

# The tourist visitation in Iguazu National Park, Paraná, Brazil

## A visitação turística no Parque Nacional do Iguazu

## Des visites touristiques dans le Parc National d'Iguazu



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**Abstract:** This article proposes to discuss the trajectory of the tourist visitation in Iguazu National Park, one of the most celebrated and visited parks in Brazil. During its almost 80 years, the tourism visitation never ceased to be one of its objectives, however, this activity underwent a considerable transformation, with significant reflections on its territorial organization. The consolidation of the environmental movement and the development of instruments for the management of protected natural areas can be considered as causes of these transformations. Likewise, the valuation of nature tourism and the vision of the Park as a business opportunity can also be pointed out as causes. From the idea of an event, ruptures and continuities in this trajectory were identified, which allowed us to propose to understand the tourist visitation of the Park through three major phases: recreational visitation, monitored recreational visitation, and commercial visitation, which extends to the nowadays. It is expected to contribute to a better knowledge of Iguazu National Park and, above all, foment the discussions on tourism in natural areas, especially in national parks.

**Keywords:** Iguazu National Park. Tourist Visitation. Territorial Organization.

**Resumo:** Este artigo propõe discutir a trajetória da visitação turística no Parque Nacional do Iguaçu, um dos parques mais célebres e visitados no Brasil. A visitação turística nunca deixou de ser um dos objetivos do Parque ao longo de seus quase 80 anos, contudo, essa atividade sofreu considerável transformação, com reflexos significativos em sua organização territorial. A consolidação do movimento ambientalista e o desenvolvimento de instrumentos de gestão de áreas naturais protegidas podem ser apontados como causas dessas transformações. Da mesma forma, a valorização do turismo de natureza e a visão do Parque como uma oportunidade de negócio também podem ser apontados como causas. A partir da ideia de evento, foram identificadas rupturas e continuidades nessa trajetória, o que permitiu a este estudo propor compreender a visitação turística do Parque por meio de três grandes fases: a visitação recreativa, a visitação recreativa monitorada e a visitação comercial, que se estende até os dias de hoje. Espera-se contribuir para um maior conhecimento do Parque do Iguaçu e, sobretudo, fomentar as discussões sobre o turismo em áreas naturais, em especial, nos parques nacionais.

**Palavras-chave:** Parque Nacional do Iguaçu. Visitação Turística. Organização do Território.

**Résumé:** Cet article propose de discuter la trajectoire des visites touristiques dans le Parc National d'Iguaçu, l'un des parcs les plus célèbres et visités du Brésil. Au cours de ses 80 ans, la fréquentation touristique n'a jamais cessé d'être l'un de ses objectifs. Néanmoins, cette activité a subi une transformation considérable, avec des conséquences importantes sur son organisation territoriale. La consolidation du mouvement environnemental et le développement d'outils de gestion des espaces naturels protégés peuvent être identifiés comme les causes de ces changements. De même, l'appréciation du tourisme vert et la perception du Parc en tant qu'une opportunité commerciale peuvent également être mise en évidence. À partir de l'idée d'événement, des ruptures et des continuités ont été identifiées dans cette trajectoire, ce qui a permis à cette étude de proposer une compréhension de la fréquentation touristique du Parc en trois phases principales: la visite récréative, la

visite récréative surveillée et la visite commerciale, celle-ci qui s'étend jusqu'à nos jours. Cet article devrait contribuer à la connaissance du Parc d'Iguaçu et surtout à stimuler les discussions sur le tourisme dans les espaces naturels, en particulier dans les parcs nationaux.

