



PADRE NUESTRO TRAIL PARQUE NACIONAL DEL ESTE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVED
INTERPRETATION AND SIGNAGE

BAYAHÍBE, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

TECHNICAL REPORT

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In collaboration with

La Romana-Bayahibe Hotel Association

Parque Nacional del Este

US Peace Corps

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DR-CAFTA

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INTRODUCTION

PADRE NUESTRO TRAIL BACKGROUND

The Padre Nuestro Trail, located near the coastal community of Bayahibe on the southeast coast of the Dominican Republic (Figure 1), was developed in 2007 as part of a USAID-funded program to relocate the community of Villa Padre Nuestro damaged by Hurricane George in 1998. At that time, 183 families (most of whom had worked as laborers constructing nearby tourism resorts), were living under primitive conditions and degrading the aquifer that provided water to most of the eastern part of the island. Pollution from outhouses and animal waste, hunting and deforestation from charcoal production and gardening were causing negative environmental impacts. Subsequently, over 1,000 individuals were moved to more modern housing about 13 kilometers away from this location. In 2002, eight square kilometers encompassing this trail were included within the legal boundary of the Parque Nacional del Este (Figure 2) and in early 2008 the Padre Nuestro Trail was inaugurated (Figure 3). A guide association was formed, partially as a means to give meaningful employment and to improve the economic status of the displaced families and partially as a means to help provide for long-term protection of the site.

Trail management objectives were established to help guide the trail development and future activities. The overall management objectives of the trail are to: 1) provide a high-quality recreational experience that connects visitors to the park in a safe and enjoyable way, 2) provide environmental education for local and international visitors, and 3) protect the environment, and promote sustainable economic development for guides and local tour businesses.

Figure 1. Padre Nuestro Trail location.



Cactus and dry forest vegetation commonly seen along the trail.

CURRENT TOURISM SITUATION

Tourism developments associated with the trail include construction of an open-air visitor center (i.e. Kiosk) with seven informational signs, restroom facility (soon to be completed), signs identifying selected plants and trees along the trail, a Spanish and English brochure (11x17 inches), and a large metal sign interpreting the historic charcoal manufacturing site.

Presently about 150 people visit the trail each week. Nearly all of them go directly to the Chicho II cave to swim and do not utilize the trail, nor the services of the local guides. The local guide association is currently negotiating with the park to offer guided tours on the trail. The park entrance fee is 300 pesos (about US\$3) and the proposed guide fee would be an additional 300 pesos.

