



BLUEFIELDS BAY, JAMAICA GEOTOURISM EVALUATION



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Executive Summary

Bluefields Bay, Jamaica is on the cusp of tourism opportunity. There are strong, interested parties that are working toward responsible tourism development and a growing travel trend toward more nature based travel, of which the area has in abundance.

The fact that Bluefields Bay has not as yet been invaded by mega resorts, neon bars and tacky souvenir shops is greatly to its benefit. As yet the forests, dirt roads, flora and fauna have not been irretrievably destroyed. As yet the people in the area are welcoming, interested in the tourists that make the off side journey.

All of that can change in an instant – positively and negatively.

Bluefields Bay has the opportunity to develop nature based, cultural and heritage tourism that fit Geotourism guidelines if there is a concentrated tourism plan. In addition, there must be a commitment by the Jamaican government that understands the need for some pristine areas of the Jamaica to be preserved.

Not only would the area be attractive to international tourists, but to Jamaicans themselves who are living in the country's urban areas. These citizens are deeply affected by the country's mass market tourism, and are often looking for a more peaceful, simple holiday.

The challenge here is to convince the Jamaican government that mega developments are not necessary on the southern coast. The additional challenge is in developing accommodations that meet modern standards while still preserving the tranquil nature of the area. And, making accommodations affordable for the nature based tourist and the Jamaican citizen.

Nature based tourism would be an inevitable success in this area of Jamaica if it is coupled with accommodations that meld into the environment and maintain what the tourist has come to see in the first place.

Bluefields Bay is located on the lesser developed south coast of Jamaica. It is a place of great natural beauty, small villages, native cultures and traditional crafts. This is a place where Jamaicans can come to reconnect with the country's past, where high rises and mass market tourism has yet to intrude on this pastoral countryside

Bluefields Bay area also faces west, offering spectacular sunsets. This west facing view is one of the most popular when tourists are choosing accommodations. Capitalizing on this geographic location gives the area an advantage that only Negril can compete with. The "sunset" travel concept can be developed in a myriad of ways and the imagery that comes along with it has been shown to attract the most guests.

The south coast affords an opportunity to protect some of the country's important coastal lands, when many areas of the coast have been filled with mega hotels and resorts and valuable habitats have been lost. Substantial areas of the north are similar to any developed beach tourist area, without much to claim as unique.

The southern coastal area is unique. It has a different atmosphere than the north and southeast areas. This is the area that is probably closest to old Jamaica and one of the few areas that can present the combination of resort and relaxation vacation.

According to USA Today July 13, 2011 online edition, one of the growing travel trends are "Digital detox vacations:

"...take an "unplugged" journey...no TV or in-room phone, let alone iPhone and iPad - and look forward to exploring a place without being short-circuited by technology."

Ecotourism is considered the fastest growing market in the tourism industry, according to the World Tourism Organization. There has been an annual growth rate of 5% worldwide,

representing 6% of the world's gross domestic product and 11.4% of all consumer spending - not a market to be taken lightly. The Bluefields Bay Area of Jamaica is a unique position to take advantage of this growing trend in nature based tourism.

There are a number of nature based attractions already in place. These include the designated fish sanctuary and an accessible reef. There is also an established birding and nature based tour operation, with trained guides. In addition, to date there has not been damaging development that can destroy habitats.

The challenges will be in financing for projects that will not destroy the character of the region. Challenges will also be in establishing and developing suitable accommodations that reflect the region's nature based focus, while providing quality amenities.

In addition, the community needs to have a vested interest in the success of the tourism product and entrepreneurial efforts need to be encouraged.

Of all of the facilities available in the Bluefields Bay area, there were a total of only four that were found suitable for hosting incoming visitors. Each is a low density development, setup to accommodate small to medium sized groups.