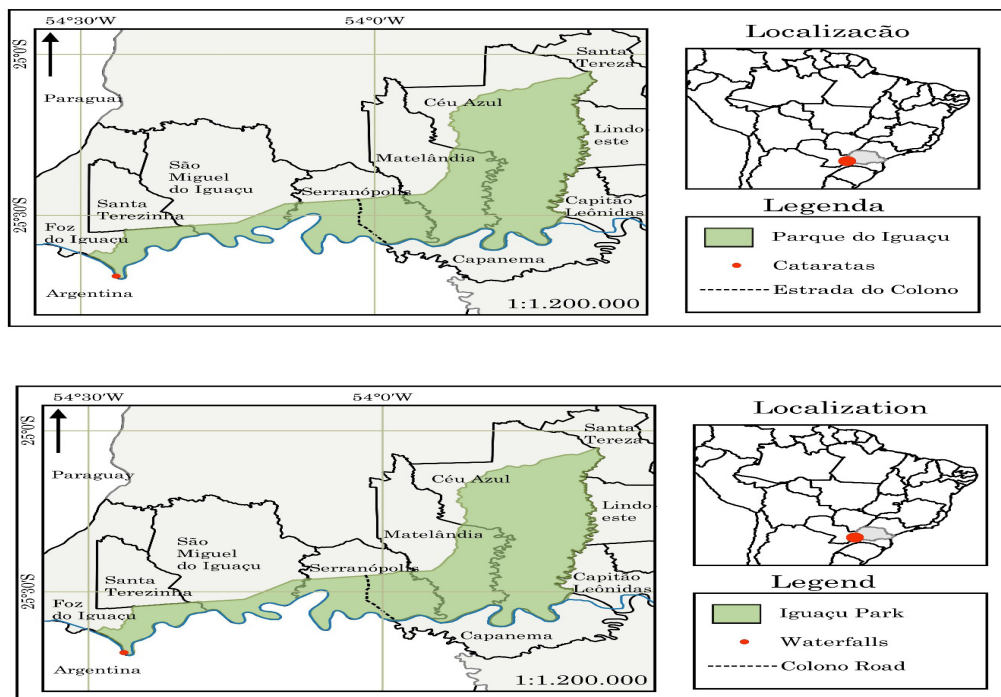
**Mots-clés:** Parc National d'Iguaçu. Visites touristiques. Organisation du territoire.

## Introduction

Located in the western region of Paraná, the Iguaçu National Park is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Brazil due to its postcard: the Iguaçu Falls. It is the second most visited national park in the country, and received in 2017 more than 1.7 million visitors, from Brazil and from abroad (ICMBio, 2018). The Park has a proposal for a tourist visitation differentiated in relation to the other national parks, because there are concessionaires responsible for the logistics of the visitation, for services and activities to support tourism, such as internal transportation, catering, ambulatory, maintenance of trails and roads, and walks. Currently, the Iguaçu National Park is not the only national park in which concessionaires operate in the management of tourist visits, but it was the pioneer park in these public-private partnerships and gathers almost 20 years of experience in this model of management of public use.

The Iguaçu National Park (Map 1) houses and protects a set of 275 waterfalls, and this landscape constitutes one of the elements that gave the Park the recognition as World Heritage in 1986. The other element is that it shelters a forest area of more than 160,000 ha of extension of a very preserved Atlantic Forest (ICMBio, 2018). This is one of the largest remnants of this biome, which also allows the *in situ* conservation of biological diversity and the development of scientific research. Public use is restricted to only 3% of this territory, defined in the management plan as areas of intensive and extensive use. It is this portion of the Park that allows tourist visitation and in which lies the interest of this article.

Map 1. Iguazu National Park



Source: MMA (2015); IBGE (2010); Protected Planet (2016). QGIS Software. Prepared by the author.

This article aims to analyze the trajectory of the tourist visitation in the Iguazu National Park throughout its nearly 80 years of creation, in order to characterize the occurrence of particular phases with regards to the purpose of the visitation and the organization of the territory.

The research was based on the concept of territory due the political and administrative sense that this category of the geographic space can have. It is understood that protected natural areas constitute territories – superimposed on the territory of federal entities – since they are regulated by an official instrument of the public power and with a particular management regime. The demarcation of a territory allows the exercise of several functions, among them the legal function, which refers to the application of a set of norms and laws that legitimize and organize the very existence of the territory, and the control function, which is responsible for the inspection, restriction or prohibition of movement in certain

territories (Raffestin, 1993). It also responds to the need to control the use and appropriation of remaining natural areas.