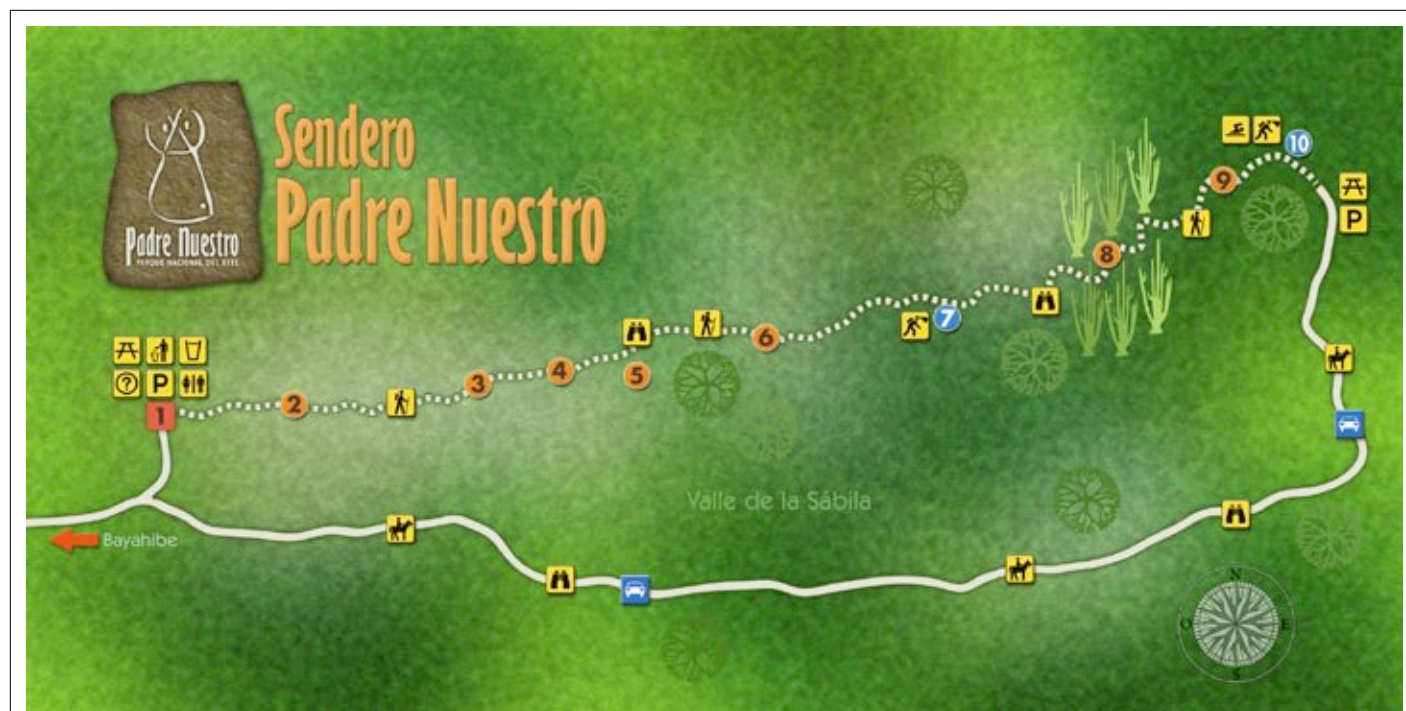
FIELDWORK

A US Forest Service team visited the trail on October 17 and 18, 2008 to conduct this assessment and to gather data to use as a case study in the USAID/CAFTA/US Forest Service sustainable tourism training short-course to be held later in the week. Under the direction of Jerry Bauer, the assessment team was comprised of Jerry Bauer, Bienva Bauer, Jerry Wylie, and Jorge Paniagua, with assistance from Peace Corps Volunteer Dilana Pickett. The team visited the trail for a rapid assessment and had discussions with Kelly Schaub, Executive Director of the La Romana-Bayahibe Hotel Association which is the major sponsor of this trail. Graphic designs were developed by Jorge Paniagua.

Figure 2. Parque del Este location.



Figure 3. Padre Nuestro Trail map.



KEY			
1	Centro Interpretativo	6	La Carbonera
2	Antigua Comunidad de Padre Nuestro	7	La Cueva De La Lechuza
3	Jardín de Guayiga	8	El Bosque de Cactus
4	Árbol de las Orquídeas	9	El Árbol Patas Arriba
5	Bomba de Agua	10	La Cueva y El Manantial Chicho 1 & 2

Recorrido	1.9 kilómetros • 1.2 millas
Tiempo	1.5 a 2 horas
Nivel de Dificultad	Moderada



Early morning moon over the trail.



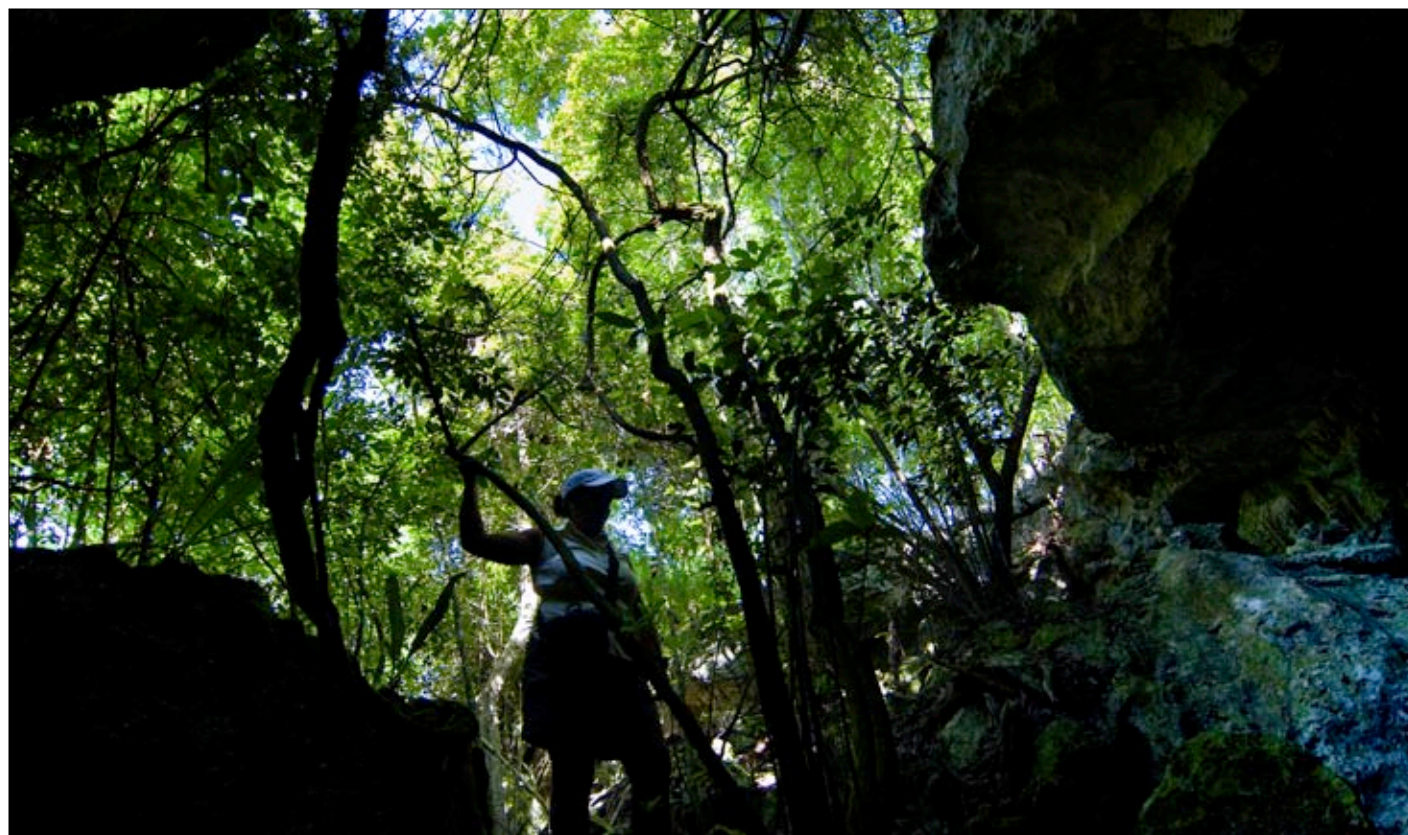
Common plant found along the trail.

SWOT RAPID ASSESSMENT

A quick analysis of the area's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) was conducted as a first step of this assessment. Table I summarizes this SWOT.