Horizon Cottages was the least preferred of the accommodations but does have a private beach as well as a security wall surrounding the compound. Each furnished cottage features a large living/dining porch with privacy shades, a ceiling and table fanned bedroom with queen size bed, fully-equipped kitchen and a private bathroom. Additional amenities include a seaside pavilion, sea kayaking, snorkeling, horseback riding as well as a housekeeper and boatmen. This facility would most likely generate a two star rating

The Bluefields Bay Villas qualifies as a four to five star private villa rental property. Private bay front as well as high seclusion and security are just some of the highlighted amenities. The property also includes a private swimming pool, two master bedroom suites with two additional bedrooms. There is access to a tennis court, seaside gazebo and patios as well as wireless internet. This property is listed as a full service facility that includes access to a spa.

The third facility was the Bluefields Bay Resort. This particular location had numerous amenities including a security wall, private huts, a public bar as well as a restaurant with space to rent. This new addition to the property is listed for weddings or family parties. It could also be converted to serve as a non-traditional style meeting space. The food, drink, and service were all excellent. There are rooms for rent that are connected to the main compound with interior corridors. However, as an extension of the regular rooms, there are three exterior rooms located on the edge of the sea by the beachfront. Each of the rooms has an

in suite bath and toilet and the rooms are furnished with original wood furniture as well as a satellite TV. This property was assessed to as a two star facility.

The last of the accommodation to be assessed is that of the locally owned Sunset Cottages. This facility includes a kitchen, dining room as well as a courtyard. The property includes six private rooms and four interior quarters. The private bayside view and outside gazebo make for additions to the facility. Perhaps the most important feature of the Sunset Cottages is that of the wall surrounding the complex. This sense of security eases the mind of those within its walls.

All of the previous facilities had websites except the Sunset Cottages. The main issue with the available accommodations is the gap in services provided from Bluefields Bay Villas and the other three properties. It leaves one to choose between a four or five star accommodation and a 1-2 star facility.

A community can become a popular destination solely on the basis of offering a unique dining experience to visitors. Great food can attract many people to a destination even if it has little to offer outside of a restaurant. Given the culture and heritage behind the uniqueness of Jamaican cuisine, Bluefields does have a potential market for this which they are not currently targeting. Many of the dining establishments in the Bluefields Bay area are poorly maintained and advertised, leaving visitors unwilling to try or oblivious to the existence of the local eateries. The right combination of traditional cooking, unique atmosphere, and overall dining experience could potentially lead to a successful restaurant, providing economic income, and a cornerstone for future commercial development for the community.

The lack of dining options in the Bluefields area can be attributed to the area's low density population, and the tendency of Jamaicans to cook their own food. Dining options in Bluefields are limited to a few small restaurants and bars, as well as the ever present street food vendors.

The Bluefields Bay Resort offers a bar and restaurant setting on the ocean, complete with a newly built second level to the bar area. Other establishments in the area include Pablo's Paradise, KD's Keg and Fish Joint, and Gooden's. Of the three, Pablo's Paradise is best suited for tourists. KD's Keg and Fish Joint is located beachside and offers pool tables, while Gooden's is a popular local bar offering a limited daily menu. These establishments are considered "local hangouts", but offer decent food with nice drinking atmospheres. Typically the food offered is inexpensive, costing about \$5 US per meal.

An additional option for dining can be found at Sunset Cottages, given prior notification, the staff can provide authentic Jamaican family style meals. There are many small, modest bars

in the Bluefields area, most of them are simple tiki huts located on the sides of the main road through town. Leroy's is one of these types of local bars which provides access to the beach for visitors.

Street food is readily available in Bluefields, covering a wide variety of foods readily available to the locals. Some of these foods include fruits, fish, breads, and chicken to name a few. Of these traditional street foods, none is more popular in the area than Omar's chicken. Omar cooks Jamaican jerk style chicken out of an oil drum converted to a grill with the Jamaican flag painted on. This type of cultural dining experience is exactly what visitors to the area are willing to take part in when visiting an area such as Bluefields.

