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REPORT ON  
INCREASED TOURISM POSSIBILITIES  
FOR CAP HAÏTIEN

Submitted by:

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Haiti is one of the Caribbean's least publicized tourist destinations. Yet it offers an entirely different experience from other Caribbean countries. As with other areas, it does possess pristine beaches, mountains, striking scenery, and good hotels though not a large number. But over and above these "classic" tourist attractions, Haiti introduces the visitor to its unique environment of French, Creole and African culture with unusual arts, handicrafts, music, cuisine and universally friendly people.

Unfortunately, Haiti has been perceived by many potential visitors, influenced by a critical and at times unfair foreign press, as a troubled destination.

Furthermore, lack of a sufficient government tourism budget has precluded, up to now, hiring of a good public relations firm to help dispel any negative image of Haiti or to promote Haiti as a viable tourism destination. Improved roads and communications are vitally needed; better air services between Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien, and from abroad to Cap-Haitien, thereby bringing many more tourists and necessitating additional hotel rooms and/or expansion of existing hostels, are required in a foreseeable future.

This tourism consultant made assessments of Haiti's tourism possibilities, balancing negative situations with positive attractions; he recommended specific steps which should be taken by the private and public sectors working in close collaboration.

Encouraging and positive developments have occurred recently which promise well for the future tourism prospects of Haiti. Now is the time for both the public and private sectors to capitalize on these opportunities which are:

1. An increase in the number of cruise ships of the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line (RCCL) which call at Labadie near Cap-Haitien. Scheduled for Labadie in 1987 are 116 one-day stops of RCCL ships. Approximately 1,000 passengers per ship disembark for these beautiful beaches with an estimated total of some 116,000 cruise visitors a year touching the soil of Haiti.

2. The Haitien government has agreed to give \$2 of every \$4 received from RCCL per cruise passenger landing in Labadie to the Support Committee for Development of Tourism in the North (Comite d'Appui du Development du Tourisme dans la Nord) to be used for the generation of tourism in the Cap Haitien area. From this fund approximately \$232,000 (based on the expected 116,000 passengers) will be available as a basis for a promotional budget approved by the National Tourism Office (ONTRP). It should be noted that RCCL will have additional ships calling at Labadie in future years, bringing a total estimated impact of \$35 million in the first 5 years, 1986 through 1990.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN  
CAP HAITIEN AREA**

The initiative of the Comite d'Appui (hereafter called the Committee on Tourism) is highly significant for the future of tourism in Cap Haitien. In previous reports the consultant agreed that Cap Haitien offered more opportunities than other areas of the country because of the cruise ships calling in Labadie and because other cruise lines would be cognizant of the success of RCCL and eventually schedule calls in the port of Cap Haitien.

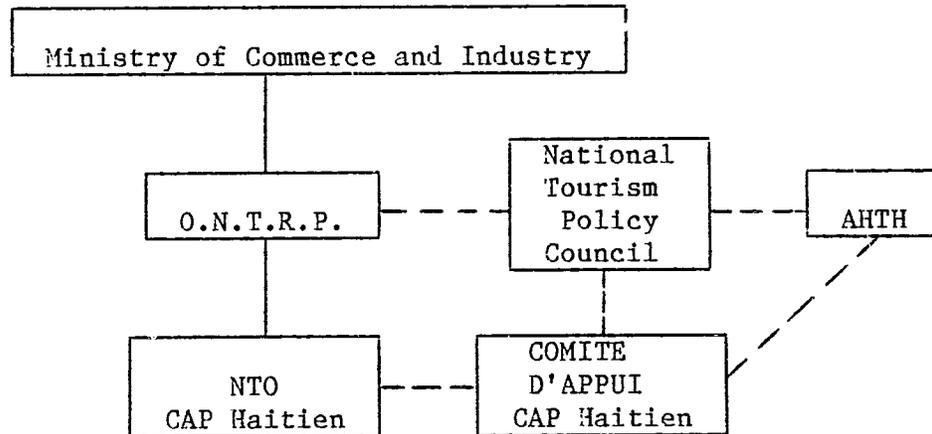
The historical monuments of Sans Souci and the Citadelle are major attractions which no other Caribbean country can match. It has been felt by many observers of Haiti's touristic possibilities that cruise passengers of RCCL could logically be aware of these attractions and many would wish to return to Haiti by air to see what they had missed on their initial stay in Labadie Beach. It can also be assumed that RCCL, recognizing they have access to unique sites, will offer options to passengers wishing to go on excursions to Cap Haitien, Sans Souci and the Citadelle. Cruise ships may permit passengers to combine the two events, i.e., sightsee and still have time, if desired, for relaxation on Labadie beaches. It is also conceivable that RCCL ships will remain longer in the Cap Haitien area. In fact, surveys taken of preferences of previous cruise passengers show that a majority would have liked to have stayed longer in Labadie, even to the extent of skipping stops in Jamaica (Ocho Rios) and Cozumel.

