

## Connecting: recinatur and the proposed Geopark in Huasteca Potosina, Mexico

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The state of San Luis Potosí, in the centre-North of Mexico is made up of 58 municipalities, distributed over four geographic areas, known variously as Región Media, Centro, Altiplano and Huasteca. Huasteca Potosina, the area proposed here, is second in importance from the socio-economic perspective. The region covers some 11,409.46 km<sup>2</sup> (18.31% of the total State of SLP) with a population of around 667,000 (30% of the total State population). The climate is tropical with an average 26°C all year round, apart from May when temperatures of over 50°C are registered. The Huasteca Potosina is made up of the following 20 provinces: Aquismón, Xilitla, Huehuetlán, Coxcatlán, Tampamolón Corona, Tanquián de Escobedo, Tancanhuitz de Santos, San Antonio, Axtla de Terrazas, Tampacán, Matla- pa, San Martín Chalchicuautla, Tamazunchale, Tamasopo, El Naranjo, Tamuín, Ebano, Tanlajás, San Vicente Tancuayalab and Ciudad Valles.

The Huasteca Potosina is in the extreme East of the State, in full midst of the Sierra Madre Oriental and concentrates 94.8% of the native speakers of Náhuatl and Tenek. The main attractions offered by the area are the archaeological sites at Tamohí (the place where the figure of the God Quetzalcóatl as a youth was discovered) and Tamtoc, where a 30-ton monolith was excavated. Micos is a series of seven stepped waterfalls with their corresponding pools; El Sótano de las Golondrinas, one of the deepest and most beautiful abyssees in the world (512 metres) that offers the incredible spectacles of thousands of swifts emerging and returning each day; Tamul, the largest waterfall at over 100 metres; La Cueva del Agua, the cave lagoon together with the caves at Mantetzulel, divided over four different caves full of spectacular rock formations; El Jardín Surrealista, the Surrealist garden created by Sir Edward James, full of exotic vegetation with three-stepped waterfalls and sculptures based on magic symbolism; Tamasopo with its three-stepped waterfalls and the Puente de Dios, the cave with a blue lagoon the waterfalls at Minas Viejas and El Meco; El Puente de Dios del Sidral y Aquismón; the rivers el Salto and Tampaón, El Sótano de las Guaguas, various natural water springs and the protected nature reserve of Sierra del Abra de Tanchipa, by way of mention of only some of the natural attractions.

The natives of the region maintain many of their ancestral traditions. Their cosmovision is based very strongly on astronomy and they use the stars to guide them in their day-to-day life. The huastecos are direct descendents of the Meso-American civilisations. Tenek in their mother tongue means *los que viven aquí en el campo con su lengua y que comparten costumbres*: those who live in the country and share customs and a common language. The whole community participates in collective tasks. Indeed, this is an obligation to form part of said communities.

However, the area is riddled with pockets of marginalisation and poverty. To that end, the national government in State Development Plan 2009–2015 has proposed various axes along which to work to eradicate poverty, promote and preserve the natural resources and the cultural heritage mainly through community employment in responsible and inclusive tourism, with the creation of competitive tourism products based on identity and natural landscape, ranging from geo- to adventure tourism.

This proposal forms part of the RECINATUR bid to set up a network of geo-parks within an existing network based on responsible tourism and preservation of natural identity to join the GGN. All of the areas involved in the various parts of Central and Latin America are regions where native traditions and cosmovisions are being disrupted or are in danger, due to developments arising from geological extractions. RECINATUR, as the name indicates, is working in the field of responsible tourism to train trainers and strike scale economies in operations such as, in this case, the design of management plans that will work in each of the applicants within the network. This bid, which is still in its earliest stages but designed to be presented in October 2014 (together with Imbabura, Ecuador, Carchi (Ecuador)/Pasto (Colombia) trans-national geo-park and Corral/Zona de los Ríos (Chile) is designed to offer a sustainable future for the excluded native populations, through their geological and archaeological heritage and their sociocultural traditions, that will stem the migration of youth from the area. Although the proposal is presented by the University, the State and popular support exists and will be built up before the bid is formally presented in October.