The Peter Tosh Memorial is one of Bluefields Bay's most popular attractions. Here you can visit Peter Tosh's brightly painted tomb, and a Rastafarian guide will show you where Peter Tosh lived as well as some herbal remedies for various ailments. Also at the Peter Tosh memorial you can purchase CD's. This is a popular attraction for Reggae-lovers.

There were minimal listings of events specific to the Bluefields Bay area or the Westmoreland parish. The only exhibit/event was the Peter Tosh Memorial which hosted concerts throughout the year. The only notable event seemed to be celebrating his birthday.

Upon review of other prominent national holidays, Independence day and National Heroes day seemed to be the most popular in Jamaica, but no specific events were advertised or noted for the area.

An important factor in strategic planning is the use of appropriate marketing techniques. Currently, the Bluefields Bay area is not being marketed effectively. There is an absence of positioning, profile, and awareness.

A centralized website containing visitor information regarding the accommodations, attractions, and businesses of the entire area is desperately needed. This will provide the general public with an awareness of the Bluefields Bay area, providing the important service of informing the potential visitor.

Marketing is not cohesive and an identity has not been determined. In addition, the Jamaican Tourist Board lumps the entire south coast into one region and has not defined the area for the tourist. This can be accounted for by the lack of a developed tourist plan by the area.

The area seems to have strong connections to traditional Jamaican life and Jamaican history. This is an area where interviews with local citizens will provide asset sources that can be developed for tourism.

There is a strong Rastafarian presence and a connection to Reggae music through the Peter Tosh Memorial. The religious and musical connection needs to be developed, without being destroyed. Information for the tourist, through brochures and the web site, would help them understand the importance of these two elements to the area. No such information currently exists.

There is also a strong marine history to Bluefields Bay from both the Spanish and English colonialists. Remnants of that history can be found in a few buildings and sea floor anchorages. However, local citizens seem to know where certain historical features were, even if there are no remnants today. This needs to be developed, again through conversations with local citizens.

While the historical features are not as expansive as other parts of the island, the maritime history is somewhat unique and could be developed much further. The Taino history is limited, but there are currently research projects looking at a greater presence which might be beneficial.

Overall, there needs to be more of a relationship between the tourist and these cultural and heritage features. Information on a web site, with links to historical sources, brochures and stories about the history of the area, etc., would be a first priority. All of these will give the tourist a greater connection, which leads to a greater interest, in the area.

At this point, the interest level is low, primarily because tourists have no idea of the identity of the area, what it has to offer and what a vacation in the area will provide to the

potential visitor. This is not just a problem for the local tourist authorities, because it appears that the Jamaican Tourist Board has a similar problem. When looking at the JTB web site for the area, it is quite uninteresting. There is little to tempt the visitor to pursue more information on the area as it appears there are little or no accommodations, attractions or history.

A group of Missouri State students were asked several questions regarding their trip to Bluefields Bay. Their responses were rated on a 5 point scale as follows:

- 1 – Poor
- 2 – Marginal
- 3 – Satisfactory
- 4 – Above Average
- 5 – Outstanding

There were a total of twelve (12) Questions that were used for sample data:

1. What was your first impression of Bluefields Bay when you arrived and did anything in particular make a positive or negative first impression?
 - a. The average response was satisfactory at a 3.73.
2. What was your impression of sunset cottages? What do you think of your room?
 - a. The average response was above average at a 4.27.
3. What did you think of the mountain hike in the morning?
 - a. The average response was satisfactory at 3.36.
4. If you were traveling alone, would you have taken either of these tours?
 - a. The average response was satisfactory to marginal at 2.91 indicating a lower probability of taking the tours.
5. Prior to the birding tour, discuss your level of knowledge and interest in the subject. Has the tour changed your level of interest?
 - a. The average response was satisfactory to marginal at 2.82 indicating a lower probability of increasing knowledge in birding.