During the consultant's visits to Haiti, he has had the opportunity of witnessing cruise ships arrive in Cap Haitien, Labadie, and Port-au-Prince.

It was gratifying to see written surveys of satisfied cruise passengers at Labadie and to have had actual interviews with passengers landing for day stays in Cap Haitien and in Port-au-Prince. Nevertheless, certain negative factors must be overcome and the committee, working with the National Tourist Office in Cap Haitien, as well as with AHTH, ONTRP, and other government offices and private sector organizations, international as well as national, can help bring back tourism to Cap Haitien and the country in general. Initial steps to be taken follow.

Restructuring of National Tourist Office in Cap Haitien

The NTO in Cap Haitien, headed by Joseph Dugue, has its office in an older building which needs renovation. It is well located, not too far from the wharves where cruise ships dock. Mr. Dugue is an energetic member of the Committee and can both lead and receive support. Specifically, it is recommended that the headquarters of the Committee be physically located in the National Tourist Office (NTO) in Cap Haitien. This would ensure liaison with NTO, act as the secretariat, and be easily accessible to all members of the Committee. Staffing of the secretariat should include an executive director and a clerk typist. The executive director will be responsible for logging in and overseeing business of the Committee and will work in strict liaison with the NTO. He or she should be knowledgeable in tourism and could possibly be recruited from ONTRP in Port-au-Prince, if willing to relocate to Cap Haitien. Salaries for these two persons would come from the funds obtained from the \$2 per cruise passenger of the RCCL. Acting as a "Travel Advisory Board" (a system in other countries, including the USA) for both advice and follow through on projects and activities, the Committee's position on an organization chart could be as follows:



The Projet de Decret seen by the consultant is very comprehensive in its scope, spelling out composition of the Committee or TURISNOR, and its projected activities. It is notable that all sectors will be closely allied and communications should be maintained with all sectors involved in the urgent task of bringing back tourism to Haiti, with Cap Haitien as the immediate focal point.

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It is hoped that a promotional budget will soon be allocated by the Government to ONTRP, as promised. There is an urgent need for these funds if Haiti is to announce its attractions to the world of tourism and take its rightful place as an attractive destination to which tourists and foreign exchange will flow.

Nonetheless, the Committee can use its allocated funds for priority projects in Cap Haitien area. The budget could be used for:

1. Setting up space in NTO, Cap Haitien for the Secretariat, including refurbishing where necessary for office space and a conference room. If funds have not been given to NTO as of this writing, the Committee could advance them.
2. Select executive director and clerk typist.
3. Purchase or rent typewriter (word processor, if possible) and necessary office supplies and furniture.
4. Use funds to announce to the general public by the press, radio and television, the objectives of NTO and the newly-established Committee, and the importance of tourism and the benefits it can bring to many local people of Cap Haitien and the country. Such a publicity campaign should be extended to schools and through churches, with repetition where necessary. It is important to instill a pride (which certainly must exist instinctively) of the citizens for Cap Haitien and its many attractions. The campaign should stress that a friendly and smiling reception of tourists will bring a perception to the outside world that Haiti is indeed a Land of Welcome and that the people of the North are truly anxious to have visitors see them. A budget should be drawn up for this campaign, with followup sensitization of the general public to the importance to them of tourism. Such a campaign is certainly highly recommended on a nationwide basis, and coordination with ONTRP should be established. Such a campaign should also involve a plea to avoid any harassment of visitors.

In connection with this campaign, liaison should be established with the Association Marche Touristique of Cap Haitien.

5. An early reprint or new version of the brochure "Le Guide des Visiteurs" is vitally necessary. It should also include listing of various hotels of Cap Haitien, rather than any specific hotel unless special arrangements are made. Bids should be obtained now.

Obtain or reprint copies of the folder in color on The Citadelle and Sans Soui.

6. Get bids for publishing a newsletter concerning local projects and events of interest.
7. Get bids and follow through on plans for establishment of a Kiosk area near docks for handicraft displays and sales.