Table I. SWOT Rapid Assessment

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close proximity to Bayahibe resorts • Attractive setting • Environmental diversity • Caves with springs • Wildlife watching (Birds and butterflies) • Taino petroglyphs • Existing tourism infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of marketing • Unfocused interpretation • Lack of integrated planning for signage • Intrusive sign at charcoal manufacturing site • Awkward trail design • Lack of toilets at Chicho caves • Only one trail option • Unsafe trail conditions in Chicho II cave
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretive guided tours • Additional trails (shorter to meet visitor needs) • Sale of local souvenirs and drinks • Training and capacity building for guide association members • Micro business development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of scenic quality due to poor planning and sign placement • Water pollution due to contamination from swimming and human waste • Injuries due to falls



Assessment team looking for Taino petroglyphs in a limestone cave.

HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is more than just presenting information. It is about revealing hidden meanings and helping make connections between visitors and this site. In addition to having a central thematic message, it must be interesting, personally relevant, organized and have a purpose. We must answer the question “What do we want people to DO with this information...or how do we want them to RESPOND?” These responses can be intellectual (learning), emotional (feeling) or behavioral (action).

OBJECTIVES

Possible objectives for interpretation and visitor information for the Padre Nuestro trail include the following:

Intellectual

- Understand the importance of karst topography (key thematic message)
- Understand why the community was moved
- Understand a tropical dry forest
- Know what the trail is and where it is located
- Know how and why the Taino used springs
- Know that water used by the local population and tourist hotels comes from this aquifer

Emotional

- Appreciate the beauty and the environmental diversity of the forest
- Respect the natural environment
- Respect the effort and sacrifice of the residents who were displaced
- Enjoy and appreciate the trail and underground spring

Behavioral

- Visit the trail with an official guide
- Pay the park entrance fee and the guide fee
- Follow all park regulations
- Practice water conservation in hotels

INTERPRETIVE THEMATIC MESSAGES

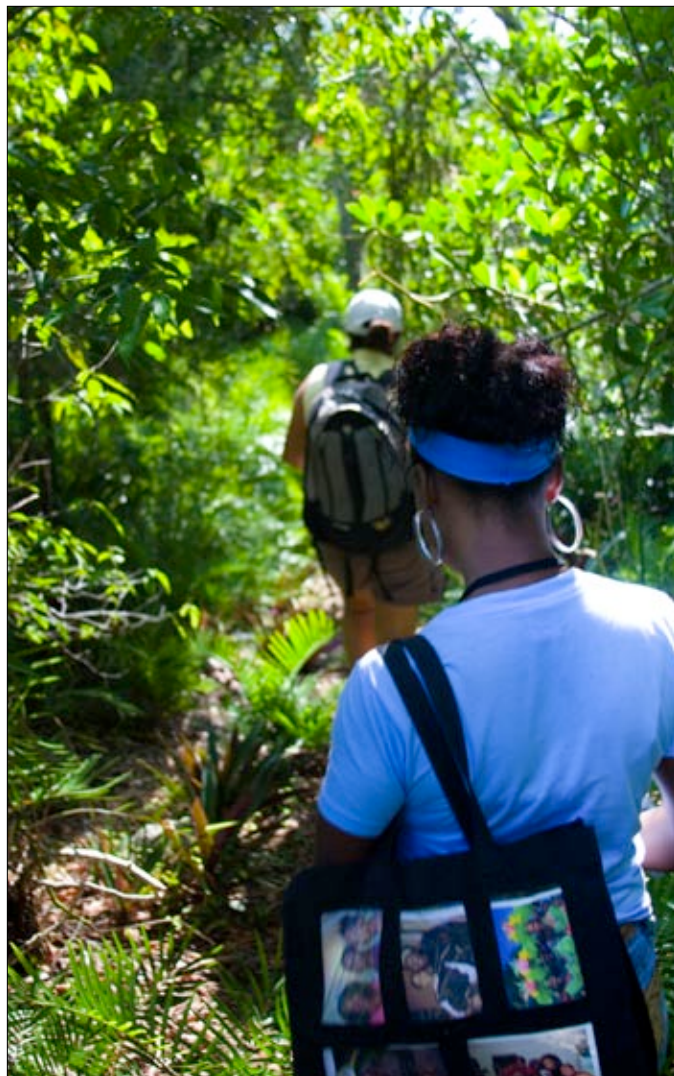
After visiting the trail and the surrounding area, the assessment team determined that the primary topics for interpretation include nature, history and water.

The proposed central thematic message that links all three topics is “Limestone ‘karst’ topography shapes our lives.” This includes not only our lives today, but the importance of karst topography --its caves and underground aquifers-- on the lives of prehistoric inhabitants, as well as how plants and animals have adapted to this particular environment. This key idea will help organize the entire interpretive program.

This primary “take-away” message is supported by the following six sub-themes:

1. The Villa Padre Nuestro community was built over a fragile aquifer and was relocated.
2. Karst topography has caves and springs but no surface water.
3. Traditional activities such as charcoal production has altered the landscape.
4. This resilient forest is recovering from deforestation and hurricanes.
5. Prehistoric Taino inhabitants used caves and springs for drinking water and rituals.
6. This aquifer is a primary source of water for most of the eastern part of the island.

Suggested locations for presenting each of these sub-theme messages is shown in Figure 4. This can be done through signage and verbal presentations by guides.



Assessment team walking the trail.