6. Do you think there is any potential for the destruction of the coral reefs due to snorkeling activities? Do you think it requires more regulation to limit any damage?
 - a. The average response was satisfactory to marginal at 2.55 indicating that there is some potential and requires more regulation
7. Do you have a preference for one activity you would have liked to spend more time on?
 - a. The average response was satisfactory to above average at 3.36 indicating an interest in more time with outdoor and more active programs.
8. Is there enough being done to ensure the preservation of Bluefields Bay?
 - a. The average response was satisfactory to marginal at 2.55 indicating that there is a belief that more should be done.
9. Part of the trip was a typical luncheon. What did you think of the local cuisine?
 - a. The average response was outstanding at 4.73.
10. Do you think that YS falls would be considered a major attraction?
 - a. The average response was above average at 3.91.
11. Do you think that the Boat tour of the Black River and Great Morass would be considered a major attraction?
 - a. The average response was above average at 4.09.
12. Is Treasure Beach worth the trip?
 - a. The average response was above average at 4.27.

The above was analyzed in order to gain some insight into the destination's potential for tourism and current tourism situation. This was an extremely small test group, and had a very similar demographic, so findings are somewhat different than that of a larger and more diverse group. However, this group of college age students has an overall positive attitude towards the destination indicating that this is a strong potential target market from tourism initiatives.

The PEP Analysis is an examination of a traveler's experience. Data is composed of traveler's opinions on how passive/active an activity is while at the same time stating to what degree the traveler felt the activity was an observation/immersion.

Two scales are used to generate a projected experience, which suggests how much an activity qualifies as education, entertainment, aesthetics and/or escapism. The data for this review was generated by the GRY-470, Jamaica Study Group.

Graphing will be found on the power point.

Bluefields Bay has a number of strengths that make it a desirable tourism destination.

First, the seclusion that effectively separates it from the "mass market tourism" that is found on the north and far west sides of the island. There are no high rise hotels or large resort developments, and nature has been left alone to flourish without fear of adverse development.

There are not amenities or accommodations suitable for supporting such an influx of visitors, which retains the pristine nature of the area. The natural attraction of the area results in less number of visitors, but a much richer experience.

The region is only an hour and a half away from the Montego Bay airport and an hour from the more high traffic area of Negril. It is also located about 45 minutes north west of the Treasure Beach area and attractions such as YS Falls and the Black River.

Another strength that should be noted is the friendliness of the local community. Often in high traffic resort areas we find an almost adversarial relationship between tourists and local citizens. This is not the case in this area. The only way that a tourism product such as Bluefields Bay can sustain long-term development is to have the support of the local population, and this appears to be a positive relationship.

Available are locally produced food and crafts, which are particularly attractive to those desiring a more authentic experience. Both the culinary and artistic elements are important assets.

There are many strengths in the Bluefields Bay area, particularly with respect to the environment. To begin, there is the presence of high levels of biodiversity as well as the presence of several at-risk species. This rare commodity harbors potential tourism dollars for those that

are particularly interested in an exhibition of such species. Having a wide spectrum of plant and animal life adds to the perceived image of nature based tourism.

The largest fish sanctuary in Jamaica is another strength, perhaps one of the strongest. This not only helps protect marine life, but has the fish's natural predators returning to the Bay. As the sanctuary continues to replenish the fish population, this can lead to development of marine associated activities. Just outside the sanctuary there are excellent swimming, boating, fishing and diving sites.

The sanctuary adds to the high biodiversity as the sanctuary houses various reefs. Being the largest fish sanctuary in Jamaica, Bluefields Bay sets a high standard for further preservation efforts, and provides a testament to the commitment of the region to long term sustainability.

There is also the area's natural physical geography. The bay as well as the mountains offers breathtaking views of the other. Just slightly removed from the bay one begins to see the various types of agriculture that have added another facet to the internal offerings for inbound travel. The climate is also worth listing in this particular section as the weather in Jamaica is excellent. Having a tropical climate is particularly attractive to international travelers. Last, but certainly not least, the amazing view of the sunset on the bay. The westward facing beach line yields not only protection from tropical storms but also a private showing of a sunset every night.

