

TITLE

The Challenges to Developing Cultural Heritage Tourism in Rural Jamaica

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AFFILIATION

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INTRODUCTION



Problem Statement

There is a need to “transform the tourism industry from a narrow focus on sun, sand and sea, based largely on all-inclusive hotels, to an island-wide industry that offers a diversity of accommodation and visitor experiences.” (*Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development*, 2002, p.6).



METHODOLOGY: CASE STUDY OF KITSON TOWN

Kitson Town

- The Kitson Town Community Development Committee (CDC) wish to develop a cultural tourism enterprise based on the heritage assets in the former parish of St. John.

Research Questions

- RQ 1: What is the quality of the cultural heritage sites located in St. John?
- RQ 2: What are the challenges faced by the Kitson Town CDC in order to create a cultural tourism enterprise that adheres to best practices?

Data Collection & Analysis

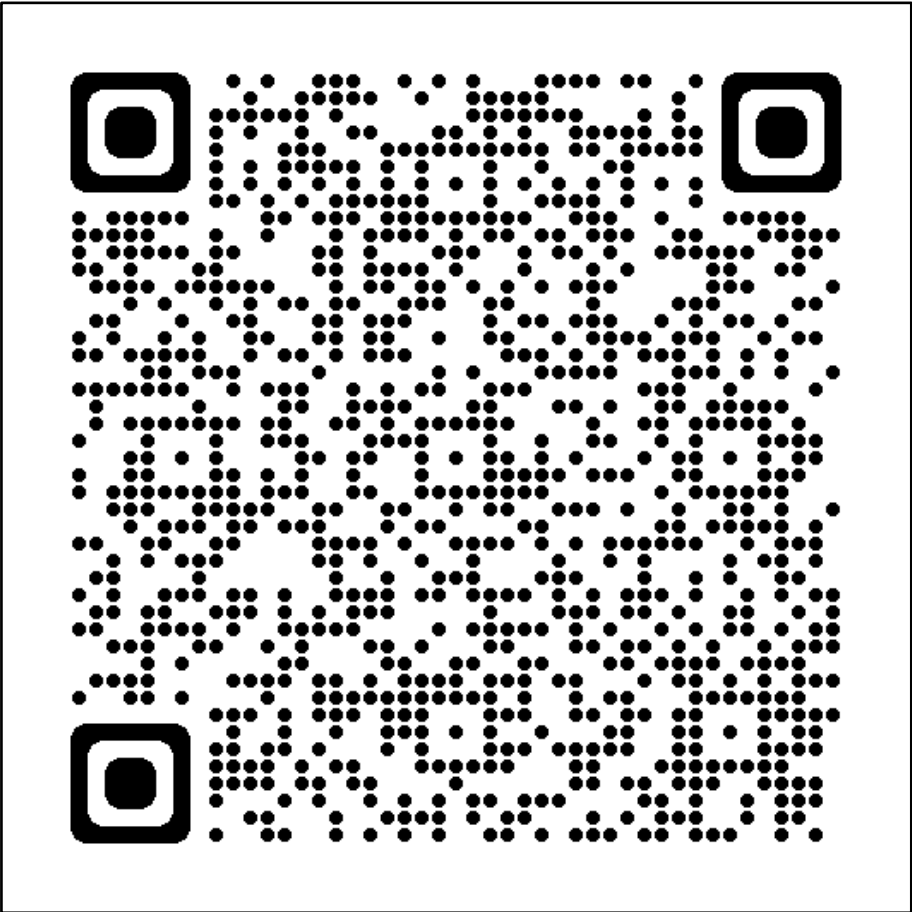
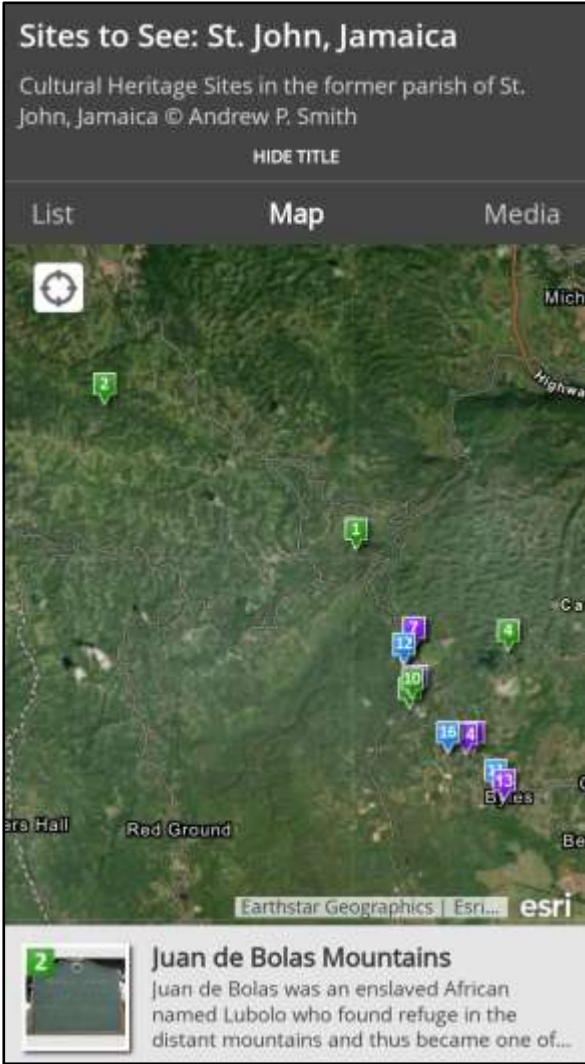
- **Participatory and non-participatory field work.**
- **Interviews** with CDC officials and Jamaican cultural tourism experts.
- **Document analysis** of four Government of Jamaica (GoJ) policy documents.
- **Document analysis** of the ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2022).