NEW INTERPRETIVE AND MARKETING PRODUCTS

Several draft designs were developed for interpretive banners and marketing materials for Padre Nuestro Trail. These current products are illustrated in Appendix I. Future products that could be developed are identified in the recommendations.

Product 1

Site Map “Sendero Padre Nuestro”

This is a redesigned trail map, using the original trail map and current information from Google Earth. This map shows the points of interest along the trail and uses international symbols (instead of text) to identify services, facilities and special features.

This map is provided as an electronic file, in the original Adobe Photoshop format and as a jpeg format. The original file can be printed in any size needed on banners, fliers, brochures, etc. for future use.

Product 2

Welcome Banner “Sendero Padre Nuestro”

This banner was designed to be used as the primary “Welcome” sign at the Visitor Kiosk. It is designed to be about 36 x 80 inches in size. It is provided as an electronic file, in the original Adobe Photoshop format and as a jpeg format. The original file can be printed in any size needed on banners, fliers, brochures, etc. for future use.

We recommend that a 36 x 80 inches banner be printed on plastic vinyl and be placed at the Visitor Kiosk.

Product 3

Location Banner “Sendero Padre Nuestro”

Explore Naturaleza, Historia y Agua

This banner was designed to be used as the primary sign for the visitor to become oriented to their location and what they can expect to see and do on the trail. It is designed to be about 36 x 80 inches in size. It is provided as an electronic file, in the original Adobe Photoshop format and as a jpeg format. The original file can be printed in any size needed on banners, fliers, brochures, etc. for future use.

We recommend that a 36 x 80 inches banner be printed on plastic vinyl and be placed at the Visitor Kiosk.

Product 4

Rack Card “Padre Nuestro Trail”

Explore Nature, History & Water

The “rack card”, 4 inches x 9 inches in size, is designed as a marketing tool, to advertise the trail and the adventure at local tourist hotels. It is a double sided card which provides basic site information and a location map. It should be printed on heavy paper stock and placed in all hotels and airports in the area.

It is provided as an electronic file, in the original Adobe Photoshop format and as a jpeg format. It is ready to print.

Product 5

Bookmark

Explore Nature, History & Water

The bookmark, 2 inches x 9 inches in size and one sided, is designed to be used as a tool to help raise awareness and funds for the guide association. This item can be printed on heavy stock paper and/or laminated and sold at souvenir shops and hotel gift shops. In the US and Puerto Rico similar items sell for up to \$3 per unit.

It is provided as an electronic file, in the original Adobe Photoshop format and as a jpeg format. It is ready to print.

Product 6

Padre Nuestro Trail Multimedia

A multimedia slide show was developed about the Padre Nuestro Trail. This MM product is about 4 minutes long and can be played by any DVD player; it can be used as a tool to help raise awareness about the trail, as an educational tool in local communities, and also could be sold as a souvenir in gift shops.

The Master CD of this product is provided. It can be reproduced as may be needed.

Product 7

Padre Nuestro Trail Photos

The original high-resolution photographs used in all the developed products are provided on a CD so they can be used on future products and educational programs. These are provided as high-resolution jpeg files.

Product 8

Padre Nuestro Trail Marker

A trail marker, using the Padre Nuestro logo, was designed to be placed at strategic locations along the trail. This marker will assist the visitor with identifying the trail location and will not be intrusive as a larger sign or marker. In addition this marker can be produced by local artisans, providing employment and pride in ones work and community. It could also be produced on a smaller scale and sold as a souvenir to tourists.

We recommend a 4 x 8 inches trail marker.

Product 9

Logos

As part of these products the Padre Nuestro logo was redrawn in a high-resolution, electronic file. The original file is provided, it can be printed any size as may be needed on any product.

We recommend that this logo be TradeMark so it is protected for exclusive use of the guide association.

Several other logos that may be of use for materials development are also included in electronic format.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing trail and Visitor Information Kiosk are a very good start and an excellent foundation for building a high-quality visitor program. However, the following recommendations are provided to address the important limitations and opportunities identified in the SWOT rapid assessment and to improve trail management and visitor satisfaction. These do not have to be implemented immediately or concurrently, but should be considered as funding and technical assistance become available and as existing infrastructure requires replacement.

TRAIL DESIGN, INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

- Convert the gravel road from hiking trail to vehicle and horse access to the Chicho II cave and for bird-watching.
- Install bathroom facilities close to Chicho II cave.
- Install a new Visitor Information Kiosk or signs at Chicho caves parking area.
- Develop one or two short loop trails feeding from main trail for those visitors that hike the entire trail. These could start at Visitor Information Kiosk and at the Chicho caves parking area.
- Do not develop a new kiosk or large, intrusive signs along the trail. Keep the trail rustic and natural and let the guides present as much of the interpretive message as possible. The exceptions are those sites that require special photographs or graphics to illustrate their story. These include the charcoal site, town site, upside-down tree's original location, and petroglyphs that cannot be easily seen. See Figure 4 for recommendations on verbal interpretation locations and signage & non-personal interpretation locations.
- Control access of local tour guides, tour companies and hotels who are currently using the site and not paying park entrance or guide fees.

SIGNAGE AND INTERPRETATION

- Shorten the name to just "Padre Nuestro Trail." The words "archeology" and "environmental" are unnecessary and distract from the central interpretive message.
- Redesign information panels at the Visitor Information Kiosk to include interpretation, not just information.
- Limit amount of text on signs and use more graphics and photographs.
- Add a banner at the Visitor Information Kiosk to include the newly designed trail map with points of interest.
- Design a "Welcome" banner at Visitor Information Kiosk with logos and general information and eliminate this redundant information from all other signs and information panels.