The methodology consisted of a literature review and documentary research of materials held by archives and physical and virtual libraries of United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (Unesco), National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN) and Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), in which it was possible to assess documents such as the Management Plan of 1981, the Revitalization Program of 1997, the inscription dossier of the 1985 World Heritage Site, various reports on the state of conservation of the Iguaçu National Park, among other important documents for understanding its tourism trajectory and the dynamics of its territory. Moreover, fieldwork was undertaken between 2015 and 2017 for direct observation and photographic register, to consult the *Projeto Memória das Cataratas* material in the Visitors Center of the Iguaçu National Park, and for the application of semi-structured interviews with city residents and employees of the Park, among them, public servants and employees of the concessionaires.

The idea of “event” proposed by Milton Santos was chosen. For the author, the event constitutes the “link between places and a moving story”, and allows to qualify and differentiate a fraction of space and time (SANTOS, 2002, p. 165).

The idea of an event makes it possible to contextualize a place in the world and, above all, in its own history. Thus, three events were identified that conform points of inflection in the trajectory of the tourist visitation and in the territorial organization of the Iguaçu National Park.

The first of them was the creation of the Iguaçu National Park in 1939, followed by the installation of infrastructure in order to enable the tourist visitation. The genesis of the Park combined the goal of protecting the region formed by the falls with that of making it available for recreation and leisure activities. Hence, the conception of the Park allowed the beginning of the recreational

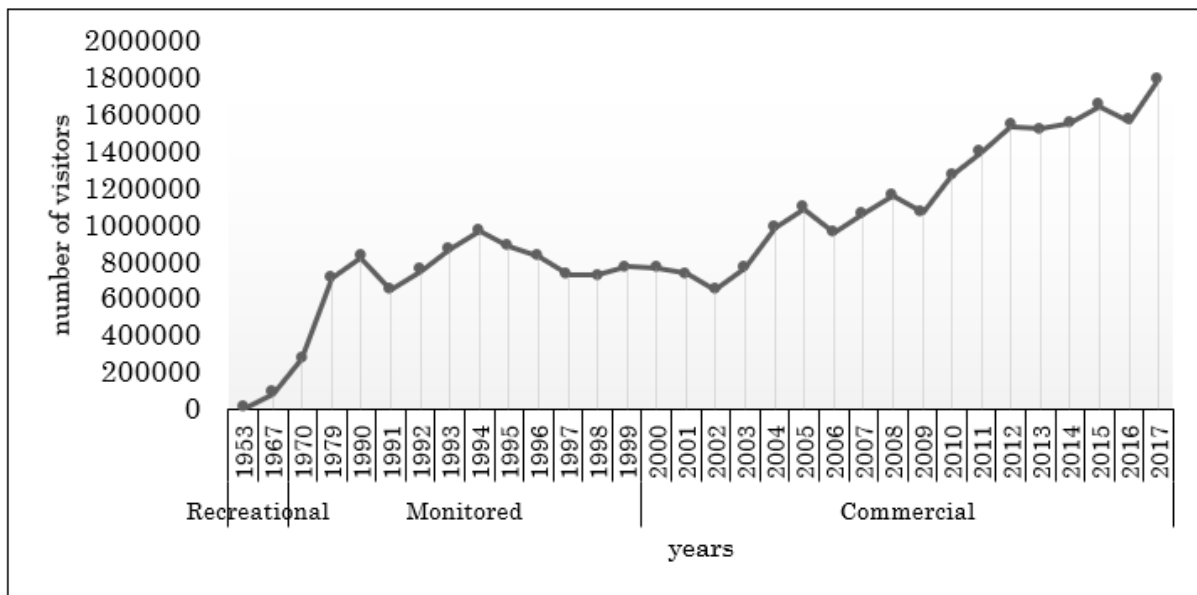
tourist visitation phase, which lasted until the year 1970, when the Brazilian Institute of Forest Development (IBDF) issued Ordinance No. 1.587 (IBDF, 1970).

This Ordinance, the second event identified, approved the collection of admission fees in national parks. This fact, associated with the strengthening of the environmental movement, contributed to the revision of the activity of visitation and had implications for the organization of the territory of the Iguazu National Park. In the 1970s, the portal was built to organize the sale of tickets and control the access of visitors to the Park. At that moment the stage called “monitored tourist visitation” began in which the Iguazu National Park maintains its role as a recreational space, nevertheless more rigid rules were established to curb predatory actions to the environment.