Finally, there is a maritime history in the Bluefields Bay Area. Captain Bligh and the Mutiny on the Bounty brought the breadfruit tree to Jamaica, landing with it in Bluefields Bay. He also visited on two occasions. Captain Henry "Bluebeard" Morgan and the British Fleet is another of the maritime historic strengths of the region. The fleet was docked in the area and underwater anchorages have been identified on the seafloor.

There were also ruins of several businesses that were used to supply the ships. There is an area where fresh water was brought out to the ships as well as a lime juice factory directly on the bay. There are some pier and wharf ruins that also extend into the Bay.

The maritime connection can be further explored through activities associated with marine activities and marine life. There is potential for scuba diving, not only on the reefs but also on the bottom of the bay where historical artifacts can be found. Also, looking at fishing, boating and marine development is a logical extension of this historical connection.

The presence of weaknesses will be apparent in any destination when undergoing thorough evaluation, but with timely identification and proper corrective actions, improvements can be made to prevent the weaknesses of Bluefields Bay, from becoming threats or overwhelming any opportunities.

The first issue which must be addressed is the lack of planning for any tourism development. Strategic plans are needed in order to encourage the drivers of the tourism economy. Without the adequate planning actions necessary to develop a sustainable tourism destination, Bluefields will be the victim of inefficient development, leading to unattractive sprawl. While community enthusiasm and support will go a long way in negating this issue, additional support outside of the community may need to be sought when considering more costly improvements.

Another weakness which stands out is the poor road systems of Jamaica. The issue is on both the macro and micro levels for the island, making transportation difficult and time consuming. The road from Montego Bay into Bluefields is curvy, bumpy, congested, and limits access into the area.

The location of Bluefields can be viewed as a positive, as well as a negative. From the negative viewpoint, the community is removed and difficult to reach. The relatively small population operates in a low wage economy, and is unfortunately located outside of the “tourism bubble”, resulting in less money being brought into the community by the tourism industry. Being located outside of the “tourism bubble”, also accentuates the issue of safety, visitors may not feel as comfortable removed from developed areas.

There is also the issue of internal weaknesses within the community, regarding conflicting viewpoints on operational practices. On one hand, we have the efforts being made by the Bluefields People's Community Association (BPCA) and the Friendly Fishermen's Society to improve the ecological wellbeing of the area, and on the other hand we have community locals dumping waste into the ocean, within close proximity to the Fish Sanctuary. I believe that the local community would benefit from environmental education, to better understand the importance of proper waste management for ecological wellbeing of the island.

While there are weaknesses present in the area, there are certainly actions which can take place to alleviate these issues. It will take some time and effort, as well as some community involvement, but positives will come of calling attention to these issues, providing for an improved overall visitor experience.

The most obvious, and potentially most successful, opportunities for Bluefields Bay, Jamaica are expanding Study Away programs for universities. This is a growing trend and an increasing demand for places like Bluefields Bay to student travelers. For example, Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri indicates that the Study Away organization they work with started with only 28 students and now they have 37,000. There are many benefits for Study Away students such as a great cultural experience, learning a new language, gaining more independence, meeting new people, traveling to new places, taking unique courses, building their resume, and learning more about themselves in a different culture. Bluefields Bay has the opportunity to capitalize on all of these potential benefits and draw in Study Away students to this area.

Bluefields Bay also has the opportunity to develop meeting rooms and classrooms. As the number of student travelers increases, the need for infrastructure where these students can meet to learn and have discussions also increases. The area has the opportunity to create a great learning environment for these students simply by developing meeting rooms and classrooms.

Another opportunity for would be the area's ability to attract those markets with particular interest in nature activities such as birding, hiking, and nature walks as well as activities like sailing, diving, and exploring the coral reefs. And because Bluefields Bay offers these types of nature activities, they have the opportunity to develop nature based educational tour programs as well.

The Peter Tosh Memorial is one of the most popular attractions. Many people are drawn to this memorial because it is a symbol of Jamaican culture and it has ties with the popular

Reggae movement. The memorial could be further developed and utilize its growing popularity to attract even more visitors.

