

# PARQUE NACIONAL SUBMARINO LA CALETA

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KAYAK TOURISM





# TECHNICAL REPORT

# PARQUE NACIONAL SUBMARINO LA CALETA

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KAYAK TOURISM

By

Jerry Wylie

Ecotourism Specialist

USDA Forest Service

International Institute of Tropical Forestry

Río Piedras, Puerto Rico

and

Jerry Bauer

Project Team Leader

USDA Forest Service

International Institute of Tropical Forestry

Río Piedras, Puerto Rico

In collaboration with

Parque Nacional Submarino La Caleta

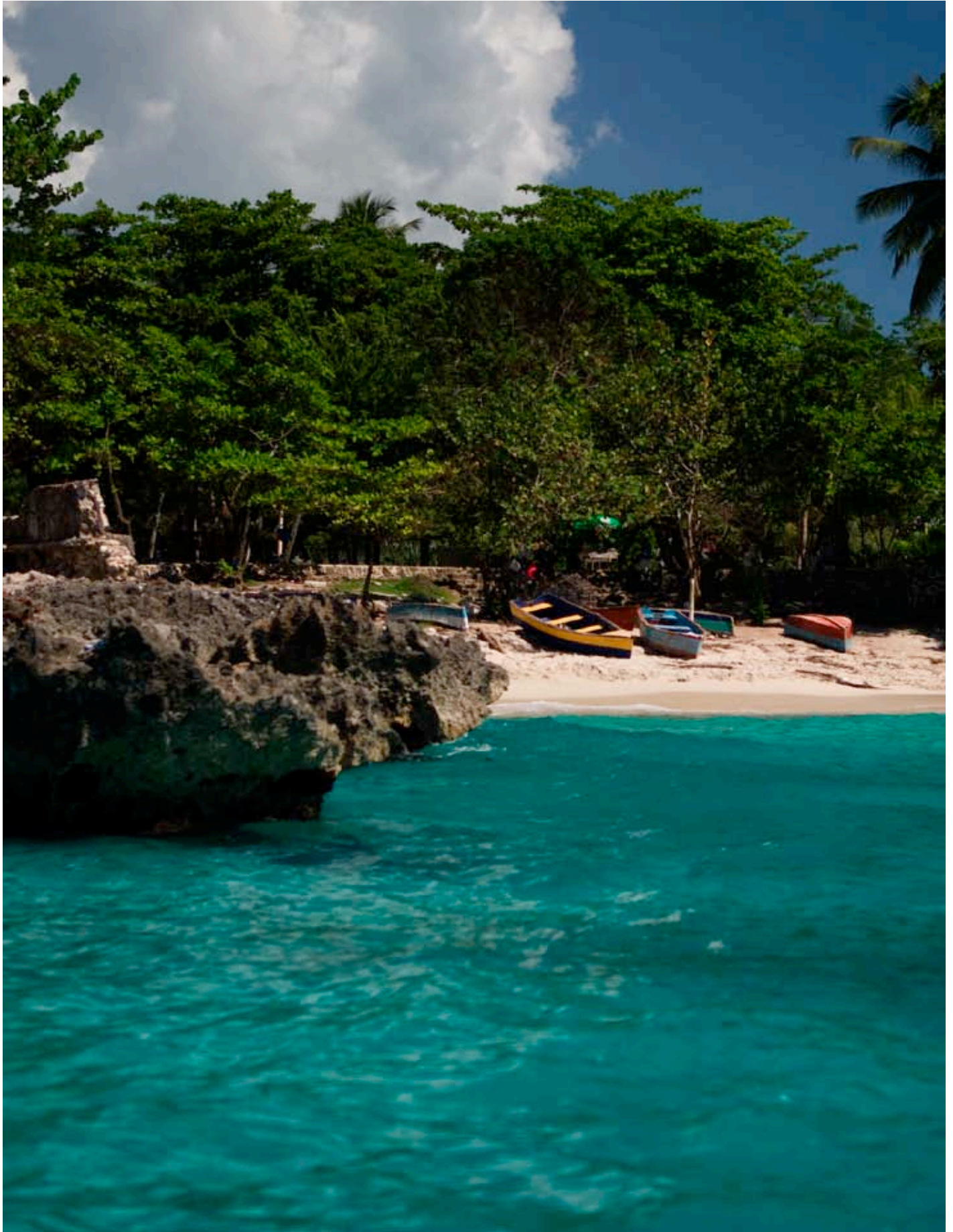
Dominican Republic, October 2008



**DR-CAFTA**

*This work was completed with support from the people of the United States through USAID/Dominican Republic and DR-CAFTA by the USDA Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry, with assistance from local and international partners and collaborators. The contents are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the United States Government. For further information contact Jerry Bauer at [gbauer@fs.fed.us](mailto:gbauer@fs.fed.us).*





Rock formations and cristal clear water at La Caleta beach.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Kayak Tourism Assessment	3
Ranking as a Potential Sea Kayak Destination	4
Recommendations	5
Recommended Kayaks and Equipment (Retail Prices)	6
Small Enterprise Establishment	7
Map 1. General Location of Parque Nacional Submarino La Caleta	8
Map 2. Marine Use Areas of Parque Nacional Submarino La Caleta	10
Photos of Parque Nacional Submarino La Caleta	11

## Tables

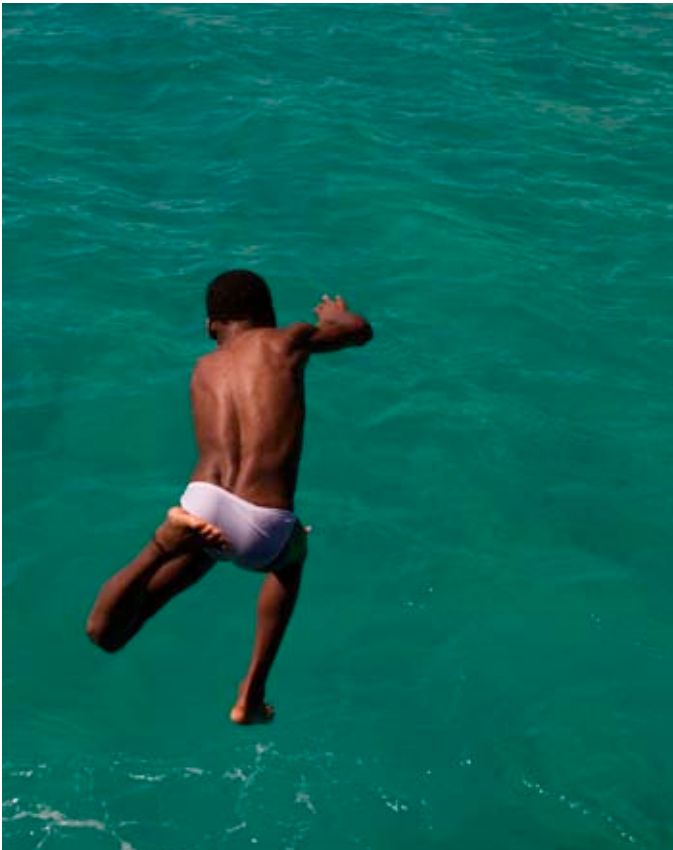
Table 1. SWOT Rapid Assessment	2
