THE ATLANTIC FOREST: A NATURAL AND CULTURAL SPECTACLE

The Atlantic Forest is one of the most emblematic biomes in the world. Within its territory, this biome holds natural and cultural treasures, some of Brazil’s largest cities, and over 120 million inhabitants. Brazilian history was built in the Atlantic Forest which has also witnessed the country’s development. However, most of the landscapes have been transformed by human activities, and natural resources have been intensively explored. All this has affected the environmental balance and the quality of life of the Atlantic Forest inhabitants. The good news is that we can still find a significant portion of well-preserved forest! Along the coast of São Paulo, Paraná and Santa Catarina states is located the largest remnant of this biome, called the Atlantic Forest Great Reserve. This 4.5-million-hectare natural area is home to a huge diversity of wildlife, mountains, caves, waterfalls, bayous, mangroves and beaches, as well as local communities. It is up to us to protect this treasure from the risk of disappearance.

The economic development in this region has in the Full Nature framework its greatest source. The Atlantic Forest is a Brazilian natural heritage and must be valued, recognized and preserved by all of us!

PROTECTED AREAS AND FULL NATURE

The Full Nature framework considers the ecological integrity and the peaceful coexistence between society and the natural environments as the basis for a green and restorative economy, especially in isolated and disorganized rural areas. Nature conservation should not seem as an alternative to development, but rather as an economic opportunity to generate income with high added value. Natural and cultural attractions create opportunities for new generations of people to have the opportunity to stay in their lands.

The Atlantic Forest Great Reserve has several Public and Private Protected Areas accounting for 24% of its territory. Additionally, it is internationally recognized as a Biosphere Reserve and a UNESCO Natural Heritage Centre. The region receives thousands of visitors every year. In this view, new businesses have been established. However, not all activities take into consideration nature conservation. Full Nature framework was designed as a unifying cause to ensure that development is sustainable and long-lasting. And, most importantly, to guarantee that protected areas are also considered as economic assets that benefit the entire society.

WILDLIFE

The environmental characteristics of the Atlantic Forest make it one of the places with the largest diversity of species on the planet. The Atlantic Forest Great Reserve is today the main shelter of this biome for endangered species such as jaguars (Panthera onca), Southern muriquis (Brachyteles piacentinus), the largest primates in the Americas, and tapirs (Tapirus terrestris), the largest terrestrial mammal in South America. The endearing nature harbors populations of top predators like cougars (Puma concolor) and black bear (Ursus americanus), but also other species such as the adorably Guiana dolphin (Sotalia guianensis) and, with some luck, the impressive jumps of the giant oceanic manta ray (Manta biros). Finally, the Atlantic forest is home to species such as the adorable Guiana dolphin (Sotalia guianensis) and, with some luck, the impressive jumps of the giant oceanic manta ray (Manta biros), a bird with intense red feathers that almost became extinct in this region, can be spotted once again. Its presence brings colors to the sky in this coastal area.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

In this region, human occupation existed before the European colonization. Thus, we have a magnificent ethnological collection. Some hills up to 30 meters high are actually “sambaquis” or middens, deposits of shells and residues of the nomadic people who lived here thousands of years ago. The canyons, traditional inhabitants of the caatinga, have originated from the miscegenation of Indians, Africans and Europeans. The manufacture of canoes, artisanal fishing, extraction activities, land cultivation and handicrafts are part of their rich culture. The region’s folklore is best represented by the Fandango Caixeira, a musical-choreo- graphic-poetic and festive expression, that is officially recognized as “Brazilian Intangible Cultural Heritage.” Thanks to the diversity of environments and processes, there is a huge variety of traditional groups, indigenous, quilombolas and quilombolas that can remain and thrive in their lands while their traditions are respected and appreciated.

We can identify the Portuguese heritage in the region’s colonial architecture and typical cuisines such as the “bauru” – a stewed made in a clay pot with canoa flour, rice, and bananas as side-dish.

TOURISM AND LEISURE

The Atlantic Forest Great Reserve includes four historic cities that are officially protected by the Brazilian National Institute of Artistic and Historic Heritage – São Francisco do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo and Paraná. One of the two oldest towns in Brazil – Guarapuava-PR and Cananéia-SP, which are full of charming colonial architecture. Rustic and colorful houses made of stone, sand and whale oil decorate the historic centers with their pedestrian streets, small squares and bandstands. Throughout the year, cultural festivals fill up these cities by bringing together music, theater, cinema, fine arts, and gastronomy, attracting artists and visitors from all over Brazil. For those who like the excitement of connecting with nature, it is possible to have adventures with surfers, kayakers or rafters on the streets. It is also possible to jump a boat trip, to dive, to climb on the mountains, hiking or cycling on trails in the middle of forests. There are activities for all ages and ages. After an intense day of recreation, there is nothing better than to enjoy the hospitality and cuisine of a hotel resort for all budgets.

