

# Tourism Focus

A regular section reporting on developments in the field of sustainable tourism,  
and on the activities of the UNEP Tourism Programme



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## Roteiros de Charme Associação de Hotéis (Brazil): combining hospitality and environmental consciousness

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### Abstract

*The Brazilian Roteiros de Charme Associação de Hotéis, a non-profit entity grouping 30 independent hotels, inns and ecological refuges, has adopted a voluntary Environmental Code of Conduct. Besides their commitment to environmental protection, many Roteiros de Charme members also participate in projects specifically concerned with preservation of fauna, flora or cultural heritage. Information about the association and the Code of Conduct is available in English, Spanish and Portuguese on [www.roteirosdecharme.com.br](http://www.roteirosdecharme.com.br).*

### Résumé

*L'association brésilienne Roteiros de Charme Associação de Hotéis, qui regroupe 30 hôtels, auberges et refuges écologiques indépendants, a adopté un code de conduite volontaire pour la protection de l'environnement. Outre leur engagement de protéger l'environnement, de nombreux membres de l'association participent également à des projets spécifiques de préservation de la faune, de la flore ou du patrimoine culturel. Des renseignements sur l'association et son code de conduite sont disponibles sur Internet en anglais, espagnol et portugais : [www.roteirosdecharme.com.br](http://www.roteirosdecharme.com.br).*

### Resumen

*Roteiros de Charme Associação de Hotéis, organización brasileña de fines no lucrativos que reagrupa a 30 hoteles, hostales y refugios ecológicos independientes, ha adoptado voluntariamente un Código de Conducta Ambiental. Además de comprometerse a proteger el entorno, muchos de sus miembros participan en proyectos específicos de preservación de la fauna, la flora o el legado cultural. Encontrará información sobre la asociación y el código de conducta en inglés, español y portugués en: [www.roteirosdecharme.com.br](http://www.roteirosdecharme.com.br).*

The resolutions adopted by the UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm in 1972 served as the basis for environmental legislation in many countries. In Brazil, one of the first major victories came in 1985 with the creation of the *Ação Civil Pública* ("Public Civil Suit"). It was furthered by the *Código de Defesa do Consumidor* ("Consumer Defence Code"), which permitted organized social groups such as NGOs to defend their interests. The Constitution of 1988 defined the environment as an asset for the common use of the people. It invested the government with powers, and with the duty, to protect the soil, forests and seas. It also empowered municipalities to undertake land use planning. What had previously been a federal government prerogative has therefore become a

state and municipal responsibility as well.

Just as important as adequate and updated environmental legislation, usually understood in only a general way by the majority of the population, are voluntary codes of environmental conduct. These were advocated in the action plan approved by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. While environmental legislation is strict but not always effective, voluntary codes of conduct have proven quite efficient and have produced significant results. As adoption of such codes does not result from the coercive power of the State, but rather from the awareness and will of an enterprise and those who are part of it, their standards are more easily accepted and are not resisted as undue interference with their rights.

An example of such a programme of environmental consciousness was developed at the Hotel Rosa dos Ventos at Teresópolis, in the State of Rio de Janeiro. This hotel (established in 1976) is perched 4000 feet above sea level in a mountainous 250-acre private park, of which 100 acres is preserved tropical forest with luxuriant foliage and a wide variety of birds. Following acquisition of the property in 1972, burning of pasture land and deforestation were totally eliminated. Since the initial planning, all construction has been restricted to existing pasture land and other areas that are already deforested, to preserve the remaining natural forest. Solar heating equipment has been used since the hotel began operating as a small inn 24 years ago. The manager and other employees are motivated to join the programme and participate in the results achieved.

This is by no means a costly social megaprogramme, but a stimulus to each person's day-to-day environmental practices. It focuses on simple measures with significant practical results, such as:

- ◆ encouraging maintenance of landscaping around the homes of employees and their families who live within the property limits, with monthly prizes for the best-kept garden, chosen by themselves;
- ◆ incentives for reducing energy wastage, rewarding those who consume less than the

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average for homes of equivalent size and standard in the surrounding area;

- ◆ incentives for reducing the hotel's energy consumed through offering a prize;
- ◆ an incentive for recycling solid waste produced by the hotel, such as bottles, cardboard boxes, newspapers and non-reusable equipment, through offering financial rewards to employees;
- ◆ encouraging participation by neighbours in the recycling programme, through sharing storage at appropriate locations so that minimum quantities required by collectors are obtained;
- ◆ donation of unserviceable bed, table and bath linen to charitable institutions;
- ◆ incentives for professional advancement through provision of adequate study conditions, a work schedule compatible with school hours, and absorption by the enterprise of all or part of the educational and transportation costs of employees and their families (e.g. facilities necessary for continuing employees' education, and medical and dental care, which are in accordance with the principles of a sustainable enterprise).