There are a lot of empty buildings right along the beach in the Bluefields Bay area that used to be residences and restaurants but currently are not being used. Here is an opportunity to utilize these infrastructures and restore them to create beachside restaurants that will attract locals and visitors alike.

Another opportunity would be to develop the culinary traditions of the area. It is rich in culinary elements and there are many different forms of agriculture as well as accessibility to locally made foods. And the recently rejuvenated fish population in the bay can be featured in these restaurants as well. By renovating the empty buildings and creating restaurants, Bluefields Bay can really exploit the unique local cuisine.

There are a few things that threaten Bluefields Bay, Jamaica as a tourist destination. One of these threats involves potential Study Away students. Students could potentially be deferred from a destination because of things like culture shock, their academic classes may not transfer, classes in other countries may be more difficult for the student, studying abroad is expensive, separation from family and friends, and some students may experience discrimination. If Bluefields Bay does not consider these threats and work hard to minimize them, they will lose student travelers.

Safety issues also threaten travel to Bluefields Bay. Some of the places in Bluefields Bay are not gated, some do not have good security, piracy has been known to threaten the Caribbean, and crime is not uncommon. The Jamaican government is currently in charge of paying local individuals to police areas like Bluefields Bay, but the government is considering ceasing to pay these individuals, which would result in a serious lack of regulation and police force. If tourists feel in any way that their safety will be threatened when visiting Bluefields Bay, they will choose a different destination to visit, which will threaten the success of tourism to Bluefields Bay.

Competition with other beach destinations is another threat to the success of tourism in Bluefields Bay. There are many other locations with exquisite villas, fine dining, pristine beaches, high class services, and plenty of beach activities. If Bluefields Bay does not find ways to stand above and beyond these other locations even when offering some of the same attractions, they will lose tourists.

A lack of planning with regards to the watersheds and water supplies, as well as the water quality of the rivers flowing into Bluefields Bay, is another threat to Bluefields Bay's tourism

potential. And activities such as sailing and diving can threaten the fragile coral reefs in Bluefields Bay if there aren't strict regulations in place to protect them.

Another threat to Bluefields Bay is a lack of environmental education for the general population. If the general population does not understand the importance of environmental protection in their own city, then there will be no one to explain and demonstrate its importance to tourists. Locals need to lead by example. Otherwise, if no one is concerned about protecting this fragile environment, it will eventually be destroyed by locals and tourists alike.

The fish sanctuary is currently being protected by the Jamaican government so that the fish population has a chance to regenerate after destructive fishing practices and over-fishing. If the government decides to take back its protection of the fish sanctuary, it will threaten the fish population, which will affect the local cuisine being offered in restaurants, and in turn affect tourism potential.

The new development on the hill is a big threat to tourism potential in Bluefields Bay for several reasons. This development is not set on a stable infrastructure with stable walls around it, so when it rains, debris and runoff from the development area washes down the hill and then pollutes the water, threatens the fish sanctuary and damages the fragile coral reefs. It is causing large amounts of environmental destruction. If the development is not finished and is left on the hill in its current condition, it will leave a huge ecological scar, damaging the environment and creating an eyesore for both visitors and locals. It is not aesthetically pleasing and it threatens the natural atmosphere of Bluefields Bay.

Recommendations

Accommodations

The general recommendation for the accommodations sector of the Bluefields Bay area is for the facilities to standardize their services. There needs to be some sort of entity controlling the quality of the product being produced. An alliance with several facilities will ultimately lower the initial cost each property will incur when making themselves more visible to the outside world. Sharing business allows the lodging facilities to accommodate larger groups while being able to be more flexible at the same time.