Table 2. Potential for successful sea kayak tourism	4
Table 3. Comparison with other kayak destinations	4
Table 4. Recommended kayak equipment and cost needed to start small business	6
Table 5. Recommended training for kayak tourism and small business development in PNSLC	7

## Figures

Figure 1. Examples of suitable kayak models for La Caleta	6
---	---

# INTRODUCTION

The authors visited the Parque Nacional Submarino La Caleta on October 26 at the invitation of Peace Corps Volunteer Victor Galvan, at the completion of a 3-day workshop on community-based sustainable tourism. During that workshop, Mr. Galvan and local counterparts saw a proposed kayak water trail plan from Montego Bay, Jamaica and a presentation on developing water trails that sparked their interest in exploring kayaking as an option for the La Caleta. Located about 22 kilometers east of Santo Domingo, La Caleta is one of the country's smallest national parks and is very popular with local divers. It has a large coral reef, prehistoric Taino Indian remains, a cemetery dating back to 1880s, several ruined buildings, and a small sandy beach. Fifteen of its 18 square kilometers are under water. We spent about four hours at the park, first walking the grounds and talking to members of the Fishing and Tourism Service Providers Cooperative and then we took a short tour by boat (yola) to the south eastern (toward the airport) and then the western (toward the cementary) boundaries, where we snorkeled at two locations (see Maps 1 & 2, pages 8-10). A very quick assessment of the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is summarized in Table 1 below.