The third moment identified was the implementation of internal collective transportation in the year 2000. This situation marked the beginning of commercial tourism visitation that extends to the present day, which is based mainly on two justifications: the first one is the need to promote sustainable tourism that seeks to minimize the negative effects of visitation to the Park’s ecosystem. The second one is anchored in the quest for financial sustainability and presents the Iguazu National Park as a business opportunity able to generate revenues and jobs. The tourist visitation is a recreational activity for the visitor, nonetheless, it is also the acquisition of a service or experience.

It is also possible to observe the different stages of tourist visitation through its reflections on the volume of visitors. Chart 1 summarizes the visitation statistics available for the Iguazu National Park between 1953 and 2017. It can be seen that occasional fluctuations in visitations are related to economic, political or international security crises, as shown by the falls in 2002, a consequence of the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 and its effects on international tourism, or in 2009, as a result of the global economic and financial crisis in 2008.

Chart 1. Evolution of the Tourist Visitation in Iguaçu National Park



Source: Elaborated by the author on the basis of the information provided by Corrêa; Aldé (2014); IBDF (1981); Ibama (2001); Müller (2002); ICMBio (2016b); ICMBio (2018).

It can also be suggested that trends of stagnation, growth, and fall of visitation are related to broader contexts, such as the expansion of access roads, the increase in the search for nature tourism and the visitor management model.

## The Recreational Tourist Visitation

The creation of the Iguaçu National Park was based on two legal provisions existing in 1939. One of them was the 1937 Constitution, which generated the protection and preservation by the Union of natural monuments and remarkable landscapes (BRASIL, 1937). The other was the Forest Code, which elaborated the beginning of parks in places with primitive floristic composition or peculiar natural characteristics (BRASIL, 1934). We must also consider the National Integration Plan, which included the Iguaçu Territory, in the western part of Paraná state, with the objective to promote



the economic promotion of this region by granting farming lands. In addition, Getúlio Vargas' government led the project of national identity, using monuments and natural landscapes representative of the idea of Brazilian natural exuberance.

The establishment of the Iguaçu National Park was proposed to make possible the public tourist visitation of the area, which decades before was privately owned. Between 1939 and 1970 this visitation was remarkably recreational, free movement, and weak restriction to the tourist visitation.

The recreational aspect is directly related to the activities that were practiced inside the Park: campings, barbecues and picnics, families and groups of friends contemplated the landscape, swam in the river, did trails and even fished and hunted animals, although these activities were prohibited locally by the Hunting and Fishing Code (BRAZIL, 1934). By the 1950s, rowing, horseback riding, and climbing were already offered commercially, by the initiative of autonomous.

Tourist visitation was exclusively recreational, due to accessibility issues the Iguaçu National Park was attended mainly by its neighboring population, on the weekends and vacations. Access to the western of Paraná was only facilitated in the 1970s, with the completion of highways and the opening of Foz do Iguaçu airport. In the 1950s, for example, a tourist from Rio de Janeiro took about 10 days to reach the city and should be submitted to a travel itinerary in which trains and river ships interspersed (THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO, 1958).

The access to the Iguaçu National Park was free because it did not demand payment of entrance or even the rigid control on how many people entered the waterfalls. For that reason, the available records that portray the turnover in this period are scarce. Discontinuous and inaccurate data were found on the number of visitors between 1953 and 1990 (Chart 1).

The freedom of entry and the most diverse activities within the Iguaçu National Park corresponded to the scenario characterized

by the incipient material and institutional infrastructure installed there. It was a space that began to be occupied and organized by the action of the State. The testimonies gathered in the *Projeto Memória das Cataratas* summarize the local access difficulties and the precariousness of the infrastructures: there were no bus lines linking the city of Foz do Iguaçu to the Park and the people went by bicycle, hitchhiking with the truck, that served the Administration of the Park, or on foot, even if it took hours of pilgrimage. Moreover, the trails inside the Park were the bites in the woods and the steps were cut in the ravines cleared of vegetation; in the steepest portions of the tracks, the wooden log fences and the barbwire demarcated the minimally safe space.

In order to consolidate the Iguaçu National Park as a tourist destination, Getúlio Vargas' government, in the 1940s, invested in the implementation of infrastructure, launched bidding notices for the construction of the Park Administration building, houses for employees, stairways for visitation of the waterfalls, bridges, railings, tracks, hotel, and hydroelectric power plant in the São João river, one of the tributaries of Iguaçu, which supplied energy to the Park (CORRÊA; ALDÉ, 2014).

