ICCSA 2011 Welcome Message

Welcome to Santander and the 11th International Conference on Computational Science and Its Applications, ICCSA 2011!

The city of Santander is located in the self-governed region of Cantabria, on the northern coast of Spain between Asturias and the Basque Country. This beautiful region of half a million inhabitants is on the shores of the Cantabrian Sea and is crossed by a mountain range. The shores and inland valleys offer a wide variety of landscapes as a consequence of the mild, moist climate of so-called Green Spain. The coastal landscape of beaches, bays and cliffs blends together with valleys and highland areas. All along the coast there are typical traditional fishing ports and innumerable diverse beaches of soft white sand.

However, Cantabria’s attractions are not limited to its natural treasures. History has provided a rich artistic and cultural heritage found in towns and villages that are outstanding in their own right. The archaeological remains and historic buildings bear the mark of a unique history starting with the world-famous Altamira cave paintings, a veritable shrine to the prehistoric age. In addition, there are remarkable remains from the Romans, the Mozarabic presence and the beginnings of the Reconquest of Spain, along with artistic heritage of Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque styles. Examples include the Prehistoric Era (the Altamira and Puente Viesgo Caves), Roman ruins such as those of Julióbriga, medieval settlements, such as Santillana del Mar and several examples of the civil and religious architecture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The surrounding nature and the historical importance of many of its villages and buildings make this region very appealing for tourism, especially during the spring and summer seasons, when the humid, mild weather gives the region a rich and varied nature with plenty of woods and meadows. At the time of the conference, you will enjoy the gentle climate (with temperatures averaging 18-20 degrees Celsius) and the longest days of the year. You will find yourself waiting for sunset at the beach at about 11 pm.!!!

Capital of the autonomous region of Cantabria, the city of Santander is also a very popular destination for tourism. Based around one of the most beautiful bays in the world, this modern city is famous by its sparkling beaches of yellow sand and clean water, the hospitality of its people and the high reputation of its celebrated gastronomy, mostly based on fish and shellfish. With a population of about two hundred thousand inhabitants, Santander is a very safe city, with a vibrant tourist ambient filled with entertainment and a high quality of life and safety, matching the best standards in the world. The coastal side of the city boasts a long string of top quality beaches and recreational areas, such as the Magdalena Peninsula, the Sardinero and Mataleñas Park. There are several beaches and harbours limiting the city on the northern side, towards the southern part you will find the old city centre and a bit further the green mountains. We proudly say that Santander is between the blue and the green.

The University of Cantabria (in Spanish, the Universidad de Cantabria, UC) is the only public university in Cantabria, Spain. It was founded in 1972 and is organized in 12 faculties and schools. With about 13,000 students and 1,000 academic staff, the University of Cantabria is one of the most reputed universities in the country, ranking in the highest positions of Spanish universities in relation to its size. Not surprisingly, it was selected as a Campus of International Excellence by the Spanish Government in 2009.

Besides the technical sessions and presentations, ICCSA'2011 provides an interesting, must-attend social program. It starts with a Welcome Reception at the Royal Palace of the Magdalena (Sunday 19th), the most emblematic building of Santander and also the most visited place in the city. The royal family used the palace during the period 1913-1930 as a base for numerous recreational and sporting activities,
and the king sometimes also held government meetings at the property. Conference delegates will have the wonderful opportunity to visit this splendid palace, enjoy the magnificent views and see some rooms where royalty lived. The Gala Dinner (Tuesday 21st) will take place at the Grand Casino, in “The Sardinero” area, a regal, 1920’s building with large windows and spacious terraces offering superb views of the Sardinero beach. The Casino was King Alfonso XIII and Queen Victoria Eugenia’s main place of entertainment during their summer holidays in the city between 1913 and 1930. The Gala will also include some cultural and musical amenities that conference delegates should not miss at all. Finally, a half-day conference tour (Wednesday 22nd) will take you to the “alive museum” of the Middle Ages, Santillana del Mar (a medieval town with cobbled streets, declared “Site of Artistic and Historical Importance” and one of the best-known cultural and tourist centres in Cantabria) and the Altamira Neocave, an exact reproduction of the original Altamira cave (now closed the public for preservation) with all its cracks and textures and the permanent exhibition “The Times of Altamira”, which introduces the visitors to the prehistory of the Peninsula and Rupestrian art.

And to close the conference, you can join the people of Santander for St. John’s day, celebrated in the night between 23rd and 24th June to commemorate the summer solstice with with bonfires on the beach.

For those who have a few extra days before coming back home, we propose a trip to visit the Cabárceno Nature Reserve (Thursday 23rd), a spectacular paradise for fauna where hundreds of animals from all over the world live in semi-liberty. Africa, America, Asia and Australia have all found their way in Cantabria. The park offers a home in semi-liberty to hundreds of animals representing all the zoological communities of the Earth. In this reserve for animals in danger of extinction you can observe, in a way that is unique in the whole of Europe, a host of wildlife from far-away countries: tigers, bears, lions, jaguars, elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes, buffalos and many more, living and reproducing in a habitat which is thousands of years old, and has now been restored. And for Friday 24th, we propose a trip to visit the city of Bilbao (capital of the Basque Country) and its famous Guggenheim Museum, a magnificent example of the most groundbreaking architecture to have come out of the 20th century. This spectacular building is completely covered with titanium sheets. It houses its own private collection, in addition to sharing with New York and Venice the world's largest and most impressive private collection of modern and contemporary art. Bilbao is a particularly historic city, with a legacy of old buildings and a rich culture, based around the Old Town, in the Casco Viejo area. Bilbao also boasts an impressive selection of restaurants and shops, together with a vibrant nightlife to rival any city.

We hope that all these attractions will make your trip an unforgettable experience.

On behalf of the local organizing committee members, let me express our satisfaction for your visit and give you our warmest welcome to the region of Cantabria, the city of Santander and the University of Cantabria, ICCSA’2011 conference venue.

Andrés Iglesias
ICCSA 2011 Local Organizing Chair