Local youth enjoying water activities at La Caleta.

Table 1. SWOT Rapid Assessment.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Park status</li><li>• Coral reef with tropical fishes</li><li>• Proximity to Santo Domingo &amp; international airport</li><li>• Attractive trees &amp; vegetation</li><li>• Nice swimming beach</li><li>• Local tourism cooperatives</li><li>• Popular local recreation spot</li><li>• Ample space</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ruined buildings</li><li>• Abandoned infrastructure (pond, etc.)</li><li>• Cemetery in poor condition</li><li>• Trash and clutter</li><li>• No bathrooms</li><li>• No strong commercial linkage</li><li>• No signage or marketing</li><li>• Limited administrative facilities</li><li>• Limited law enforcement</li><li>• Limited parking facilities</li><li>• No heritage interpretation</li></ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dive and souvenir shop</li><li>• Diving and SCUBA lessons</li><li>• Great business location</li><li>• Fitness trail</li><li>• Snorkeling trail</li><li>• Diving trail</li><li>• Heritage interpretation</li><li>• Kayak classes, tours and rentals</li><li>• Kayak SCUBA diving and fishing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vandalism</li><li>• Illegal fishing</li><li>• Pollution</li><li>• Conflicting uses at beach</li></ul>

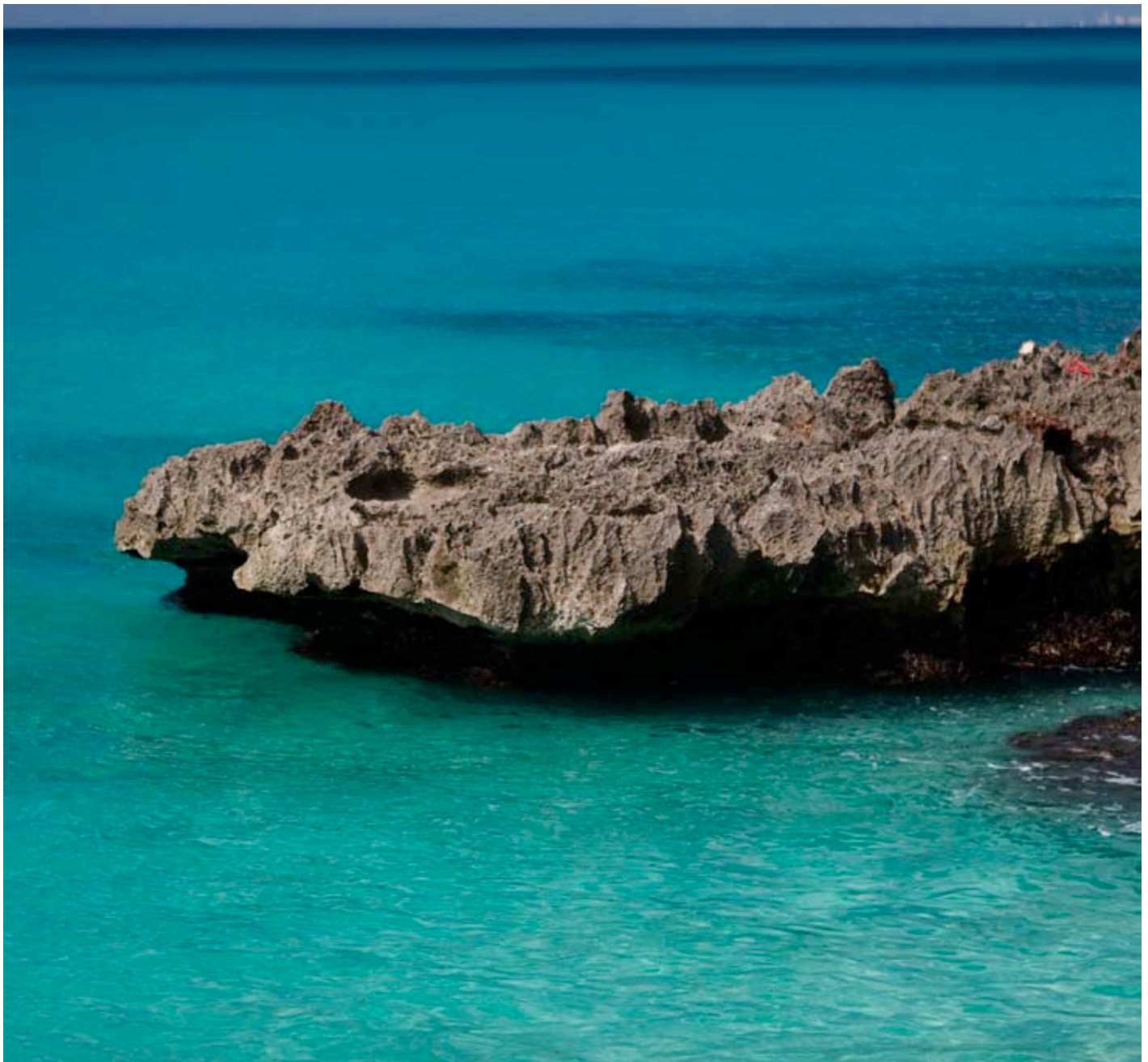


## KAYAK TOURISM ASSESSMENT

A rapid survey of the coastline, from the small beach to the west and the east ends of La Caleta, was completed in a small yola with an outboard motor. This survey took about two hours, as we only went about 50 yards into the ocean. The water was calm and relative clear, with good views from the boat to depths of about 15 feet. We were able to observe coral and several species of tropical fish from the yola. In addition, the jagged limestone coastline was interesting with unique rock formations and “water spouts” where the pounding waves shot through breaks in the rock formations. We snorkeled in two locations, where we were able to observe more fish than from the boat and several interesting coral formations.

We observed local fisherman on the coastline, using typical hand held line and we observed scuba divers who had entered the water directly from the coast (with no boat).