#### Development of the Code of Conduct

Aware of the power of diffusing ideas, and of the hotel industry's responsibility to make it possible to visit environmentally and culturally important locations, I was asked to develop an Environmental Code of Conduct for the Roteiros de Charme Associação de Hotéis, using the positive experience of the voluntary environmental programme implemented at my own hotel.

The Roteiros de Charme is a private non-profit entity grouping 30 Brazilian hotels, inns and ecological refuges. The majority are in historic towns, mountain villages, resort beaches and national parks. The independent member hotels, in addition to the characteristics required by the association to which they belong, share a common awareness of the need to preserve the environment and respect nature. With the support and unanimous approval of all associates, the Environmental Code of Conduct has been adopted and is being implemented with the full cooperation of partners, managers, employees and other collaborators.

The Code was drawn up using material obtained in Brazil, as well as the excellent publications and other information supplied by UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics. Through combining this material with my professional background as a lawyer and 14 years' experience as the principal administrator of the Hotel Rosa dos Ventos, the Environmental Code of Conduct was developed.

The goal of this work is to achieve the assessment, analysis and reduction of the hotel industry's environmental impacts. Its standards recognize, in context, the local social and economic reality, operational feasibility,

### ENVIRONMENTAL CODE OF CONDUCT

For sustainable development, the fulfillment of present needs cannot compromise the needs of future generations. With this in mind, we have incorporated our Environmental Code of Conduct into The Rules and Standards of this Association, with the following guidelines:

- \*To ensure the participation and support of our major partners, directors and managers in the implementation of environmentally friendly practices and to involve all those who participate in, or provide services to the Company, in the program.
- \*To identify and to mitigate environmental risks impacts, including in planning new projects and buildings, so as to conserve local scenery, fauna and flora.
- \*To control and to reduce the use of products that are hazardous or unfriendly to the environment, such as asbestos, CFCs, pesticides and toxic, corrosive, infectious, explosive and flammable materials.
- \*To respect religious and historical sites, the host population and their cultural values and traditions.
- \*The conservation of energy, by eliminating superfluous lighting and, wherever possible, using alternate sources of energy, low-power bulbs and automatic control equipment, such as timers, sensors and thermostats.
- \*The avoidance of wastage of water and the reduction of its consumption, checking for leaks, collecting and using rainwater whenever possible, and using showers, valves and equipment which allow for better control of water flow and use.
- \*The adoption of the 3Rs of environmental awareness: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. The analysis of the demand for recyclable materials and of the flow of the company's solid waste, with the identification of the major components of the waste produced so as to enable adequate storage and recycling. Avoidance of the use of non-recyclable disposable products and plastic containers.
- \*The elimination of indiscriminate incineration of waste, burning of pastures and deforestation.
- \*The avoidance of leakage of any untreated sewage or of chemical products hazardous to health into the sea, rivers, springs and reservoirs. The introduction of bacteria which consume organic matter in the traditional existing cesspits and the adoption of ecological cesspits in future projects located in areas not served by public sanitation.
- \*The reduction of noise and air pollution by reducing noise emissions and, whenever possible, the installation of exhaust-fan filters and the substitution of refrigerating gases by others which do not affect the ozone layer.

and the rights and expectations of our guests, without which we could not survive. It strives for a common objective, rather than conflict between environmental protection and the survival of an enterprise. There is no sustainable development without the enterprise, and consequently no employment. In accordance with these principles, some of the more radical actions which at first glance might have seemed more effective, such as "to eliminate", were replaced by "to reduce" and "to avoid" due to their unfeasibility in the present context. Actions that appear less stringent are nevertheless more easily implemented since they are more realistic. We prefer to consider as effective those environmental actions that are possible within a given cultural and economic context.

To gain the attention and elicit the interaction of guests, we have inserted the Environmental Code of Conduct guidelines in the *Guia Passaporte Roteiros de Charme* (Roteiros de Charme Passport Guide), an annual publication with a circulation of 50,000. We have included some of the practical actions taken and general information concerning our proposal to reduce water and energy consumption and solid waste generation. The Passport Guide, distributed to guests

and at hotel and tourism industry events and conventions, as well as through the major sponsoring brands, is the Association's principal means of communication. As it offers loyalty prizes, the Passport Guide is more valuable than the usual publicity folder or flyer and is therefore kept.