In this sense, between the 1940s and 1970s, the territory of the Iguaçu National Park underwent intense modification promoted by the State, with the creation of infrastructure to serve the visitation. Foz do Iguaçu municipality went through a great economic dynamism due to the increase in tourism. Although the creation of protected natural areas could be seen as a restriction to local development, the creation of the Iguaçu Park, at that time, had an opposite meaning.

Among the infrastructures implanted in the Iguaçu National Park, stands out the Hotel das Cataratas, leased since its inauguration, in 1958, to the private initiative. This lease testifies that the performance of private companies is not recent and does not stem only from the concessions that occurred in the 1990s.

Between 1939 and 1970, the organization of the territory of the Iguaçu National Park reflected the growing presence of the State and its intention to promote the tourist visitation. Nature protection was secondary even in the reports of the chiefs of the Park, who focused mainly on the visitation and left in the background the information's about the conservation of the forest or the occurrence of hunting (RAMOS, 2009).

## The Monitored Tourist Visitation

The monitored tourist visit extends from 1970 to the year 2000. This was a unique moment, marked by the strengthening of the environmental movement and the proposal of sustainable development. This context had a direct influence on the visitation and territorial organization of the Iguaçu National Park. First, by placing nature at the center of the debate, environmentalism contradictorily valued natural protected areas as spaces for tourism (PAES-LUCHIARI, 2007) and was responsible for increasing demand for nature tourism. Second, because aspects of environmentalism have developed instruments and methods of management of these natural areas, such as the management plan and cargo capacity studies, in order to minimize the impacts of tourism.

The event that marked the beginning of this new phase for the Iguaçu National Park was the publication of the IBDF Ordinance No. 1587/1970, which made official the collection of entrance fees, stay, use of barbecue grills and parking in the national parks. The Ordinance was succeeded by the construction of the portal at the entrance of the Park, to enable the collection of entrance fees and registration of visitors' access.

In addition, other measures were taken and contributed to increasing the monitoring and control over the territory of the Iguaçu National Park. Regarding the knowledge and protection of the ecosystem, Adílson Simão, then head of the Park, provided

the preparation of the first management plan, published in 1981, proposing zoning and identifying conflicting uses. Another measure was the closure of the Colono Road, a requirement imposed by Unesco for the registration of the Park to the World Heritage List, which occurred in 1986. It should also be noted that the removal of more than 400 families living in the interior of the Park, remnants of the former employees who worked on the buildings and the hydroelectric power plant (CORRÊA; ALDÉ, 2014). In relation to the tourist visitation, the Park's employees began to monitor, but also to guide and inform visitors about the appropriate behavior in a national park.

In spite of all the changes undertaken to better control the territory of the Iguaçu National Park, tourism visitation was insufficiently modified, which led the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in the 1980s, signaling the need to modify the visitation or to restrict the number of visitors, since visitation concentrated near the falls could be a threat to the integrity of the Park's ecosystem and landscapes (IUCN, 1986).

The access portal and ticket collection gave greater control over the entrance to the Iguaçu National Park and allowed the measurement of the flow of visitation. However, they did not prevent the visitors' inappropriate behaviors, such as the speeding on BR-469, which connects the entrance to the falls; irregular waste disposal; noise and air pollution; feeding wild animals; the removal of objects that could serve as souvenirs; parking in the prohibited areas (IBDF, 1981). Therefore, the Management Plan of 1981 suggested the limitation of private car access within the Park (IBDF, 1981), a proposal that materialized almost 20 years later.

During this period, innovations in infrastructure continued to be implemented to support the increasing visitation in the Iguaçu National Park. For example, the construction of the first walkway advancing over the river, the installation of the panoramic elevator next to the Devil's Throat and the beginning of the helicopter flights over the falls, all date back to the 1970s. From that decade, the kiosks, cafeteria, and restaurant were also installed and leased.

The nature sports activities became professionalized, with the permission to operate the boat rides inside the Park granted to an old ferryman that made the crossing of the cars by the river Iguaçu, between the Colono Road and the municipality of Capanema.