HERITAGE SITES: ST. JOHN, JAMAICA



Above: 1794 map showing the location of St. John
Centre and right: “Sites to See: St. John, Jamaica” App, with QR code



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HERITAGE SITES: TIANO PICTOGRAPHS & PETROGLYPHS AT MOUNTAIN RIVER CAVE



Left: Taíno pictographs depicting animals and humans have been dated to between 500 to 1300 years old.

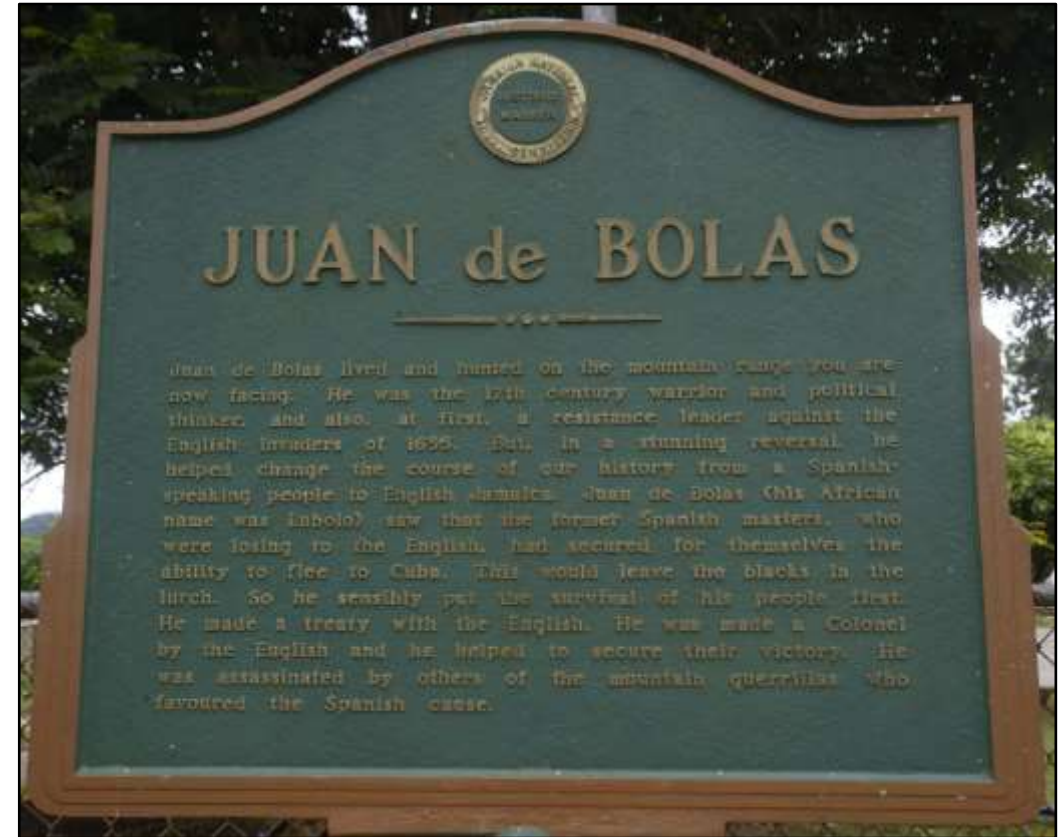
Right: Petroglyphs, which have been vandalised.

The Tainos arrived in Jamaica from South and Central America in 600 CE



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HERITAGE SITES: JUAN DE BOLAS



Left: The Juan de Bolas Mountains are named after an enslaved African who originally fought for the Spanish against the British invaders in 1655. He switched sides, helping to defeat the Spanish in 1660.

Right: Jamaica National Heritage Trust Monument to Juan to Bolas in the community of Lluidas Vale.



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HERITAGE SITES: ST. JOHN'S CHURCH



Left: St. John Parish Church at Guanaboa Vale dates to the late 17th century.
Right: Tomb of John Charnoch and family, with heraldry.



HERITAGE SITES: SUGAR ESTATES



Left: The sugar house on Lloyd's & Belmont Estate, which, along with Aylmer's Estate are the two former sugar estates in the area. Over 500 slaves worked on these estates as at 1832.