- Replace the existing large metal sign at the charcoal production site and move it to a better location where it does not encourage visitors to walk across the site and does not block the view. Use a rustic wooden sign frame.
- Develop a simple interpretive sign at the old town site overlook that includes a photograph of the original houses. Use a rustic wooden sign frame (no roofed kiosk).
- Develop a standardized interpretive talk for tour guides utilizing each of the 10 points of interest along the trail. This should be based on the central thematic message outlined above and be supported by the 6 sub-themes.
- Mark the trail location with 10-15 rustic wooden trail markers featuring a carving of the Padre Nuestro logo. These can be nailed to existing trees or to simple wooden posts.

MARKETING AND SOUVENIRS

- Develop marketing materials to attract visitors, such as rack cards.
- Develop souvenir products that can be sold to raise funds for guide association, such as bookmarks, posters, post cards, screen savers, etc. See "New Interpretive and Marketing Products" on page 7 and Appendix I for some ideas and suggestions. Items #5, #6 and #7 can all be marketed as souvenirs in gift shops.
- Sell refreshments, water and souvenirs at the Chicho Caves parking area.
- Develop site tours from specific hotels.
- Create a simple website to advertise the site. Include the trail and location map shown on the rack card, along with high-quality photographs of attractions and a short history of the project. Also indicate how visitors can make arrangements for tours (contact hotels).



Assessment team inside the Chicho II cave.

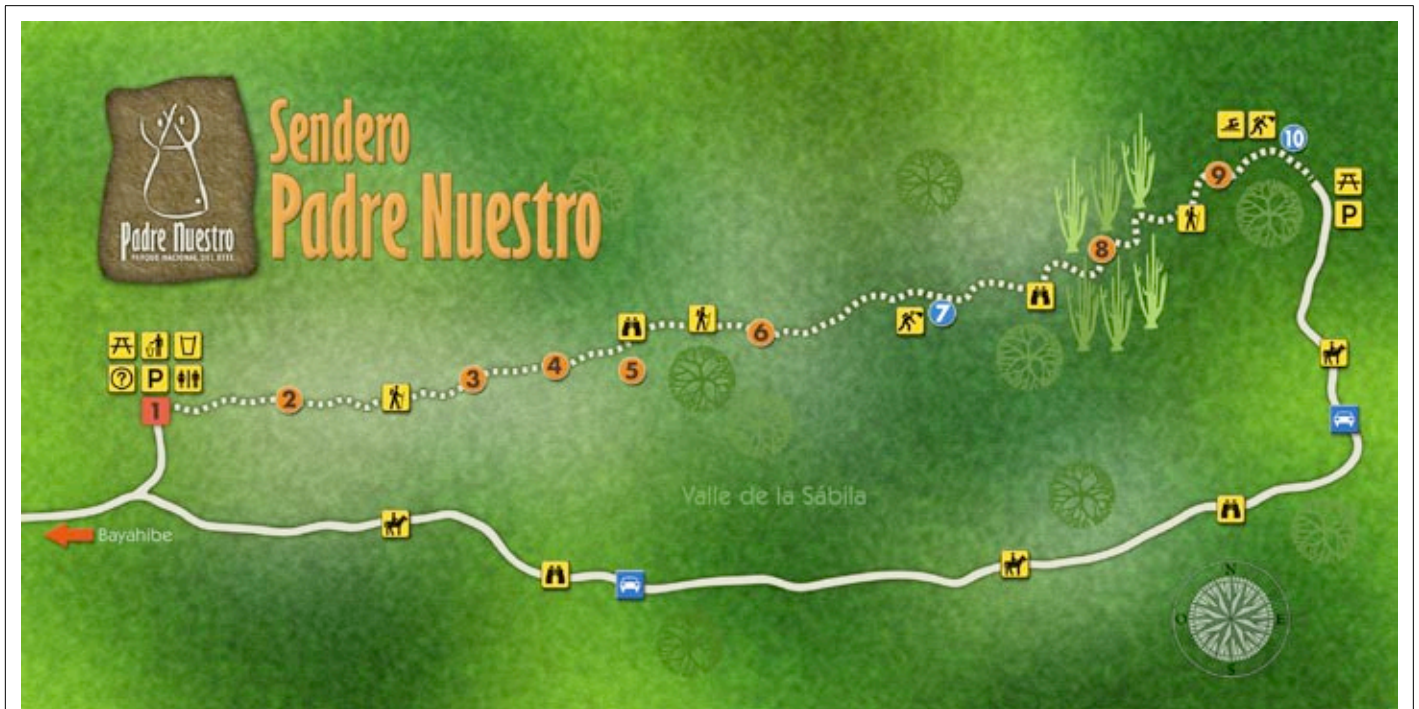
APPENDIX I

EXAMPLES OF INTERPRETIVE AND MARKETING PRODUCTS DEVELOPED FOR PADRE NUESTRO TRAIL

Product I

Site Map “Sendero Padre Nuestro”

- Site map, high resolution electronic files developed



KEY			
1	Centro Interpretativo	6	La Carbonera
2	Antigua Comunidad de Padre Nuestro	7	La Cueva De La Lechuza
3	Jardín de Guayiga	8	El Bosque de Cactus
4	Árbol de las Orquídeas	9	El Árbol Patas Arriba
5	Bomba de Agua	10	La Cueva y El Manantial Chicho 1 & 2

Recorrido	1.9 kilometros • 1.2 millas
Tiempo	1.5 a 2 horas
Nivel de Dificultad	Moderada

Product 2
Welcome Banner
“Sendero Padre Nuestro”



- Size: 36 x 80 inches
- Recommended to be locally printed on vinyl canvas.
- Note: All logos go on this banner and not on any other banners at Visitor Information Kiosk. Logos included on this example banner are concept only, local managers need to review and change as may be needed.