Throughout the decades of 1970 and 1980, there was a significant increase in the visitation of the Park (Chart 1), either through the improvement of the access routes that guaranteed the arrival of visitors from distant regions, or by the valorization of nature tourism.

The organization and infrastructure of the Iguaçu National Park was inefficient to meet the growing demand of visitors (IBAMA, 1997). Disrespect for the rules of the Park by visitors; formation of large queues at the ticket booths, footpaths and walkways; services low quality services offered by the companies that acted in the Park and absence of mechanisms to penalize them (IBAMA, 1997). Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) had a small number of employees to account for the administrative work and for the monitoring of the visitation. These were the conditions of the Park in the 1990s.

This scenario may have been responsible for the stagnation and drop in visitor numbers between 1994 and 1998, and a possible loss of attractiveness to other parks or other tourist itineraries (LAMOUNIER, 2002).

The government of the state of Paraná considered requiring the possession of the Iguaçu National Park to restructure the visitation experience and increase the Park's revenue (Ibama, 1999). However, the IBAMA started the elaboration of the Revitalization Program in 1997, with the objective of promoting territorial organization based on the delegation of tourist services to the private initiative. This document presented visitation as "the most adequate financing formula, given the lack of sufficient public resources for the conservation of the ecosystems included in the park" (IBAMA, 1997, p. 1). For this, the document identified areas of the Iguaçu National Park that could be modernized with

the installation of new infrastructures for the provision of services and the sale of products to visitors. Such areas would be under the responsibility of “companies or consortia of companies with professional level, managerial experience, technical administrative structure and investment capacity to increase the quality of visitor service” (IBAMA, 1997, p. 10).

It is a recurrent practice in the country to use the state of depreciation of public assets to justify the inefficiency and the need for public goods based on public-private partnerships, a modality that began to be practiced in public administration due to the National Privatization Program (Law nº. 8.087 / 1990) (BRASIL, 1990) and the Public Service Concessions Law (Law nº. 8.987 / 1995) (BRASIL, 1995).

The Revitalization Program (1997) resulted in the launching of two bidding notices in 1998. One of them was for the construction and commercial exploitation of the visitors' center, the passenger terminal, internal transport, and parking. And the other for the commercial exploitation of spaces for food, gazebos, panoramic elevator, suspended trail, environmental buildings, souvenir shops.

The phase of monitored recreation visits came to an end, in the 1990s, in a context of stagnation of visitation and political pressure for improvements in the infrastructure and in the organization of the Iguaçu National Park. Discussions on sustainable tourism are also used to support change by recommending the reduction of negative impacts on destinations (UNEP, 2005) – which can be understood as the need for greater efficiency of the activity or greater control over the visitors. In addition, the perspective of tourism as an economic activity that generates income and employment, capable of contributing to financing the protection and maintenance of natural areas, is reinforced.

## The Commercial Tourist Visitation

Since 2000 the Iguaçu National Park's visitation was marked by an almost constant growth trend (Chart 1). This picture can be explained by several factors, among them the economic growth of the country, the cheapening of transportation costs, and the acquisition of trips on credit. Another very important factor was the insertion of the Park in a new phase, here called commercial.

The visitation is commercial because it became, first and foremost, a buying and selling operation between company and consumer: visitors have access to the Iguaçu National Park by paying the entrance ticket; they have access to the trails by purchasing the tours. It does not mean that the charge for the entrance is an unprecedented fact in the Park. The question that arises from the years 2000 is that in addition to the fee charged by the Union, the services provided by the concessionaire company were also charged.

The visitation is commercial because the Iguaçu National Park is managed with a company and started to be oriented to generate revenues, taxes, taxes, jobs. The Park is considered as a vector of the economic dynamism of the region. It is open 365 days a year, from 9 am to 6 pm, with employees working in shifts. Increasing visitation is one of the strategic investments for the Park, and implies an increase in revenues, tax collection and employment.

It is worth remembering that ICMBio – autarchy created in 2007, linked to the Ministry of the Environment, with the purpose of implementing the national policy of protected areas – continues as the public entity responsible for the Iguaçu National Park. Among its attributions are monitoring, inspection, environmental education, research programs, planning of public use, in short, it is the responsibility of the ICMBio the administration of the Park as a whole and the contracts with the five companies that act in the provision of the park's tourist services (Table 1).