This rapid survey demonstrated that there is potential for kayak tourism in this area, for local and international tourists. We were impressed with the quantity of local “tourists” we observed in such a short time period. There is great potential to provide a “new” product for these local tourists to enjoy, as well as an opportunity to increase international tourist visits by offering new services.



Coastal limestone formation near La Caleta beach.

## RANKING AS A POTENTIAL SEA KAYAK DESTINATION

A numerical system rating the area's potential for successful sea kayak tourism is shown in Table 2. The following numerical system rates the area's potential for successful sea kayak tourism based on 12 criteria. The scale is 0-None, 1-Low, 2-Moderate, 3-Very Good, 4-Excellent, 5-Best in world (rare). Points are subtracted for serious negatives such as trash, conflicts with other users, and poor access to water. The maximum value is 37 points for truly "world-class" paddling destinations.

The score of 18 points shows the park has good potential for the development of kayak tourism. What it lacks in environmental diversity, different route options or in 3 undeveloped shoreline, it more than makes up in accessibility and safe paddling conditions in an urban setting. When comparing La Caleta kayaking potential with other kayaking destinations in the region its potential rates in about the middle, higher than some well-known locations (Table 3).

Commercial kayak activities could include classes, guided tours, special group events, and rentals. Kayak snorkeling tours, in particular, would be a very unique and interesting product. It may also be possible for SCUBA divers to use kayaks instead of wooden dories to reach nearby dive sites both inside and outside the park. Catch and release sport fishing from kayaks is also a possibility.

Table 2. Potential for successful sea kayak tourism.

Scoring Details		Points
A	Watchable wildlife includes reef fish and occasional dolphins	2 to 3
B	Water quality is good to excellent	3 to 4
C	Scenic quality includes an interesting shoreline	2
D	Safety and comfort appears to be excellent	4
E	Cultural and historic attractions are limited	1
F	Natural attractions are primarily the very nice reef and shoreline	3
G	Diversity of paddling opportunities is limited	1
H	Other recreational opportunities include snorkeling and diving	2
I	Conflicts with other users is not a problem	No deduction
J	Accessibility to water is good at the beach	No deduction
K	Trash is not a problem along the shore	No deduction
Total score		18 Points



Conch shell commonly found in the area.