Other Priority Projects

Arrange early meetings with chauffeurs and guides. Investigate possibilities of their union updating training programs in anticipation of increased visitors.

Make an inventory of taxis, tourist cars and buses to see what equipment is available and in what condition.

Check with owners of horses at the parking area above Milot to see whether horses are in good condition.

Assist the efforts of NTO in organizing the Sans Souci and/or Citadelle sightseeing. In this connection, this consultant took the trip to La Citadelle as an "ordinary tourist." He was subject (refrained from speaking French) to an interesting experience but one still lacking in organization. The young guide was pleasant, but pointed out how many horse handlers were necessary (I felt two too many), and his knowledge of history was slightly suspect, particularly in respect to La Citadelle and Henri Christophe. Furthermore, taking a taxi from city hotels is very expensive for a single person; mini-buses are more practical. Signing with prices clearly indicated would help remove some of the confusions for foreign visitors to Sans Souci and La Citadelle.

Major Priorities. The following points are known to all concerned with Haiti's tourism and were stressed by this consultant in previous reports. They are:

1. Road from Cap Haitien to Labadie. A RCCL official told the consultant that until a suitable road is completed, the Line will not consider seriously offering an option for cruise passengers to go to Cap Haitien and its historical marvels.
2. Repair the road from Milot to Sans Souci and on to the parking area.
3. Followup installation of "Centre d'Accueil."
4. Build a comfortable road from the parking area to La Citadelle, suitable for horseback riders or walkers. The presence of the ISPAN representative on the Committee is very valuable and he should be counted on to keep projects on schedule. The visit to such historical attractions as Sans Souci and La Citadelle are the magnets to attract more visitors to Cap Haitien and Haiti.

5. It is suggested that contacts be established with the archeological team excavating at the estimated site of the Columbus settlement. This is another potential attraction to be added to Cap Haitien tourism lore, bearing in mind that the 1992 Quintcentennial Celebration of the Discovery of America offers an opportunity to enhance Haiti's image of a rediscovered and vibrant destination.

In connection with Columbus, it has been suggested to create an Historical Museum in Cap Haitien with relics from Columbus' visits to Northern Haiti (anchor of Santa Maria), and other archeological artifacts from La Navidad, also from Henri Christophe and other historic people and events.

6. Beach Hotel-Attention should be paid by the Committee to the prospects for a resort hotel on a suitable beach near Cap Haitien. This consultant visited Chou-Chou Bay which, though very picturesque, requires at least a 30-minute drive by a winding and narrow road. Other sites should be explored and also the possibility of a major hotel chain (Hilton, Marriott, Sheraton, etc.) being induced to invest in a beach hotel project in Haiti. Such a hotel would add a definite extra plus to the suitability of Cap Haitien as a fine destination. It would also encourage older hotels to renovate where necessary and to add additional rooms when faced with the (pleasant) possibility of receiving more tourists.
7. The Committee, in conjunction with ONTRP and AHTH representatives, especially a travel firm representing steamship lines, should maintain or establish contacts with cruise line sales staff management to inform them of improvements in docking and other facilities, the possibility now of obtaining sufficient water for ships, better roads, and better organization of tourist attractions. This consultant is convinced that more cruise lines will favorably consider returning to Cap Haitien.

Incentive Travel-RCCL has become convinced of the importance of offering cruises as awards for incentive winners and is aggressively pursuing this market. The line has produced a catalogue entitled "Incentive and Promotional Gifts" and has a representative itinerery in its "Song of America's" round-trip voyage from Miami to Labadie, also including San Juan and St. Thomas. Other cruise lines could be induced to include Cap Haitien in their incentive travel plans. With the expected improvements, Cap Haitien would be a magnificent incentive destination.

8. The Committee, working in conjunction with ONTRP, should study a plan with Dominican Republic tourism authorities for joint tour programs with joint brochures and promotion to encourage travel to these two different countries with varying cultures and languages. Perhaps a program by an improved road or by sea could create tourism business between Cap Haitien and Puerto Plata.
9. Follow up with authorities for modernization of Cap Haitien airport. This is an important step in helping bring more tourists to Cap Haitien, whether from Port-au-Prince when a good air service can be established, or from overseas points. It is certain that cruise passengers spreading the word about Cap Haitien will generate interest in arriving by air.

In conclusion, in view of its historical areas and structures of national and international interest, Cap Haitien should be declared a national site.