**Table 1.** Private companies operating in the Public Use of the Iguaçu National Park

	Company	Attractive	Contract	Effective	Resp.
1	Grupo Cataratas	Visitor Center Transport Parking	01/1998	2020	ICMBio
	Grupo Cataratas	Porto Canoas Space Naipi Space Tarobá Spce Panoramic Elevator	02/1998	2020	ICMBio
2	Macuco Ecoaventura	M'Boy Circuit: trekking in trails and boarded	20/2002	2019	ICMBio
	Macuco Ecoaventura	Martins Line: trekking in trails and boarded	21/2002	2020	ICMBio
3	Macuco Safari	Macuco: trekking in trails and boarded	01/2010	2025	ICMBio
4	Belmond	Cataratas Hotel	01/2006	2026	SPU
5	Helisul	Panoramic Flight	01/2015	2020	ICMBio

Source: ICMBio (2016a),

The construction of the Visitor Center (CV), next to the old entrance, and the implantation of the internal transport for the visitors are the two main marks of the reorganization of the Park, but not the only ones.

The CV made the sale of entry tickets efficient and offered amenities to visitors, such as snack bars, volume guard, bank teller, toilets, and ambulatory. The modernization of the infrastructure of the Iguaçu National Park was designed with the aim of creating an integrated space, so as to prioritize a rustic style construction meeting the standards on the visual impact and aesthetic values of the tourist infrastructure (CPM, 2008). In addition, the Grupo Cataratas is responsible for the concession and invests in the selective collection, renewable energy, and rational use of water, as well as promoting organic food fair weekly with local producers.



However, the present CV could be better explored with explanatory totems, models, or other materials that provide visitors with information about the Iguaçu National Park, with scientific and mythological contents about cataracts, educational projects, and others. For an informative/expository exhibition, there is a panel exhibition on the fauna of the Park and the Cultural Space, which houses documents and photos of the Memory of the Falls Project. However, the biggest attraction of the CV is the souvenir shop, located strategically in the passage between the box office and the bus boarding, giving the place a commercial area appearance.

The implantation of the internal transport was already an aspiration in the decade of 1980, due to the disrespect of the limits of speed and high index of running over of animals. It is estimated that in the first year of implementation, internal transportation reduced traffic within the Park by 70% (WHC, 2001). Considering that visitation more than doubled between 2001 and 2017, we can argue that transportation was crucial to increase the visitation, without increasing animal trampling.

The internal transportation also eliminated the irregular parking near the Falls Trail and contributed to the better distribution of visitors throughout the day in the Park, since buses usually depart every 15 minutes. It is worth remembering that the internal transportation is paid along with the entry ticket, even by those who choose to visit the Park by bike or with the buses and tour vans, which continue with access to the highway inside the Park. The justification for charging everyone who accesses the Park is that internal buses are available to everyone, and are even served space to accommodate bicycles. The value of transportation is destined to Grupo Cataratas, responsible for the management of the service.

The Falls Trail is the main tourist attraction of the Iguaçu National Park. With about 1 km of extension, the route connects the road to the lookouts and walkways. The Trail allows visitors to enjoy the landscape and approach the waterfalls. Next to the Trail, there are the Porto Canoas, Naipi, and Tarobá spaces, with

shops, panoramic elevators, snack bars, restaurants, toilets, and ambulatory, under commercial exploitation and responsibility of the Grupo Cataratas.

As a counterpart to the Iguaçu National Park, the Grupo Cataratas promotes the maintenance of this trail and that of the side tracks of the BR-469 within the Park. In addition, as provided in a contract, the concessionaire must pass through public coffers between 3% and 6% of its revenue through the sale of all products and services.

In addition to hiking on the Falls Trail, visitors can do two more activities: trail in the woods and navigation upstream of the falls or trail in the woods and in the downstream from the falls. The companies responsible are Macuco Ecoaventura and Macuco Safari, both belonging to Grupo Três Mosqueteiros, founded by the old ferryman who was allowed to perform the boat ride in the Park in the 1980s. Rides are optional and are not included on the entrance ticket in the park.