The Code of Conduct is posted in social areas of participating hotels and supplied to guests who show an interest. It is distributed to participants in seminars and conventions held at the hotels, to better disseminate (mainly among businessmen and opinion-makers) our work and ideals with regard to a more environmentally responsible society. Information about the Roteiros de Charme Associação de Hotéis and its Environmental Code of Conduct can also be obtained (in Portuguese, Spanish and English) on [www.roteirosdecharme.com.br](http://www.roteirosdecharme.com.br).

From an exclusively business-oriented viewpoint, such dissemination is even more important in that customers all over the world make purchasing decisions and hotel choices based on environmental considerations. Close to 50 million people are affiliated to NGOs. Many more, even if they do not participate in one of these organizations, are well-informed and give preference to environment-friendly products and services.

#### Trials with guests and research with hotel-keepers

Prior to initiating implementation of the Environmental Code, we ran trials at hotels of different types and categories, in different regions, to test ways to disseminate the programme to guests. Individual notices or wall panels concerning the need to protect the environment did not prove sufficient to secure guests' adherence or avoid eventual dissatisfaction, even if slight, on the part of one guest or another. The most effective way to provide information, capable of persuading guests to participate and avoiding discontent, was a letter addressed to them emphasizing that, in adopting environmental conduct standards, the hotel (i) had no intention of benefitting in any way or to the detriment of guests' well-being; (ii) was being extremely careful to preserve the rights of guests and had avoided any action that could reduce the expected comfort and quality of its service; and (iii) had the exclusive intention, by informing guests of the existence of a Code of Conduct adopted by the hotel, of motivating them to participate in a programme committed to life, with the main goal of assuring the right of their children and grandchildren to natural resources that are limited and finite.

In addition to the associated hotels, we contacted managers of hotels belonging to other international associations and chains, including large luxury hotels, in an effort to

Beyond members' commitment to the environment, many Roteiros de Charme hotels participate in projects specifically linked to preservation of fauna, flora and cultural heritage. Examples are:

- ◆ The Projeto Arara Azul, or Blue Macaw Project. The Blue Macaw (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*) Project is based at the Refúgio Ecológico Caiman (Caiman Ecological Retreat), a private ecological reserve with an area of 17,290 acres. This ecotourism venture is located 100 miles from Rio de Janeiro in the Pantanal, one of the world's major ecosystems in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, southwestern Brazil. The Pantanal concentrates 70% of the blue macaw population, which is near extinction because of changes in its habitat and human depredation. The Caiman Inn provides accommodation and maintains the project's infrastructure.
- ◆ The Projeto Peixe-Boi, or Manatee Project. The manatee (*Trichechus manatus*; *Trichechus munguis* in the Amazon region) is the largest marine mammal threatened with extinction. The Manary Praia Hotel, 1600 miles from Rio de Janeiro in Praia Ponta Negra, State of Rio Grande do Norte, helps support the Manatee Project. It promotes lectures and seminars on environmental preservation and contributes income from the sale of products including miniatures of the animal made by the families of fishermen who used to catch the manatee and now make their living from its preservation.



► The Rosa dos Ventos Hotel. To preserve the forest and its fauna and flora, construction has always been restricted to existing pasture land and other already deforested areas. The hotel and other employees are motivated to join the environmental programme through prizes for reducing energy wastage and financial returns from sale of the hotel's solid waste and from recycling. Guests are encouraged to protect nature, and to birdwatch. A variety of birds can be seen along the miles of tracks on the property. They are listed on the website.

► Historic towns in the State of Minas Gerais. The towns of Ouro Preto and Tiradentes, which played an important role in Brazil's economy and history in the 18th century, have an extremely well-preserved heritage of colonial architecture. The Pousada do Mondago, a 1747 manor house in Ouro Preto (a small town inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List) was acquired 50 years ago by the family of the present owners. It has taken them the better part of the last 19 years to complete its restoration. In Tiradentes, the owners of the Solar da Ponte, have devoted many years to preserving the ambiance and decor of their colonial manor house to comfortably accommodate those who come to visit the Vilas do Ouro or "Golden Villages". Both hotels are deeply involved in environmental preservation, making information available on the areas and their local fauna, flora and culture, promoting lectures on local history and culture, and organizing guided and educational tours.

identify their fears and restrictions relating to adoption of an environmental programme. We reached the following conclusions.