Table 3. Comparison with other kayak destinations.

Destination	Score
Lake Gatun	34 points
Guanaja Island, Honduras	22 points
Culebra Island, Puerto Rico	20 points
Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge, Honduras	20 points
Glover's Reef, Belize	19 points
<b>La Caleta, Republica Dominicana</b>	<b>18 points</b>
Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua	14 points
Utila Island, Honduras	9 points



Snorkeler observing the coral reef.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop specific paddling routes and waterproof maps showing key attractions both above and below the water.
2. Installing mooring buoys at the primary snorkeling locations would make it easier for paddlers to secure their kayaks while swimming. It may also be possible for snorkelers to tow kayaks with lines attached to their belts, or to use a folding anchor.
3. Develop information, materials and presentations for guided and self-guided kayak tours. Consider waterproof fish identification guides and trail maps.
4. Construct a secure storage facility for the kayaks and equipment near the beach and with a source of fresh water for rinsing gear. Kayaks and equipment should not be stored in direct sunlight or they will deteriorate.
5. Obtain suitable kayaks and safety equipment. See list on page 6.
6. Train kayak guides and instructors (preferably local fisherman and community members). Kayak guides need to be strong paddlers, be able to demonstrate basic strokes and maneuvers, be familiar with the coastline, know how to deal with clients, have basic first-aid training, and be familiar with local hazards. We suggest, at a minimum, a 3-day training program patterned after the American Canoe Association's Day Trip Leader (guide) and Basic Coastal Kayak Instructor programs.
7. Develop marketing materials for kayak programs. At a minimum this should include a 4 x 9 inch rack card to advertise at local businesses, such as hotels and dive shops. Obtain high-quality photographs for this, including underwater shots.
8. Establish safety policies. Paddlers should wear life jackets at all times while on kayaks, have appropriate footwear (not sandals), not drink alcoholic beverages during the trip, take plenty of water, and wear hats and use sunscreen to protect against the sun. Expensive cameras are not recommended, even with dry bags, and car keys should be left with someone on shore if possible. Clients should also sign a standard release waiver indicating that they recognize the inherent risks of kayaking (including serious injury and even death), that they take full responsibility for their own safety, and that they will not sue anyone involved in the kayaking business if there is an accident.
9. Develop pricing for kayak products. Three-hour classes and guided tours typically range from US\$50-100 per person. Rentals range from US\$25-50 for a half day single kayak and slightly more for a double kayak.
10. Establish a "center of excellence or small business incubator" for kayak tourism & training and use this site as a model for others in Dominican Republic and the region.



Snorkeler observing the coral reef.

## RECOMMENDED KAYAKS AND EQUIPMENT (RETAIL PRICES)

Sit-on-top kayaks are well suited for tropical areas such as La Caleta. They are especially easy to get on and off when snorkeling and after a capsized. They are stable and can also be used to surf in gentle conditions. Table 4 shows the recommended kayak equipment and associated cost (in US\$) needed to start small business. This is the minimum equipment needed.

A minimum of two double kayaks and two single kayaks are recommended to start the program. This would accommodate up to five clients plus a guide. Additional equipment is listed in the attached list.

The total retail cost of equipment is about \$5,000. However, it should be possible to obtain wholesale or discount prices by purchasing blemished boats. Typical professional discounts are 25-30%. Taxes and shipping are extra.

Table 4. Recommended kayak equipment and cost needed to start small business.

Type of Equipment		Qty.	Each \$	Total \$
Sit-on-top Ocean Kayaks	Single person Prowler 13	2	\$849	\$1,698
	Zest Two Exp double	2	\$949	\$1,898
Equipment	Simply Magic paddles	8	\$105	\$840
	life jackets of various sizes	7	\$46	\$320
	safety whistles	8	\$6	\$48
	Folding anchor kit for snorkeling	1	\$40	\$40
	Rescue tow belt	1	\$76	\$45
	small dry bags	2	\$12	\$24
	first-aid kit	1	\$25	\$25
	waterproof map cases	2	\$10	\$20
TOTAL				\$4,958
All costs in US dollars.				

