frequently in Serra da Capivara since the first conservation efforts began.

In the region, 208 species of birds have been identified. These include macaws, king vultures, buzzard eagles, herons, guans, partridge-like *inhambus*, cormorants, swallows, Brazilian blue grosbeaks, orioles, and woodpeckers.

There are also many reptiles such as lizards and chameleons. Seventeen species of snakes live in the park.

Little is known about Serra da Capivara's other inhabitants. There are many insects that have never been studied.

In prehistoric times, when the area enjoyed a humid tropical climate, fauna were more diverse. Horses, mastodons, llamas, giant armadillos, giant sloths, saber-toothed tigers, capybaras, and marsh deer roamed what is today the park. Unable to endure the change in climate, these animals gradually disappeared. They had probably died out completely 8,000 years ago.

7-8 Park Conservation and Buffer Zones



The poor who lived around the park's 129,000 hectares often encroached upon Serra da Capivara territory in their struggle to survive. They hunted indiscriminately, burned land to clear it for crops, and felled trees in search of valuable hardwoods.

These practices seriously disrupted the ecological balance, endangering the region's cultural wealth. Species such as the anteater and other insect eaters teetered on the brink of extinction. Natural predators disappeared, and the termite population exploded. Termites built their structures at important prehistoric sites, destroying some of the rock paintings the human inhabitants had left behind.

To protect the national park, FUMDHAM adopted a policy designed to promote socioeconomic development in the desperately poor areas bordering the Serra da Capivara. With help from institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank and Terra Nuova and from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil's Ministry of Education, and the government of the State of Piauí, buffer zones were set up around the park to help local communities by providing schools, health posts, and housing for guides and technicians.

Flower and vegetable gardens were planted and are cared for by children, who receive three meals a day and basic education. The children are also trained in art, technology, and sports based on the historical and cultural traditions of the region.

A cultural and economic evolution is already underway. The southeastern part of Piauí has changed and will never return to its former poverty and hopelessness. New generations now count on 500 centuries of history and a limitless future. ➤

9 Apiculture



With support from the Inter-American Development Bank, a small beekeeping project designed to provide additional income for the local population began in 1993. The project offers training, hives and equipment, and marketing alternatives for honey and other apiculture products. Children also have the opportunity to study apiculture in the buffer-zone schools.

The project has several objectives—protect the beehives from depredation, increase pollenization of park vegetation, and provide additional income for the local people through nontraditional productive activities. ➤

10 Ecotourism and Self-Sustainability



The Foundation Museum of American Man has made 22 archeological sites and limestone caverns accessible to tourists. This ecotourism project integrates park conservation with education, health services, and training for the local people.

Small enterprises have sprung up to provide for the needs of park visitors. The double objective is to make the Serra da Capivara self-sustaining and, thus, ultimately to preserve it and to enable the local people to make a living through ecotourism. The Inter-American Development Bank supports these objectives. ➤

1 Serra da Capivara National Park



Brazil's archeologically significant Serra da Capivara National Park, in the northeastern state of Piauí, encompasses dense concentrations of sites rich in prehistoric paintings and rock carvings. This ancient art depicts scenes from the ceremonies and day-to-day life of the ethnic groups that first inhabited the area thousands of years ago, narrating their cultural evolution over the centuries. These sites have been preserved through the millennia thanks to an ecological balance that is now being threatened. Brazil established Serra da Capivara as a national park to protect this, its most important prehistoric cultural patrimony. In 1991, UNESCO declared Serra da Capivara a World Heritage Site.

An abundance of now-extinct plants and animals once inhabited the park, which today is home to several rare species. Diverse ecosystems evolved side-by-side because of Serra da Capivara's distinctively varied topography.

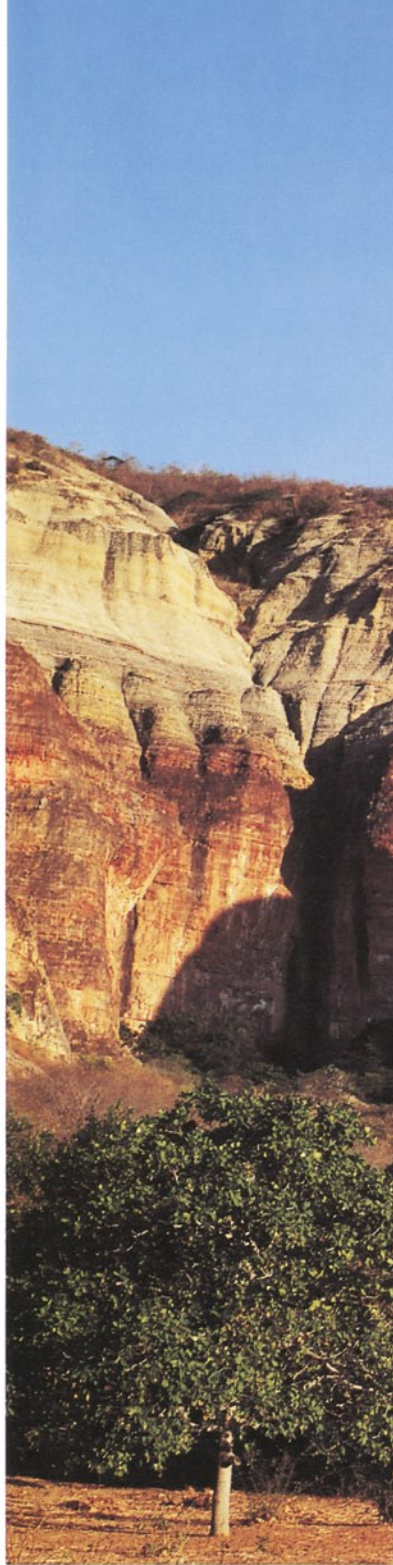
The surrounding populations live in extreme poverty. Because the area's climate is so harsh and so dependent on the rains, the local people have often had to despoil the park in order to survive. Protecting Serra da Capivara necessarily includes improving living conditions for the people in the buffer zones established around the park through education, health services, and employment generation.

The nonprofit Foundation Museum of American Man (FUMDHAM) was created to conserve the park and stimulate economic and social development in the region. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has supported ecologically sound economic development in the area through a beekeeping project in the park's Environmentally Protected Zone. Beekeeping provides an alternative income source year-round for each of the project's participating families.

With the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), FUMDHAM administers Serra da Capivara, overseeing ecological and cultural tourism at the archeological sites to ensure that this important heritage is not endangered. The IDB also supports this project by promoting tourism, which encourages production and services that will contribute to the region's development.

Preserving this cultural and natural patrimony spurs development in neglected areas, enabling local populations to reach an equilibrium with nature and discouraging the trend of migration from the countryside to the city.

This exhibit focuses on the topography and climate of Serra da Capivara, its flora and fauna, prehistory, cultural heritage, buffer zones, surrounding region, park conservation, apiculture, and ecotourism and sustainable development.



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