The great majority of hotel owners, partners and administrators lack true awareness of the fact that, besides being good for the environment, adoption of environmental practices can provide considerable financial benefits for the enterprise directly resulting from reduced consumption of electricity, water and products. They do not realize that, without interfering with the quality of the services rendered, eliminating or at least partially reducing the enormous wastage that is constantly present in our activities can considerably improve productivity and put the company in tune with the modern world.

Luxury hotel and restaurant keepers are generally afraid to adopt environmental practices that entail even optional participation by their customers. Some prefer that guests not even be informed of the existence of any environmental programme adopted by the hotel, for fear of not meeting the expectations of comfort and quality of those who are willing to pay more for service. However, the necessity of protecting the environment is an issue reported in the daily media. It is of concern to all, including the most demanding guests.

Simply letting guests who stay more than one night decide when their bath linen should be changed has resulted in an average



Feeding a rescued manatee calf.

38% reduction of the volume to be washed. When appropriately informed, guests not only participated but even praised the hotel's initiative. No discontent or complaints arose whatsoever. All this leads us to conclude that receptivity and adherence to the environmental practices adopted depend directly on the level of information provided to guests, and not on the hotel's category, its daily rate, or the social and economic level of its customers.

#### Development of operational guidelines

To implement the Code of Conduct, The Roteiros de Charme took the following measures:

- ◆ It established guidelines for members' environmental quality management that initially considered their situations relative to water,

sewage, garbage collection and pollution control (with few exceptions, pollution control is only carried out effectively in capital cities and other major urban areas).

- ◆ It instructed hotel-keepers to choose someone on their staff to be generally responsible for the programme and, depending on the company's structure, persons to be responsible for each of the environmental programme's core aspects: water, energy and waste. Rooms, food and beverages, house-keeping and maintenance all have impacts. Everyone uses water, consumes energy and generates waste. It is therefore necessary for the head of each administrative division to participate, in order to oversee the efforts of direct

subordinates.

- ◆ It urged hotel-keepers, together with those responsible for their environmental programmes, to conduct an assessment of existing impacts. We suggested they prepare a checklist of all equipment and fixtures in rooms, bathrooms, social and service areas, gardens and swimming pool areas and ascertain eventual water, energy and product wastage.

- ◆ It disseminated, on a weekly basis, a short list of actions to be undertaken in each of the hotel's administrative divisions. Previous experience at the Hotel Rosa dos Ventos demonstrated that better results would be achieved through proposing a small number of individual actions every week, thus avoiding the risk of actions not being carried out or even of the programme being abandoned al-

together. In this Weekly Environmental Action Letter we addressed all aspects of the Code, suggesting administrative routines and measures that could be implemented. In this way we were able to propose essentially practical procedures relative to each part of the hotel, including those relating to appropriate use of electrical equipment, lighting, preventive maintenance, wastage of water, and the reduction, separation, warehousing and recycling of solid waste.

◆ It stimulated development of the programme's sustainability through continuous exchanges of information and suggestions between employers and employees, recording the results obtained so as to facilitate and provide a reduction of implementation costs.

Implementing and monitoring the Environmental Code of Conduct

The Association contracted a small team of recently graduated biologists, brimming with idealism and enthusiasm and led by a university professor, and prepared a three-phase plan for independent monitoring of our environmental programme. So far, the Association has covered not only most of the costs of the contracted team but also the time required and travel expenses of these and other professionals hired for the same purpose. Some associated hotels are over 1000 miles from our headquarters in Rio de Janeiro. The average cost to each hotel of the first phase (the audit) is around US\$ 3000, of which the Association covers two-thirds. For the remaining phases, costs are estimated at US\$ 2000 per hotel and per phase. To cover the costs, we are looking for partners and sponsors.

### Phase 1: First Independent Environmental Audit

Depending on the hotel, two to three days are required for analysis of information previously supplied by the hotel and for bibliographical research; three to five days for visiting the site, evaluation of existing impacts, meetings with proprietors and administrators, and personnel training; and two to three days for preparation of a report corresponding to the basic environmental assessment arising from the on-site visit. In other words, around seven to ten days of work per hotel, in addition to travel time, which gives a good idea of the programme's scope.