Figure 1. Examples of suitable kayak models for La Caleta.





# SMALL ENTERPRISE ESTABLISHMENT

Development of a small enterprise to support kayak tourism in PNSLC will take planning and a modest amount of funding. Below is our estimate of what is needed. This can be implemented in phases so not all the funding is needed at one time. Also, we suggest for the PNSLC to develop partnerships with local organizations that might provide volunteer assistance and in-kind support for either training or equipment.

We estimate that the cost for this small-business development will be about US\$42,000 (Training = US\$25,000; Kayak equipment & supplies = US\$5,000; Equipment storage structure = US\$9,000; Marketing and promotion = US\$3,000).

## I. Training

Training will be needed in small enterprise development, hospitality and guiding, and in kayak tourism. We have outlined a series of five short-courses for a total of about 12 days of training (Table 5). This training can be given by Peace Corps Volunteers and the US Forest Service. In addition to the formal short-course training, follow-up on-the-ground training could be given by Peace Corps Volunteers.

Table 5. Recommended training for kayak tourism and small business development in PNSLC.

Course Title	Length	Provider	Est. Cost
1. Micro-enterprise formation	3 days	PC	\$3,000
2. Hosting and hospitality	1 days	USFS/PC	\$4,000
3. Principles of nature guiding	2 days	USFS/PC	\$4,000
4. Kayak guides and instructors, beginners course	3 days	USFS/PC	\$7,000
5. Kayak guides and instructors, intermediate course	3 days	USFS/PC	\$7,000
TOTAL TRAINING			\$25,000
All costs in US dollars.			

A brief description of the training courses follows:

**Course #1.** Micro-enterprise Formation - This course should help the local entrepreneur (the Cooperative) develop their concept of what they want to do and how they expect to do it (i.e. formation of business concept). It should include basic business plan development and accounting for small business operation. This course could be given by a Peace Corps business volunteer.

**Course #2.** Hosting and Hospitality - This course would teach the basic of how to work with clients, how to meet their needs, and the dos and don'ts of working with the public.

**Course #3.** Principles of nature guiding - This course would teach basic guiding principles. It could be taught in conjunction with the Hosting and Hospitality course.

**Course #4/5.** Kayak guides and instructors, beginners course and intermediate course - Before any kayak tourism is started it will be necessary to provide the guides with the technical and safety skills necessary for implementation successful tourism program. This would be done in two courses. The first course would provide the skills needed to get started and the second course, taught about 6 months after the business is in operation, would be a follow-up course to teach more advanced skills after the guides have actual on-the-ground experience.

## 2. Kayak equipment & supplies

The minimum equipment needed to establish the kayak tourism business is shown in Table 4 (page 6). Total estimated cost of this equipment is about US\$5,000

## 3. Equipment storage structure

A small structure will be needed to store the equipment, to protect it from the elements and from possible thieves. This facility needs to be large enough to protect all equipment and to provide a small work area for the business operators. It will be necessary to develop some draft designs of this facility to do a good cost estimation, but we expect the total cost to be less than US\$9,000.

## 4. Marketing and promotion

No business will be successful unless the product is marketed correctly. We recommend that basic promotion materials be developed (rack card, flyers, poster) to make potential clients aware of the kayak opportunities at PNSLC. In addition, park staff should look for free opportunities at local fairs, by doing press releases and even a FAM trip for local journalist. Total estimated cost for basic marketing is US\$3,000.



Typical scenery at La Caleta.