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HERITAGE SITES: KITSON TOWN FREE VILLAGE



Devon Thompson, President of the Kitson Town Community Development Committee describes the establishment of the Free Village of Kitson Town in 1841.



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HERITAGE SITES: RED HILLS METHODIST CHURCH



Left: Grave at Red Hills Methodist Church of man born during slavery in 1824 and buried in 1920.

Centre: Red Hills Methodist Church, built of cut-stone in 1940.

Right: Cornerstone laid by Sir Philip Sherlock for his father Rev. Terence Sherlock, whose son Hugh wrote the words of Jamaica's National Anthem and National Pledge in 1962.



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CHALLENGES: SOCIETAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

- Friction exists between residents of Kitson Town and the current owners of the sugar estates.
- Estate owner is not interested in being a part of the enterprise, resulting in an inaccurate representation of the history of St. John.
- Participation in the heritage tourism enterprise can possibly lead to reconciliation and restoration.
- Principle 1 extract: “well-managed cultural heritage tourism enables communities to participate, while maintaining their heritage, social cohesion and cultural practices” (p. 6).



CHALLENGES: OPERATING THE ENTERPRISE AS A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

- The GoJ notes that many Jamaican cultural tourism enterprises are not operating as a business.
- Entrepreneurism involving business-minded people is necessary for a sustainable cultural heritage tourism enterprise.
- The heritage assets must be converted to products and experiences that can be sold. (R. Kerr).
- Principle 6 extract: “heritage managers should ensure they have the necessary knowledge, capacity and tools to prepare for and respond to changing contexts and developing challenges” (p. 13).



CHALLENGE: STAKEHOLDER INCLUSION IN THE GOVERNANCE OF THE ENTERPRISE

- The original project was initiated in 2018 by the Social Development Commission working with the Member of Parliament, the Kitson Town CDC, and the Tourism Product Development Company.
- After a period of inactivity, the CDC pressed forward with the project in 2019.
- Were cautioned against proceeding by the charity arm of the political constituency. No explanation was given.
- GoJ policies warn against community politics interfering with the enterprise, and of domination by community elites.
- Principle 4 extract : “the development of responsible cultural tourism must go beyond local stakeholder consultation and involve participatory governance and benefit share” (p. 11).



CHALLENGE: COMMUNITY EDUCATION & AWARENESS

The GoJ notes that aspects of Jamaica's heritage are being lost because:

- Communities may not know how to capitalise on their cultural heritage.
- Inadequate transmission of knowledge and skills by adults to the next generation.

There is also a lack of:

- Support for the idea of cultural tourism.
- Interest by young people.

- The CDC conducted well received community awareness tours in 2018 and 2019.
- Intend to educate site owners of how community development can occur based on cultural heritage tourism and site preservation.
- Principle 5 extract: “awareness and understanding of long-term protection and conservation requirements of heritage places is necessary in tourism planning and management” (p. 11).



CHALLENGE: LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES FOR VISITORS

- The GoJ observes a “lack of adequate social and physical infrastructure”, including adequate parking, public washrooms, visitor information centres, good roads and signage.
- Principle 3 extract: “responsible tourism and cultural heritage management must...provide a worthwhile visitor experience and opportunities for discovery, inclusive enjoyment and learning” (p.9).

The Mountain River Cave - a designated Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT) site.

- The cave is located on private property.
- Visitors park either in the homes of the land owners or on the main road.
- Local guides are the elderly land owners.
- Cross the river which lacks a bridge, so it cannot be crossed if it is in spate.
- A 45 to 60 minute trek through limestone forest.
- At the cave there is no information to explain what is being viewed.



CHALLENGE: AUTHENTIC PRESERVATION & PROTECTION OF HERITAGE SITES

- There is a skills shortage of “expertise to design an authentic experience, restore buildings...and commercialise the restored asset in a way that will not lead to its deterioration.”
- Many of the sites require authentic restoration and preservation, especially St. John’s Church.
- The CDC want to authentically preserve the sites, and develop a community museum to house the artefacts found.
- The CDC wishes assistance from the JNHT to preserve the sites, but this is not possible for non-declared sites.
- Principle 1 extract: “tourism development, infrastructure projects and management plans must contribute to preserving the integrity, authenticity, aesthetic, social and cultural dimensions of heritage places” (pp. 6-7).



CHALLENGE: LACK OF FUNDING FOR HERITAGE SURVEYS & CULTURAL TOURISM

- “Only 5-10% of Jamaica has been surveyed over the past 7 years in terms of locating historical/cultural sites in Jamaica...largely because of inadequate funding” (Griffiths & Emmanuel, 2005, p. 19).
- The Jamaica Social Investment Fund provides World Bank grants for community tourism projects, but they require proof that enough revenue will be generated to justify the grant.
- Principle 1 extract: “revenues generated through cultural heritage tourism must contribute to the conservation of cultural heritage and provide benefit to local communities.” (p. 7)



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