The report records the environmental impacts found and suggests goals for reducing them over the short, medium and long terms, taking into account the hotel's physical and geographical situation (e.g. city, historic town, beach, mountains, environmental protection area, national park area).

### Phase 2: Second Independent Monitoring Visit – follow-up and evaluation of results achieved

The second visit will occur 12 months after the first. We estimate that three to five days, plus travel time, will be necessary for the visit and preparation of the report. During



Dear Guest,

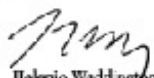
One of our major preoccupations, in establishing the Environmental Code of Conduct, was to assure your rights and satisfy your expectations of comfort while staying at a Roteiros de Charme Hotel, avoiding any action that could eventually lower the quality of service you have come to expect.

The softeners and other chemical products used in the laundry are highly pollutant. Absorbed by nature, they penetrate the water table, contaminating the water consumed by surrounding communities.

In leaving the decision of when your bath linen should be changed in your hands, we are not attempting, in any manner whatsoever, to obtain any benefit in detriment to your wellbeing. We only wish to avoid unnecessary washing, eventually of a towel that has not even been used, and avoid wasting water and energy.

Our purpose is exclusively to invite you to participate in our environmental preservation programme, the main goal of which is to assure the right of our children and grandchildren, the right of future generations, to finite natural resources.

Thank you very much,

  
Helenio Waddington  
President

the second visit, results achieved will be evaluated. Exchange of information and experience in regard to applying the Environmental Code of Conduct at other hotels will be encouraged. In addition to presentations, recycling activities and personnel training, meetings will be held with administrators. The visit will also serve to establish partnerships between the hotel and the surrounding community for purposes of promoting actions in the common interest. Within existing possibilities, partnerships will be established with local institutions, municipal authorities, local tourism, environmental and national heritage departments, community associations, NGOs, etc.

On the basis of the report of this second visit, we will attempt to establish common standards for all members of Roteiros de Charme in terms of ecological awareness.

### Phase 3: Third Independent Monitoring Visit – revision of the Environmental Code of Conduct

Up to 12 months following the second visit, the third visit will take place. We estimate that between three and five days will be necessary for the visit and report. Results will be evaluated and meetings held with administrators, in addition to presentations, recycling and personnel training.

By this time, the results of the two previous phases should have demonstrated to owners and administrators not only the importance of protecting the natural and cultural heritage, but also the economic significance of adopting the Environmental Code of Conduct. ◆

Based on an evaluation of the three first phases, the Environmental Code of Conduct is to be reviewed with the aim of establishing a common minimum standard for all the hotels. This minimum standard must be submitted to the Roteiros de Charme's General Meeting for approval, in accordance with its by-laws.

### Continuity of the programme

The programme's duration is indefinite. It needs to be refined continuously to better meet the objective of assuring sustainable development of the tourism industry, thus promoting economic development and so reducing social inequalities in regions that depend on this industry. Experience will show the road to take.

I have frequently visited almost all the hotels, inns and ecological refuges that are part of Roteiros de Charme. They are situated in all regions of Brazil, a country of continental dimensions. Brazil is full of diversity, contrasts and social inequalities, but at the same time unique in its natural beauty and in the cheerfulness of its people, who harbour no ostensible prejudice as to race or religion.

Experience with implementing the Environmental Code of Conduct leads us to believe in the continuity of this programme, in light of the receptivity of all those who have had the opportunity to participate. This encourages us to extend our commitment, which should not limit itself to the hotel association but should also reach out to host communities.

The interactive meetings we conduct are attended by all employees, including the most lowly. In these meetings we have observed the awakening of a sense of self-esteem that apparently did not exist before, and the emergence of a desire to participate in a programme whose success also depends on them. We have been able to spread the message of environmental conservation to their families, whom we also try to include in the programme. They are astounded to learn that by pouring oil or chemicals on the soil, instead of storing them in an appropriate location, they could be contaminating the water table that supplies their relatives' houses, even when these are situated miles away; or when they realize the potential benefits of not throwing away things that could be reused, recycled or even sold, and the fact that these benefits could be even greater if the efforts of friends and neighbours were joined with their own.

All the same, respect for nature and procedures that do not harm the environment can only exist in communities enjoying education, hygiene, and (consequently) good health. There is nothing more anti-ecological than poverty and misery – that is, lack of basic human necessities. The effectiveness of environmental legislation, and of codes of conduct, directly depends on the existence of decent conditions for survival and education. ◆