



VOLUNTEER MANUAL OF TIJUCA NATIONAL PARK

VOLUNTEER WORK IN CONSERVATION AREAS AROUND THE WORLD AND IN BRAZIL

The importance of volunteer work in the world is well known. Evidence of this was provided by the creation of the United Nations Volunteer Program and by the designation of 2001 as the International Year of Volunteerism. The premise of organized volunteerism is that problems can be faced and resolved through the cumulative efforts of governments, private initiative, the third sector, and organs of civil society.

Volunteer service in parks and Conservation Areas is a tradition in many countries. In the United States, the National Park Service has a volunteer program that generates many benefits, both for the parks and for the volunteers. Each year, more than 120,000 volunteers give more than four million hours of service in U.S. national parks.

In Brazil, volunteer work was regularized recently by Law 9608/98, according to which volunteer service "is a non-remunerated activity offered by an individual to a public entity of any nature, or to a private non-profit institution with civic, cultural, educational, scientific, recreational or social assistance objectives, including mutual assistance. Volunteer service does not create an employment relationship or any labor or social security obligation, etc."

In 2001, the Ministry of the Environment (MMA) conducted studies on volunteer work in Conservation Areas and held an international seminar, "Park Volunteers in Brazil: Aware Behavior, Ethics, and Good Citizenship," in Rio de Janeiro. At this event, experience with volunteers in U.S. and Italian parks were presented. Administrators of Conservation Areas, employees of MAM and IBAMA (The Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources), representatives of non-governmental organizations, and volunteers debated the topic and presented ideas about the implementation of volunteer work in Conservation Areas in Brazil.

A SHORT HISTORY OF VOLUNTEER WORK IN THE TIJUCA NATIONAL PARK

Numerous volunteer activities have already taken place in the Tijuca National Park; the most common are collaborative efforts to clean and maintain trails. The Brazilian Boy-Scout Union (UEB) has been working in the Park for a long time, and in 1999 it signed an agreement with IBAMA aimed at carrying out volunteer work in this Conservation Area. In two years, the Boy-Scouts performed more than 60,000 hours of volunteer work in the Tijuca National Park, with activities such as maintaining trails, closing off shortcuts, containing erosion, cleaning areas, monitoring visitors, and de-silting rivers. Various NGOs, as well as climbers from a number of outdoor activities centers in Rio de Janeiro, have also already done volunteer work.

By analyzing the demand for volunteer work, we arrived at the following selection of volunteer activities in the Park:

- Monitoring, restoring and maintaining trails;
- Serving the public and monitoring visitors;
- Replanting eroded areas;
- Surveying the fauna;
- Joint cleaning efforts in Park areas.

ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Volunteer Program in the Tijuca National Park continues the parks volunteer program developed by the Ministry of the Environment (MMA) since 2001. The MMA chose this park as one of the pilot areas for the implementation of the National Volunteer Program in IBAMA Conservation Areas. Volunteer work is important, most of all because people develop an awareness that the Park is a public asset, that it therefore belongs to everyone, and that we should all take care of what belongs to us. In this respect, volunteer activity is closely associated with environmental education and its consequence, "Aware Behavior in natural surroundings." One of the guiding principles of the Volunteer Program in the Tijuca National Park is that if a visitor demonstrates Aware Behavior in the Park, then in practice they are already a volunteer, regardless of whether they have registered and signed the terms of agreement; their actions are already that of a volunteer.

WHAT IS VOLUNTEER WORK?

A volunteer is any person who, out of solidarity and responsibility, gives part of his or her time, labor, and talent in actions that benefit and improve the lives of everyone. Working as a volunteer in the Tijuca National Park, you will enjoy the benefits of working in a National Park. You will also participate in varied activities in the Park's Management Plan, which will give you opportunities to express your talents and develop new skills and abilities.

THE THREE MAIN VOLUNTEER GROUPS IN THE TIJUCA NATIONAL PARK

Volunteer work in the Tijuca National Park aims to give people opportunities to participate in many of the Park's administrative and management tasks.

The volunteer program combines a series of activities such as regular volunteer work, joint efforts for cleaning and maintenance (which may be on a volunteer basis), and partnerships with NGOs and other bodies for adopting trails.

Regular Volunteers

These are people interested in working as volunteers one day every week or every two weeks.

Regular volunteers complete shifts: they choose the days and shifts on which they will work so as to complete 60 hours of volunteer work. The time-frame for completion of the 60 hours is six months (from the date of signing the terms of agreement). Upon completing this number of hours, the volunteer receives a certificate of participation.

Occasional Volunteers

These are people willing to contribute as volunteers in the activities of cleaning, maintaining trails, and environmental education which are promoted by the Park administration and volunteer bodies.

Occasional volunteers can participate in these joint efforts according to their time availability.

NGOs and Other Bodies

We form partnerships with NGOs and other bodies that have experience or interest in working in the Tijuca National Park. The Park's volunteer program is promoting the adoption of trails by NGOs as a way of ensuring their ongoing maintenance and conservation.