Product 3
Location Banner
“Sendero Padre Nuestro”
Explore Naturaleza, Historia y Agua


- Size: 36 x 80 inches
- Recommended to be locally printed on vinyl canvas.

Explore Naturaleza, Historia y Agua



1 Centro Interpretativo	6 La Carbonera
2 Antigua Comunidad de Padre Nuestro	7 La Cueva De La Lechuza
3 Jardín de Guayiga	8 El Bosque de Cactus
4 Árbol de las Orquideas	9 El Árbol Patas Arriba
5 Bomba de Agua	10 La Cueva y El Manantial Chicho 1 & 2

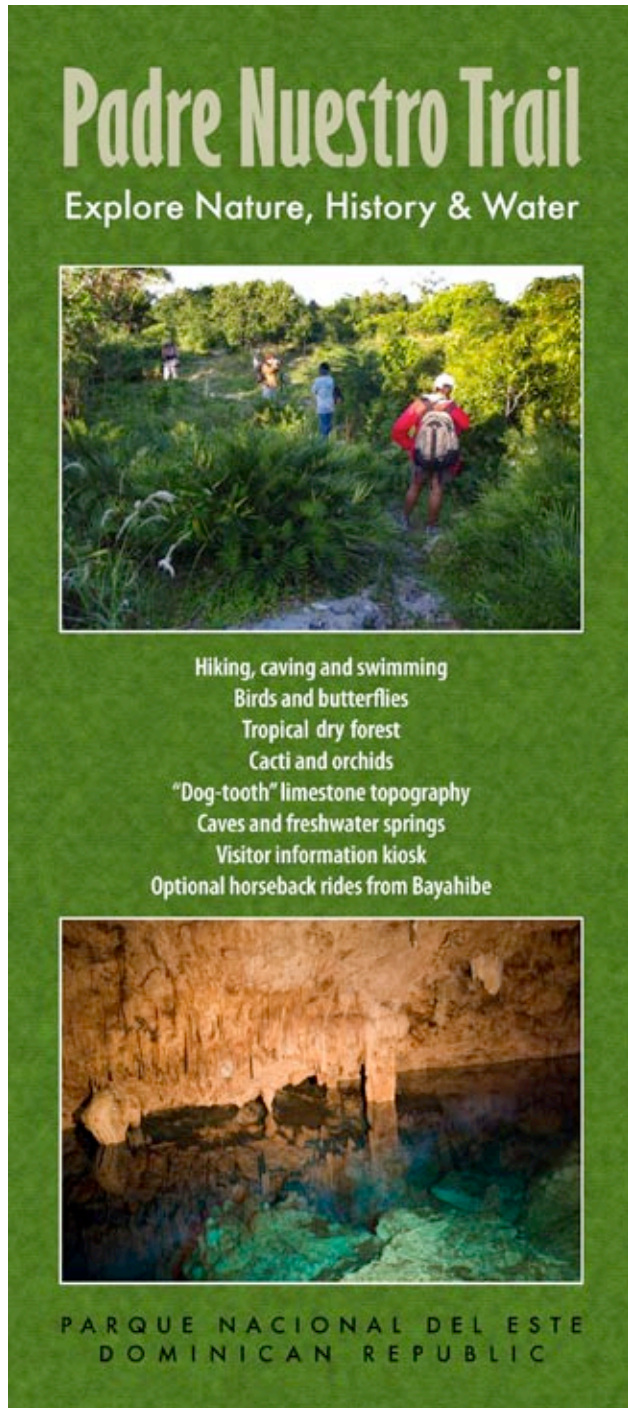
Recorrido 1.9 kilometros • 1.2 millas • Tiempo 1.5 a 2 horas • Nivel de Dificultad Moderada




