



AROUCA DECLARATION

The International Congress of Geotourism, under the auspices of UNESCO, took place in the Arouca Geopark (Portugal) from 9th to 13th November 2011. The theme was Geotourism in Action - Arouca 2011. As result of the discussions that took place during this event, the Organizing Committee, in keeping with the principles put forth by the Center for Sustainable Destinations – National Geographic Society presents the Arouca Declaration, which establishes the following:

1. We recognize that there is a need to clarify the concept of geotourism. We therefore believe that geotourism should be defined as tourism which sustains and enhances the identity of a territory, taking into consideration its geology, environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents. Geological tourism is one of the multiple components of geotourism.
2. Geological tourism is a basic tool for the conservation, dissemination and cherishing of the history of Life on Earth, including its dynamics and mechanisms. It enables visitors to understand a past of 4600 million years so as to view the present from another perspective and project possible shared futures for the Earth and humankind.
3. Appreciation of geological heritage should try to break new ground and prioritise the use of new technology over the use of traditional information posters.
4. Knowledge and information about geological heritage is often not presented a way that is easily understood by the general public. As a rule, this information comes in the style of scientific treatises which, besides using highly specialised language, leave visitors in the dark and limit touristic impact. Information must be accessible and intelligible for the general public, presented in a few basic concepts and with clarity, resulting in the combined efforts of scientists, interpretation experts and designers.
5. We thus believe the time has come to resurrect the basic principles of interpretation proposed in 1957 by Freeman Tilden and apply them to geological heritage:
 - Any presentation of geological heritage that does not somehow relate to something in the personal experience of the visitor will be sterile;
 - Information is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based on information. The two things are entirely different, but all interpretation includes information;
 - The interpretation of a natural space must provoke and arouse curiosity and emotion much more than teaching;
6. We encourage territories to develop geotourism focused not only on the environment and geological heritage, but also on cultural, historical and scenic value. In this sense, we encourage the effective involvement of local citizens and visitors, so they are not restricted to the role of tourist spectators, thus helping to build a local identity and promote what is authentic and unique in the territory. In this way we ensure that the territory and its inhabitants obtain environmental integrity, social justice and sustainable economic development.

Arouca (Arouca Geopark, Portugal), 12th November 2011