It is important to note that the companies are responsible for the trails and control their access, which means that within the Iguaçu National Park there are private visitor areas to a more restricted paying public, who represent about 10% of Park visitors. The values of the walks can vary from R\$ 61,00 to R\$ 515,00 and this is another outstanding characteristic of the commercial tourist visitation of the Park: together with the concession of exploration of an activity or service, the territory is also granted, which will be controlled by the company and only accessed by the ones that acquire its services.

The companies Macuco Safari and Ecoaventura pass through the Iguaçu National Park between 3% and 8% of the sale of services (SPF, 2002; SPF, 2010). In addition, as a counterpart to the Park, Macuco Safari has committed to providing 100 daily boat trips for inspection and research purposes to ICMBio.

Since the 2000s, the Grupo Três Mosqueteiros has been adapting its work to the requirements of sustainable tourism.

Therefore, it implemented a sewage treatment system, reduced the width of the Macuco trail (MACUCO SAFARI, 2005), also invested in electric jeeps to transport visitors, and invested in accessibility to benefit the public with reduced mobility.

The Hotel das Cataratas remains the only tourist lodging option in the Iguaçu National Park and its exploration is leased to the international group Belmond Limited. The latest bidding notice, launched in 2004, required competitors to make the building a luxury hotel. Thus, up to the early 2000s, it was possible to find travel packages that included a stay at the Hotel das Cataratas. Today, there are rarely any travel deals that include the Hotel, due to the changing target audience and marketing strategy.

The existence of this hotel is contrary to the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC) (BRASIL, 2000) and the Management Plan of 1999. After the removal of about 400 families from within the Park, demolition of houses, and gardens by the need to protect the Park, how can one justify the existence of a luxury hotel in its interior? The arguments are the generation of jobs for the region, of income and investments for the Park, such as the Carnivorous Project, the bike path, and the modernization of the electricity network. Another argument, complementary but debatable, is that the Hotel is consummate environmental damage and offers the possibility of environmental education with the guests.

Panoramic helicopter flights are also a possibility to get to know the Iguaçu National Park. Until 1999, the heliport was in front of Hotel das Cataratas and the flights departed from inside the Park. However, complaints from Argentine environmental associations about the noise and the impact caused to the ecosystem and the visitation experience resulted in the transfer of the helipad out of the Park. In this change, the request of Unesco for the activity was reduced or suppressed (WHC, 1991). In fact, the SNUC law indicates that, if it is relevant to the maintenance and equilibrium of the ecosystem, air space is part of the conservation unit and its commercial use demands public concurrence and competition among companies. As a counterpart to the Park, the Helisul company

offers 120 flight hours per year for fire prevention, surveillance, and firefighting. If they are not used by the management team, the amounts are paid to the Federal Government (UAAF, 2015).

It is important to emphasize that the park's tourist visitation is still a recreational activity, even after the 2000s. What we want to emphasize here is that the commercial and business character of the visitation prevails in the territorial organization and in the first purpose of the visitation in Iguaçu National Park: promote economic dynamism, environmental sustainability, and above all, financial sustainability. In addition to being commercial, the tourist visitation has become highly controlled, since the visitors are for most of the time under the surveillance of employees and use the internal transport to get around inside the Park. On the one hand, this organization curbs depredations, on the other, it implies an accelerated rhythm in the visitation, because the optimization of the circulation of visitors in the Park also guarantees the possibility of a greater number of accesses and a new scale of operation.

## Final considerations

Placing the tourist visitation of the Iguaçu National Park in perspective is an exercise to understand the directions of the public use of the national parks. The tourist visitation in the Iguaçu National Park occurred with different principles and different formats since its creation, which had implications for the organization of its territory.

The phases of visitation identified cannot be understood outside broader technological, scientific, economic and political contexts of life-in-society transformations, in which: nationalist policies aimed at the creation of national identity in the 1930s and 1940s stand out; principles of sustainable development and recognition of tourism as a positive activity for the financial maintenance of natural areas – depending on the way in which it

is carried out –, the strategy to take advantage of the potential for economic dynamization and income generation. The identification of recreational, monitored recreational and commercial visitation aimed to highlight important characteristics for the understanding of the transformation of visitation in the Park and does not necessarily condense unique or sealed characteristics.

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