

# THE GEODIVERSITY OF THE SALESÓPOLIS-CARAGUATATUBA TRAIL AND ITS POTENTIALITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE TOURISM

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**ABSTRACT:** The Salesópolis-Caraguatatuba trail is an unpaved road denominated by the São Paulo Mountain Bike Tourism like “Petrobrás Road”. With a high sinuosity, sharp curves and steep hillsides, the track begins at the crossing with the Pedro Eroles Highway, SP-88, in Salesópolis, and extending for 75 km up to its intersection with the Rio-Santos Highway, BR-101/SP-55, in Caraguatatuba. Spring fed streams, rivers, waterfalls, extraordinary rock exposures, prominent relief and a lush vegetation of the Atlantic Forest are some of the attractions that may be found along the trajectory. In geological terms, the region reveals a visible contrast among the basement lithological units, magmatic intrusion types and different periods of tectonic events. From the geomorphological viewpoint, a large part of the trail is characterised by a landform composed of hills with steep scarps and flattened tops, which belong to the Serra do Mar orogenic system. Nevertheless, in the final stretch, there is a clear domain of coastal plain. The superficial drainage pattern is controlled by the basement rocks structure, as well as by the regional tectonic setting. In some places, steep slopes and small valleys unite in an exceptional shape forming a small watershed with a singular panoramic view. Other particularities worth mentioning are the structures that were formed by the weathering and erosion action on igneous and metamorphic rocks. The balancing boulders, massive bedrock and spheroidal weathering are the most frequent.

In these times of heightened environmental awareness, understanding the forces of the past geological processes that shape each relief of terrestrial surface is essential for predicting how the present similar transformations may influence our life in the future. In this way, from a seeming stability of the igneous and metamorphic rock blocks to the dynamic coastal environments, the trail is an unending source of information for reconstructing a long, complex and important geological history. In the broader context, these data enable a relationship among rock, climate, topography and the types of soil, which in turn exert strong controls on the diversity of the vegetal and animal communities. Therefore, the importance of preserving these geological records, which have been moulded over hundreds millions of years and that may be observed along the trail, is absolutely necessary.

The Salesópolis-Caraguatatuba trail has stunning scenery for the development of nature tourism. Situated a little more than 100 km from the São Paulo city centre, it offers a wide range of natural resources. Some of the recreational activities include visits to the Tietê river spring, outdoor exercises of moderate intensity physical activity (walking, bicycling), adventure sport, off-road, landscape photography. Likewise, it is possible to discover valleys, streams, waterfalls and the unusual shapes of the rocks exposed.

**KEYWORDS:** SALESÓPOLIS-CARAGUATATUBA, GEODIVERSITY, NATURE TOURISM.