Providing accommodations that are upgraded in terms of basic amenities and quality of the properties is essential. A benchmark against other properties selling at the same or similar pricing is important in establishing the image of the area. Specific recommendations for Sunset Cottages will be found on the PowerPoint)

Improvement of the existing dining establishments is quite important. An aesthetic or pleasing appearance is how tourists determine if they will even enter an establishment. They are willing to immerse themselves in local cuisine, but a welcome and sanitary appearance is essential. Simple improvements could increase attendance by attracting customers who would have previously dismissed the establishment as a dining option strictly on poor appearance

There is no marketing of the F/B, but due to the lack of these types of establishments, that is not unusual. There isn't even a real local dining place to recommend to tourists, lessening the overall sense of destination. Existing establishments should also take part in the comprehensive website to increase exposure

The future development of a restaurant directed towards tourists may be beneficial to the community. This would be something that would have the ambiance and atmosphere of the destination, take advantage of local cuisine and products and fit into the tourism focus of the destination.

Visitors to the area will expect a variety of dining options and there are not any. There is nothing in the local area, within walking distance, on the beach or up in the mountains. Visitors expect beachfront restaurants as part of the island experience.

This is an area where local cuisine has a wonderful taste, where catered meals of local products was quite successful, but for the independent and casual tourist there is nothing available without a substantial effort.

There are several potential beachfront areas currently available for restaurants and bars, and before more tourists can be accommodated in Bluefields, this area needs to be improved.

The Peter Tosh is an attraction that can be built upon without extensive renovation or infusion of capital.

In order to make this attraction more popular and draw in more visitors, here are a few recommendations that we have come up with:

Have live concerts at the monument, maybe once a month music festivals to celebrate the Reggae culture and commemorate Peter Tosh.

Also could have another festival on the days of his birth and death.

Turn his home that he once lived in into a museum that is coordinated with the tomb.

Have a guide that will talk to visitors about Peter Tosh's home and then lead them to the tomb give and give an educational session about his tomb as well.

Continue to sell his CD's at these sites and have some of the music playing out loud so people passing by can hear it, but not so loud that it disturbs the surrounding environment.

You could have local people selling traditional arts and crafts at these sites as well as small food carts for people passing through to promote local culture and cuisine.

You could have someone there to photograph tourists next to the memorial and then sell the photos. And you could have the Jamaican style hats and dress that people can wear for their photos.

Need to advertise this as a packaged tour from the house to the tomb and make sure people know that there will be a guide explaining things along the way. A great way to showcase the continuing changes and improvements made to an area are to host various festivals and parades. This also gives local vendors a chance to challenge their own levels of production and

perhaps try to expand and grow. Developing more locally based festivals/events will work to stabilize domestic tourism in times that international tourism dollars may be in lower supply. This type of mentality will help to stabilize the local economy with both local and foreign dollars instead of relying solely on money coming from outside of the area. The challenge to the Bluefields Bay area is to now try to discover what they feel makes them different from all other parts of Jamaica, not just different from other countries.

The application of marketing effectively is perhaps one of the most important aspects of any tourism development plan. Tourism is all about image and perception, both of which can be enhanced in the visitor's eyes when a destination is marketed correctly. In addition to enhancing the image and perception of a destination, marketing can sway the opinions of potential visitors in favor of the destination and gain new potential visitors at the same time. The lack of marketing is currently a weakness of the Bluefields Bay area.

There are many avenues through which Bluefields Bay can better market itself as a tourism destination. The first and most important of these is the creation of a comprehensive website to better inform and encourage potential visitors to the area. In this new age of global travel, an increasing number of people are turning to the internet as their resource for travel information, in many cases travelers will research, plan, and purchase their entire vacation over the internet. Oftentimes a website is the first impression a potential visitor will have of a possible destination, and will have a large part in forming their opinions on possible locations to spend their vacation time.

Currently, there is information available for the Bluefields Bay area on the internet, unfortunately it is scattered in multiple locations and may prove difficult to track down even if an individual were interested in the destination. With information scattered in multiple locations, the chances of a potential traveler stumbling across information about Bluefields is also diminished. In addition to the information being difficult to locate, in many cases it was outdated or the website was not professionally developed. This will have an adverse effect on

the destinations credibility and public appeal. A comprehensive, informational website needs to be developed for travelers coming to the Bluefields Bay area.