PADRE NUESTRO • PARQUE NACIONAL DEL ESTE • REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA

Product 4A
Rack Card “Padre Nuestro Trail”
Explore Nature, History & Water


- 4 x 9 inches
- To be printed on heavy card stock paper



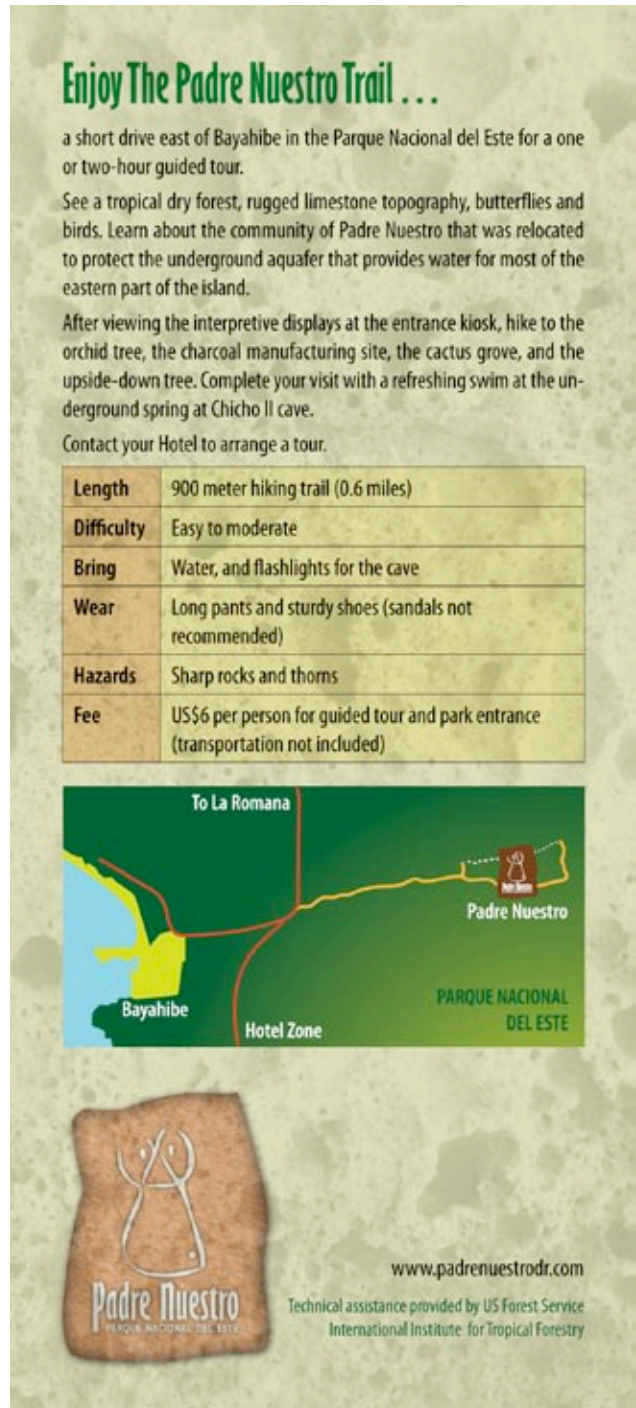
Padre Nuestro Trail
 Explore Nature, History & Water



Hiking, caving and swimming
 Birds and butterflies
 Tropical dry forest
 Cacti and orchids
 “Dog-tooth” limestone topography
 Caves and freshwater springs
 Visitor information kiosk
 Optional horseback rides from Bayahibe



PARQUE NACIONAL DEL ESTE
 DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Enjoy The Padre Nuestro Trail . . .



a short drive east of Bayahibe in the Parque Nacional del Este for a one or two-hour guided tour.

See a tropical dry forest, rugged limestone topography, butterflies and birds. Learn about the community of Padre Nuestro that was relocated to protect the underground aquifer that provides water for most of the eastern part of the island.

After viewing the interpretive displays at the entrance kiosk, hike to the orchid tree, the charcoal manufacturing site, the cactus grove, and the upside-down tree. Complete your visit with a refreshing swim at the underground spring at Chicho II cave.

Contact your Hotel to arrange a tour.

Length	900 meter hiking trail (0.6 miles)
Difficulty	Easy to moderate
Bring	Water, and flashlights for the cave
Wear	Long pants and sturdy shoes (sandals not recommended)
Hazards	Sharp rocks and thorns
Fee	US\$6 per person for guided tour and park entrance (transportation not included)


www.padrenuestrodr.com
 Technical assistance provided by US Forest Service
 International Institute for Tropical Forestry

Product 4B
Rack Card “Padre Nuestro Trail”
Explore Naturaleza, Historia y Agua


- 4 x 9 inches
- To be printed on heavy card stock paper

Sendero Padre Nuestro

Explore Naturaleza, Historia y Agua



Senderismo
 Aves y Mariposas
 Bosque Tropical Seco
 Cactus y Orquídeas
 Paisaje de piedra caliza
 Cuevas y manantiales de agua fresca
 Kiosko de información para visitantes
 Paseos a caballo desde Bayahibe



PARQUE NACIONAL DEL ESTE
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Disfruta del Sendero Padre Nuestro ...

Toma un tour guiado de una o dos horas y observa un bosque tropical seco, una paisaje de piedra caliza, mariposas y aves. Aprende sobre la comunidad de Padre Nuestro, reubicada hace algunos años con el fin de proteger los mantos subterráneos que proveen de agua a casi toda la parte este de la isla.

Después de disfrutar de las exposiciones interpretativas ubicadas en la entrada del kiosko, toma el sendero hacia el árbol de orquídeas, la carbonera, el bosque de cactus, y el árbol patas arriba. Termina tu visita nadando en el manantial subterráneo en la cueva de Chico II.

El Sendero Padre Nuestro está localizado a poca distancia de Bayahibe, en el Parque Nacional del Este. Contacta a tu hotel para organizar tu tour.

Longitud	900 metros (0.6 millas)
Dificultad	De fácil a moderada
Trae contigo	Agua y linternas para el interior de la cueva
Viste	Pantalón largo y zapatos fuertes (las sandalias no son recomendadas)
Peligros	Rocas filosas y espinas
Entrada	6 Dólares por persona por tour guiado y entrada al parque (transporte no incluido)