For years, various ONGs and other bodies have been dedicating themselves to the Park, such as the Brazilian Boy-Scout Union (UEB), the Rio de Janeiro State Federation of Mountain Sports (Femerj, which is an umbrella for various organizaions), the Grupo Terra Limpa (Clean Earth Group), the Instituto Terra Brasil (Brazil Earth Institute), Unicerj, and others.

The idea is that everyone, volunteers and organizations, can participate, each within their own abilities, once they have received the Park's technical orientation for the performance of work in accordance with Environmental Laws and the National Parks Regulations.

TWHAT A VOLUNTEER DOES

There are many tasks to be performed, requiring a wide range of talents, skills and abilities which the volunteer may possess and/or develop in the course of their work. In all cases, the volunteer will be dealing with: information, sensitization, awareness-raising, interaction, participation, solidarity, protection, and sustainability. All the work done by the group is performed cheerfully and with friendliness, and the volunteers are to avoid repressive behavior towards others. Here is a summary of the many activities performed by volunteers:

- Monitoring and maintaining trails (closing off shortcuts, clearing drains, painting signs, etc.);
- Collecting trash from the forest and other Park areas;
- Providing information to visitors;
- Giving orientation to visitors about desirable behavior in the Park;
- Acting as a guide or providing assistance in areas open to the public (Visitor Center, trails, Eco-adventures, etc.);
- Providing support at events in the Park;
- Photographing, filming and recording events and activities in the Park;
- Helping with research and management activities relating to flora and fauna;
- Receiving, recording and directing suggestions to the Park management;
- Being pro-active in the search for solutions to problems affecting the Park.

THE VOLUNTEER SHOULD

- Keep visitors informed about the Conservation Area;
- Be cheerful and friendly with visitors, volunteers and employees;
- Present themselves well, in uniform;
- Wear closed-toed, comfortable footwear;
- Be punctual and diligent;
- Explain absences;
- Go around as part of a group;
- Be duly informed about their role as a volunteer.

THE VOLUNTEER SHOULD NOT

- Argue with visitors, volunteers or employees;
- Behave in an undisciplined way;
- Collect samples of any species;
- Be absent without explanation;
- Consume alcoholic beverages or use drugs while on duty.

WORK OPPORTUNITIES

PNT Join Volunteer Efforts

Activities:

- Restoration of trails: clearing drains, repairing channels, closing shortcuts and building steps;
- Trash collection and maintenance of areas;
- Orientation of visitors about how to make excursions with minimum impact.

Maintenance and restoration of trails

Activities:

- Walk trails and complete reports on their conditions, signage, shortcuts, and other features;
- Evaluation, repositioning and construction of signage (painting signs on rocks and placement of signposts made of wood with laminated paper);
- Restoration of trails: clearing drains, repairing channels, closing shortcuts and building steps;
- Participation in joint efforts for trash collection and maintenance of areas.

Management of Flora and Reforestation

Activities

- Management of flora and monitoring of exotic species;
- Reforesting: transportation of seedlings and tools to the transplant site, clearing and preparing site and removing trash, making rows, marking and uncovering trenches, transplanting, watering, and replanting.

Environmental Patrol

Activities

- Walk the Park's trails and recreational areas, offering information and assisting in Park monitoring.
- Distributing pamphlets about Aware Behavior in the Park;
- Orientation of visitors about how to make excursions with minimum impact;
- Restoration of trails and trash collection.

AWARE BEHAVIOR IN NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

The Tijuca National Park participates in the Campaign for Aware Behavior in Natural Environments, promoted by the Ministry of the Environment and by IBAMA. This campaign is based on the dissemination of a set of behavioral principles for visitors to protected areas. These principles are known to help maintain minimum impact and have been applied successfully in various countries around the world to reduce the impact of visits.

The volunteer must have a good understanding of Aware Behavior in order to act as a catalyst. Therefore the volunteer should give out Aware Behavior pamphlets and take advantage of this to talk with visitors and to explain the role of each person in protecting the environment. It is important not to be shy, in order to talk in a friendly way with visitors about what they are not allowed to do inside the Park and that the best behavior in a natural environment is one that respects nature. The following are the principles of Aware Behavior:

1. Plan your trip.
2. You are responsible for your own security.
3. Take care of the trails and the natural environment.
4. Take your trash home with you.
5. Leave everything in its proper place.
6. Take great care with fire.
7. Respect the animals and plants.
8. Be polite to other visitors.

BENEFITS

- Working alongside nature, in peace and quiet and clean air;
- Interacting with other volunteers and visitors;
- Learning techniques for restoring trails and managing plants;
- Contributing to the preservation of the Atlantic rainforest;
- Obtaining a certificate of participation.

Serving the PNT's Public

Activities

- Leading visitors to the beginning of signposted trails;
- Welcoming groups of school students and orienting them about the PNT's services;
- Helping the eco-tourism sector with the organization of weekend activities;
- Assisting guides on free walks.

SOURCE

VOLUNTEER MANUAL OF TIJUCA NATIONAL PARK

Content Coordination

Parque Nacional da Tijuca: André Bittencourt Amador

Editorial Project and Manual Methodology Coordination

André Bittencourt Amador

Taimã Consultoria Ambiental Ltda: Márcia Panno

Final Review

Sonia Cardoso