For this website to be considered the central hub for visitor information regarding tourism activity in Bluefields Bay it will need to be professionally designed and the information will need to be regularly kept up-to-date. The website needs to be comprehensive in that it should contain all the information that a traveler coming to the destination would find useful. Some possible suggestions regarding the content of the website include lodging and business contact information, photographs of the area, activities in the area, maps, safety information, and packing and traveling tips. Hyperlinks should also be created for additional useful and professionally created websites pertaining to the Bluefields Bay area. It is also recommended that the website have connections to the Jamaica Tourist Board, this will increase the websites exposure as well as its credibility.

In addition to the website, the Bluefields area needs to be branded as a destination, the development of a logo and slogan could be an effective way of doing this. The use of a logo and slogan can increase the exposure and credibility of the community by passing on information about the destination at a single glance. Branding a destination gives the marketing efforts a name, and increases tourists' awareness and recall of a destination. Branding will also allow for the targeting of a niche market, which is a more distinct subgroup the market trying to be reached with the destination as a product. In the case of Bluefields Bay, the niche market will consist of the ecologically friendly Geotourism. All of the businesses taking part in the comprehensive website will need to operate in an environmentally responsible manner in order to deliver the product promised to the niche market.

Once travelers arrive in Bluefields Bay, the use of printed informative materials will be necessary due to the lack of the availability of internet access. This information could come in the forms of maps, pamphlets, or brochures, and should be available at every business or organization taking part in the website. All of these printed materials should include the logo and slogan of the community.

Bluefields Bay has great natural beauty that has substantial nature based tourism potential. There is access, some infrastructure and community interest in tourism development which are the building blocks of a successful program.

One of the most important areas that needs to be addressed is that of the community taking the time to evaluate community assets and identify its tourism focus. The area suffers from lack of branding and image - the potential tourist has no idea what the area is all about and does not have a clear picture of why they should go there, as opposed to other areas of Jamaica.

A community web site needs to be established with links to accommodations and sightseeing in order to market the area more effectively. In this day of easy access to technology, the lack of a web page (in the tourist's mind) is a lack of things to do, things to see, places to stay, etc.

Upgrades must be done in the budget and medium priced accommodations in order to appeal to nature based tourists who are, by tradition, less apt to spend a lot of money. That said, they are also willing to pay for their creature comforts as long as that does not intrude on the environment. However, there are glaring discrepancies in the accommodations offered and until those are addressed the tourist will be disappointed in the stay.

As a Phase I initiative we recommend increased concentration on student groups. These can be full semester Study Away programs that can be developed with various universities and the University of the West Indies. There are cooperative programs already in place with many universities that can be utilized.

These can also be limited time break or intersession classes, but often those come at the same time for all schools so concentrating only on that market would limit the income potential.

Therefore, we would recommend a tourism plan that looks at year round student tourism development.

There could also be field trips for graduate students to do research. This could also transition into projects for the community that could result from that research. As you know, Missouri State University is currently providing such services.

It must be made clear that we are not recommending a “spring break” type of destination with high numbers of bars, beach parties and so on. We are recommending a concentration on actual classes that require grading by the escorting professor which changes the complexion of this type of island vacation.

However, upgrades are still required in order to attract additional groups. There needs to be areas of accommodations or local community centers that can be used for classrooms. There needs to be available group transportation and a more formulated set of group programs that represent various areas of interest.

Concentrating on this area can provide increased income and tourism traffic while maintaining the traditional nature of the area.

Overall, these are the three phases of tourism development that we recommend:

➤ Pre-Phase

- Develop 2, 5 and 10 year strategic plan for tourism

➤ Phase I

- Upgrade accommodations, develop web site and concentrate on expanding student tour programs

➤ Phase II

- Develop eco-lodges and nature based touring programs

➤ Phase III

- Develop a sailboat marina and sailing tours to Jamaica's other islands