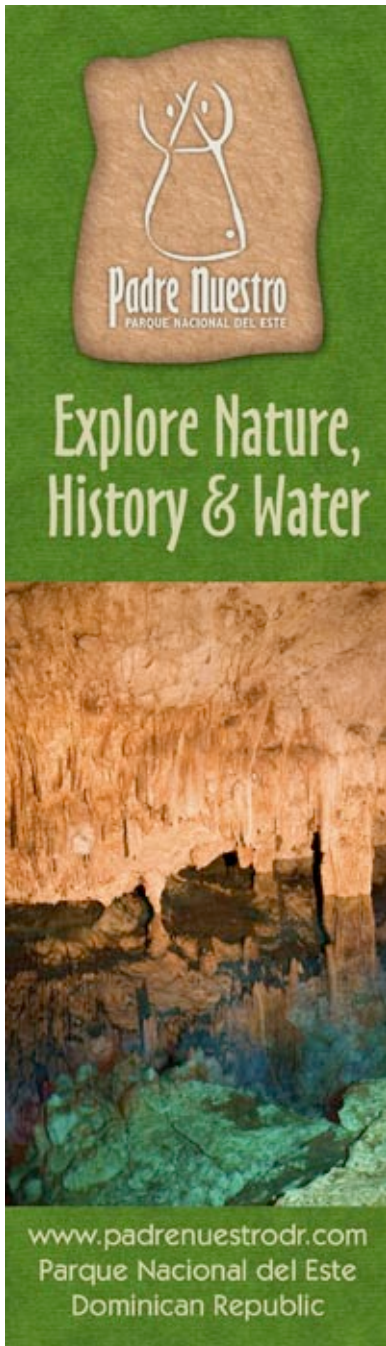



www.padrenuestrodr.com
 Asistencia Técnica provista por US Forest Service
 International Institute for Tropical Forestry

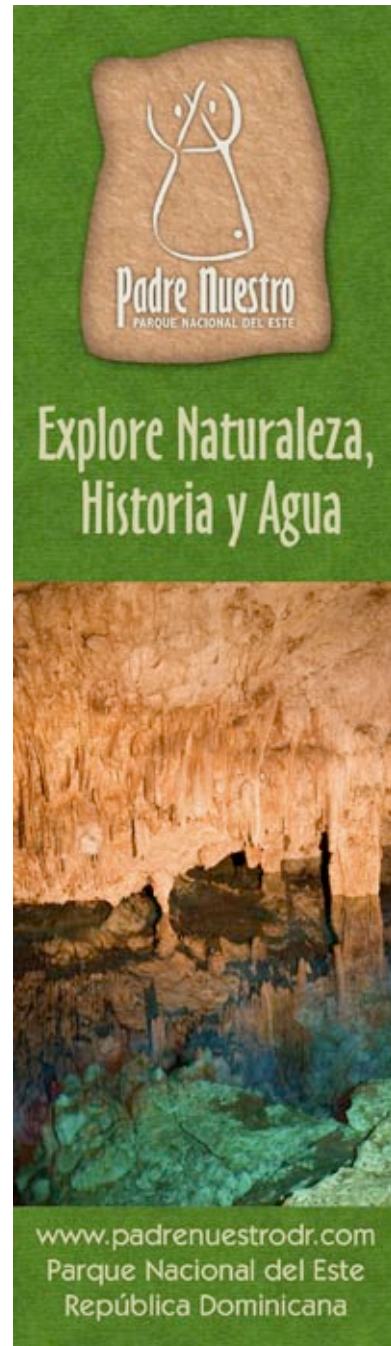
Product 5

**Bookmark “Padre Nuestro Trail”
Explore Nature, History & Water**

- 2 x 7 inches, printed one sided only
- English and Spanish versions



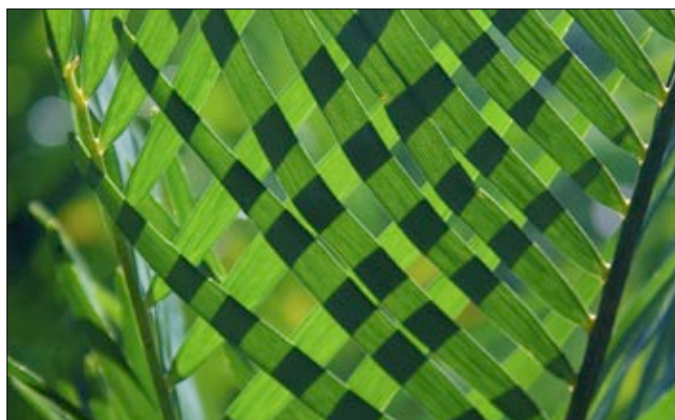
English version



Spanish version

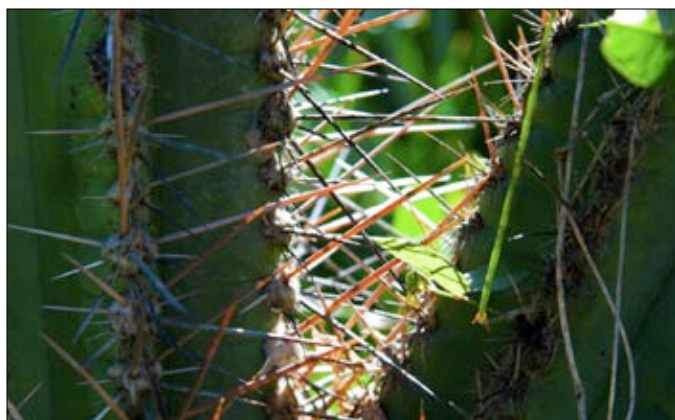
Product 6
Padre Nuestro Trail Multimedia

- Video DVD
Multimedia Presentation
- English and Spanish versions included



Product 7
Padre Nuestro Trail Photos

- High-resolution Photographs



Product 8A
Padre Nuestro Trail Marker

- 4 x 8 inches (with directional arrow).
- Recommended to be carved by local artisans.



Product 8B

Padre Nuestro Trail Marker

- 4 x 5.25 inches (without directional arrow).
- Recommended to be carved by local artisans.



Product 9
Logos



Product 9
Logos



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



USAID
DEL PUEBLO DE LOS ESTADOS
UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL FORESTRY