

Event Report: GGN Participation at FITUR 2026

Event: FITUR 2026 — International Tourism Trade Fair

Location: IFEMA, Madrid, Spain

Dates: 21–25 January 2026

Between 21st and 25th January 2026, FITUR once again confirmed its role as the main global stage where tourism policies, destination strategies and international cooperation agendas become visible and politically meaningful. For the Global Geoparks Network, this edition of FITUR represented a particularly strong and symbolic moment. This was due not only to the scale and international relevance of the event, but above all to the exceptional collective mobilisation around UNESCO Global Geoparks, led by the Spanish Network of UNESCO Global Geoparks (REGM) and strongly supported by key national and international institutions.

At the highest level, this mobilisation was framed and reinforced by the presence of the President of the GGN, Prof. Artur Sá. In his address, he underlined the central role of tourism as a driver of sustainable territorial development in UNESCO Global Geoparks, describing them as territories of sustainability, solidarity, inclusion and peace, and as concrete examples of how these territories contribute to a more balanced, resilient and human-centred model of development. His participation symbolically and operationally connected the Spanish and Ibero-American efforts with the worldwide Geoparks movement, reinforcing the role of FITUR as a platform not only for national promotion but also for advancing the international visibility and coherence of the GGN.

The REGM demonstrated an outstanding level of organisation, strategic clarity and institutional maturity. Its stand functioned as a true international platform, professionally designed, programme-driven and fully integrated into the logic of a major world tourism fair. The commitment of REGM members was evident throughout the five days, with continuous presence, coordinated communication, and a coherent narrative positioning UNESCO Global Geoparks as territories where geological heritage, biodiversity, culture, education and local development converge into a distinctive and competitive sustainable tourism product.

This collective effort was made possible and significantly strengthened by the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), whose role went far beyond logistical backing. Through its involvement, AECID clearly framed UNESCO Global Geoparks as instruments of sustainable territorial development, international cooperation and Ibero-American and North–South–South dialogue, fully aligned with the objectives of UNESCO and the 2030 Agenda. The visibility given to this partnership at FITUR sent a strong signal to tourism authorities, development agencies and international partners regarding the strategic value of UNESCO Global Geoparks as policy tools, not merely as destinations.

The institutional weight of the UNESCO Global Geoparks presence was further underlined by the participation of high-level representatives, including the President of the Spanish National Commission for UNESCO, the Vice-Secretary of State for Tourism, presidents and secretaries of tourism of several autonomous communities, mayors of Geopark municipalities and other senior national, regional and local authorities. Their attendance and public support constituted an unequivocal political endorsement of the work carried out by UNESCO Global Geoparks and

of the model of sustainable development they embody. The opening and subsequent events at the stand clearly reflected that UNESCO Global Geoparks are today recognised, at national and regional levels, as strategic assets for quality tourism, territorial cohesion and international visibility.

The international scope of the stand was further strengthened by the active participation of the Coordinator of the Latin American and Caribbean Geoparks Network, Dr Emmaline Rosado-González, whose presence highlighted the growing consolidation of GeoLAC and the relevance of cooperation between European and Latin American UGGps. Together with the GGN President, this ensured that the pavilion projected a coherent multiregional and global message, fully aligned with the objectives and values of the Global Geoparks Network.

The programme developed at the stand illustrated this collective strength and reach: 13 presentations by Spanish UGGps, one by GeoLAC, one by Portugal, two by Latin American initiatives and one additional Spanish thematic initiative. Targeted professional meetings were held with tourism service providers in key segments such as nature tourism, cycling tourism and accessible tourism, opening concrete opportunities for future cooperation and product development. Public engagement was equally significant, with more than 600 visitors during the weekend alone and around 600 participants in the on-site and online interactive quiz. To these figures should be added the many hundreds of visitors who passed through the stand during the first three days of the fair, whose presence was not systematically recorded but who nonetheless contributed significantly to the overall visibility and outreach of the with UNESCO Global Geoparks at FITUR. While some visitors were already familiar with UNESCO Global Geoparks and were seeking information about new territories to visit, the majority discovered the concept for the first time and expressed strong interest in destinations combining natural landscapes, cultural values and outdoor activities within the UNESCO framework.

Portugal also played a relevant role in this collective presence, with the participation of three UNESCO Global Geoparks and one aspiring geopark: Arouca UGGp, Naturtejo UGGp, Oeste UGGp, and the Aspiring Geopark Algarvensis. Their involvement strengthened the Iberian dimension of the UGGps community and demonstrated the added value of cross-border and transnational visibility in major tourism markets, particularly for thematic products related to geotourism, cycling, education and nature-based experiences.

Beyond the central Geoparks Pavilion, the integration of UGGps into the broader territorial narrative of FITUR was clearly reinforced by specific initiatives in the pavilions of autonomous communities such as Extremadura and Cantabria, both of which highlighted their UNESCO Global Geoparks within their regional tourism strategies. This alignment between the national Global Geoparks platform and the regional destination stands confirmed that these territories are increasingly embedded in official tourism promotion policies, rather than operating at the margins.

Overall, FITUR 2026 represented a milestone in terms of institutional recognition, political support and international projection for UNESCO Global Geoparks and the Global Geoparks Network. The coordinated action of the Spanish Geoparks Network, the decisive backing of AECID, the presence of the President of the GGN together with the leadership of GeoLAC, the participation of senior representatives of UNESCO structures and tourism authorities, and the involvement of Portuguese UGGps created a powerful and coherent message: UNESCO Global Geoparks are firmly positioned as strategic territories for sustainable tourism, education and local development, fully aligned with UNESCO values and with the global priorities of the Global Geoparks Network.