

**Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value  
Serra da Capivara National Park (Brazil, 606)**

**Date of inscription: 1991**

**Date of RSOUV: 2011**

**Brief Synthesis**

Established in 1979, the Serra da Capivara National Park stretches across the municipalities of São Raimundo Nonato, São João do Piauí, and Canto do Buriti in the south-eastern section of Piauí state in Brazil's Northeast Region. In 1995, the municipality of João Costa was carved out of São João do Piauí. The municipality of Coronel José Dias is partially located in the area of the Serra da Capivara National Park.

The Park covers nearly 129, 140 hectares and has a circumference of 214 kilometres. It is situated in the morphoclimatic zone of the Brazilian *Caatinga*, distinguished by the multiplicity of plant formations typical of the semi-arid regions of Northeast Brazil. The region's plant species are primarily characterized by the loss of most of their leaves during the dry season, extending from May to December, serving to lend the landscape its silver hue. The region borders two major geological formations – the Maranhão-Piauí sediment basin and the peripheral depression of the River São Francisco – and is endowed with a diversity of relief vegetation and landscapes of breathtaking beauty and dotted with exceptional vistas of the surrounding valleys, mountains, and plains.

The area houses one of the most important archaeological sites in the Americas containing evidence and artefacts that have forced a sweeping re-evaluation of the fundamental traditional theories underpinning the origins of human settlement in the Americas.

Over 300 archaeological sites have been found within the park, the majority consisting of rock and wall paintings dating from 50,000-30,000 years ago. Many of the numerous rock shelters in the Serra da Capivara National Park are decorated with cave paintings, some more than 25,000 years old. The analyses and dating of the evidence and artefacts found in the Serra da Capivara National Park serve to confirm the millennial presence of human beings on the American continent and the importance of the heritage. The ensemble of archaeological sites contains dating evidence that has thoroughly revolutionized classical theories regarding the entry route into the Americas by human populations along the Bering Strait. According to studies, the area encompassing the Serra da Capivara National Park was occupied by hunters and gatherers, followed by ceramic-farming societies. Discoveries at the Boqueirão da Pedra Furada archaeological suggest that human beings may have settled the region as far back as 50,000 years ago, while the oldest remaining archaeological site with surviving cave art dates back 10,530 years. In the light of these new findings, the region represents one of the most significant archaeological sites in the world and the property is an outstanding testimony to one of the oldest human communities of South America

**Justification for Criteria (1988)**

**Criterion (iii):** The Serra da Capivara National Park bears exceptional testimony to one of the oldest populations to inhabit South America. It constitutes and preserves the largest ensemble of archaeological sites, and the the oldest examples of rock art in the Americas. Moreover, deciphering the iconography of the paintings offers invaluable insight into the region's early peoples, their religious beliefs and practices.

### **Statement of Integrity (2011)**

The inscribed property contains a multiplicity of attributes that warrant its Outstanding Universal Value. It is endowed with a network of sites converging to forge a rich collection of pre-historic elements enabling extensive research into the region's environment, wildlife, plant life, and earliest inhabitants.

Formal establishment of the Park has served to ensure preservation of the archaeological sites, which stand as a testament to ancient human settlement in South America. Safely contained within the Park's clear delimitations and 10-kilometer buffer zone, the area's sites have remained effectively protected and intact, both in terms of their physical integrity preservation and historical and cultural value.

### **Statement of Authenticity (2011)**

The Serra da Capivara National Park contains evidence of the settlement by cultural groups in the area for thousands of years. These groups successfully developed practices and patterns tailored to the environment, in addition to rich and complex cultural expressions, as reflected in the surviving art work. The surviving cave art provides tangible proof of cultural wealth of these pre-colonial peoples in Brazil. The authenticity of the diverse archaeological remains is unquestionable and conditions have been largely preserved with the conservation measures that have been implemented to date.

### **Requirements for protection and management (2011)**

The Serra da Capivara National Park is managed jointly by the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis – IBAMA), replaced by the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation – ICMBio, established through Law 11516 of August 28, 2007, to manage federal conservation units (unidade de conservação – UC) throughout Brazil, and the American Man Museum Foundation (Fundação Museu do Homem Americano – FUMDHAM), a state and federally designated public utility NGO engaged in scientific research. The National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional – IPHAN) contributes toward monitoring, oversight, and conservation of the archaeological heritage site, in strict cooperation with FUMDHAM. The Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade – ICMBio) and FUMDHAM are tasked with primary responsibility for management and administration, surveillance, and oversight of the Park and the corresponding Buffer Zone, as well as maintenance and infrastructure, as well as environmental education initiatives and integration with the surrounding area.

The Serra da Capivara National Park is protected through Decree-Law 25 of 1937. It was officially designated a federal heritage site through Directive 54 of March 16, 1993 and entered in the Archaeological, Ethnographic, and Landscape Heritage Book (Livro de Tombo Arqueológico, Etnográfico e Paisagístico) under registration number 108, page 70, on September 28, 1993. Through Decree 83548 of June 5, 1979, the National Park was established to protect and preserve the cultural and ecological heritage contained in the area. In addition, the related archaeological sites are protected under Federal Law 3924 of 1961.

The ongoing flow of financial resources and international cooperation is essential to give continuity to the measures provided for under the Management Plan prepared by FUMDHAM in 1991. The key goal of the plan is to reclaim the balance between protection

of the existing cultural heritage and the ecological components of the Park, an effort that requires permanent monitoring and surveillance, in addition to measures to conserve the archaeological remains and to provide physical infrastructure for visitor access. The primary challenge at present consists of ensuring progressive and systematic registration (photogrammetry / metrology) of the sites containing cave art, so as to enable future research, as well as the execution of ongoing conservation measures, all of which is contingent on uninterrupted national and international support.

The Serra da Capivara National Park and the area's conservation have emerged as essential to the region's future by virtue of the growth and expansion of archaeological ecotourism, a key driver of economic development in the area. Tourism to the region has increased steadily since implementation of the first infrastructure projects, including the Museum of the American Man.

To ensure continuity of these efforts, consolidation of a sustainable management system for the Serra da Capivara National Park is required, with a view to fostering the strategic coordination of the various initiatives launched by FUMDHAM and the participating government agencies, including IPHAN and ICMBio. Moreover, promoting greater accessibility and incentives to tourism, among other measures, is seen as a potentially effective strategy to generate the additional means needed to maintain and conserve the area into the future.