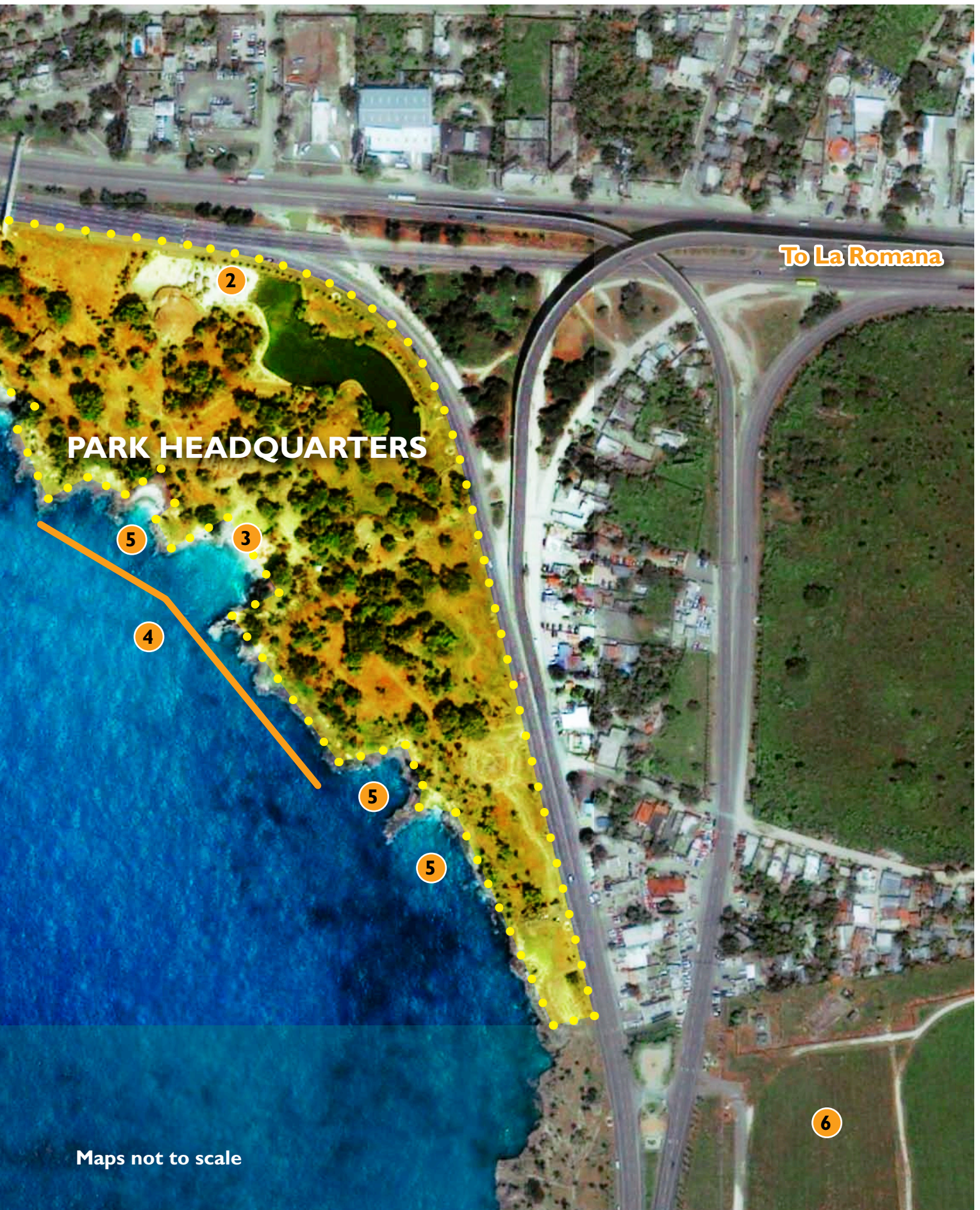
To Santo Domingo

## Map I

### GENERAL LOCATION OF PARQUE NACIONAL SUBMARINO LA CALETA

1. Cemetery
2. Potential recreation area (walking paths, bicycle trails, etc.)
3. La Caleta Beach
4. Area explored during the site visit
5. Great snorkel coves
6. Las Americas International Airport











## PHOTOGRAPHS OF PARQUE NACIONAL SUBMARINO LA CALETA



La Caleta beach is used by local tourists. This beach is also the launching site for boats to take SCUBA divers and snorkelers to the reefs.



Fisherman wooden boat, locally known as a “yola”, is used to take tourists to the reefs and also provide an interesting “artifact” to learn about local culture.



Community cemetery dating back to the 1880s is still used today.

Local community members fishing from the limestone coastline.



A variety of butterflies, such as this one feeding on a wildflower, were observed throughout the park.



Snorkelers enjoying one of the reefs in the park.