The region is well connected thanks to highways and by the proximity to international airports such as São Paulo–Guarulhos (GRU) and Curitiba International–Alfonso Pena (CWB). All this makes it easier to welcome visitors.

In the coastal region of the Atlantic Forest Great Reserve, there are attractions for all tastes: historic towns or deserted beaches, open sea or bays, and tourists or wild islands. There are hundreds of kilometers of jagged coastline, bathed by the Atlantic Ocean, inviting locals and tourists for a visit. For those who like to surf, there are appropriate and beautiful beaches! In the bays, the encounter of oceanic predators such as the red-tailed amazon (Amazona viridigenalis) and white-necked harriers (Butastur leucurus), tiny and colorful frogs, like the Amadonastur lacernulatus, tiny and colorful frogs, like the Amadonastur lacernulatus. Its presence brings colors to the sky in this coastal area.

BAYs, BEACHES AND ISLANDS

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THE LANDSCAPES OF THE ATLANTIC FOREST

ARAUCARIA FOREST

The Atlantic Forest Great Reserve hosts a few remnants of this symbolic ecosystem from the South of Brazil. Dominated by prehistoric Araucaria trees, present in the Jurassic period (more than 200 million years ago), the plant formation is well-adapted to cold climate from winter. The forest shares space with mountain-grasslands and its rocky outcrops.

MOUNTAIN GRASSLANDS AND THICKETS

These are typical habitats located on the Serra do Mar mountain tops. Hard physical conditions such as high altitude, low temperatures and strong winds prevent the establishment of forests, and promote a high diversity of grasses and small trees, many of which are endemic to these habitats. Amazing views wait for climbers visiting these environments!

CLOUD FORESTS

Right below the previous habitat, the combination of milder temperatures, slower winds and high humidity gives place to these mysterious forests where mid-sized trees are covered by epiphytes, like orchids and bromeliads. These forests are home to the tiny, endemic and colorful Bothriophyllum frogs, and act as sources of water for millions of people.

LOWLAND RAINFORESTS

Below 800 meters, where slopes become gentler, the combination of rich soils with high precipitations allow the establishment of a bewildering array of large and diverse trees that host one of the most biodiverse view habitats in the World. These lowland forests are at immeasurable and spectacular as those in the Amazon, and show the largest concentrations of large mammals and birds.

MARSHES AND LAGOONS

Where running water slows down, many marshes and lagoons concentrate around rivers and springs. Those habitats are priority areas for conservation, hosting many amphibians and reptiles. Also, this habitat hosts the only known population of the endangered Paraná anhinga. Estuaries and lagoons concentrate around the Atlantic Forest Great Reserve houses numerous species of marine birds, which snake through the region, serving to small towns and large cities across this region.

WAYS AND WATERFALLS

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RIVERS AND WATERFALLS

The Atlantic Forest Great Reserve houses numerous rivers, creeks and waterfalls, which make through the forest bringing life, movement and freshness. They provide space to aquatic recreational activities such as bathing, rafting and kayaking. Crystaline and abundant water is provided by local forests throughout the year, serving to small towns and large cities across this region.

BAYS AND MANGROVES

The realm of mangrove forests is composed of resistant trees, whose roots are adapted to the tides and high salinity. The combination of nurseries with shelter and rich productivity contains an essential nursery for marine life. A four route through these vast and wild lakes is an unforgettable experience, full of sightings of native fish, two species of dolphins and salt-tailed amarals.

BAYS AND BEACHES

Estuaries are coastal forests that grow on sandy soils with strong influence from the sea. The dunes present along the coast offer a dynamic environment, important for native species and leisure space for people. This region also hosts excellent samples of pristine beaches for the enjoyment of any visitor, which also serve as nesting grounds for green turtles, many of which are endemic to Brazil. Dominated by prehistoric Araucaria trees, present in the Jurassic period (more than 200 million years ago), the plant formation is well-adapted to cold climate from winter. The forest shares space with mountain-grasslands and its rocky outcrops.

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OCEAN AND ISLANDS

The Atlantic Ocean finds in this region one of its richest portions within Brazil. Emerarures and lagoons guarantee the survival of two species of marine life and also the possibility of performing diving and sport-fishing. The Atlantic Forest Great Reserve includes the marine platform up to 50 meters deep, peppered with several islands that contain both sandy beaches and rocky shores.