

What Makes Cubuy, Naguabo Attractive to Visitors

Cubuy: "Wherever you step, there is water"



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Introduction

The Rio Sabana Recreation Area is located on the southern side of El Yunque National Forest in Puerto Rico. While visitor activity is well-documented on the northern side of El Yunque, much less is known about the experiences and motivations of visitors to the south. We examined online visitor reviews and conducted interviews with visitors, tour guides, and other key parties, and through analysis, developed six typologies of visitors to the area. This pamphlet shows that typology, as well as recommendations regarding increased signage, trail maintenance, sale of food and beverages, and solicitation of public attitudes.

The 6 types of visitors who visit southern El Yunque, based on interviews with visitors, tour operators, and social media analysis.

SOCIAL

"Social" visitors are visitors who usually arrive in larger groups or multigenerational families. These visitors are not usually adventurous and want easily accessible places. They typically spend time enjoying each other's company, the river, and the picnic shelters. Most often the families are from Naguabo and come for day trips. These visitors would appreciate informational signs throughout the area.



(Rio Saana visitor, personal communication, November 20, 2021)



(A.Caspari, personal communication, November 29, 2021)

HIKER

"Hiker" visitors typically come to El Yunque to enjoy short- to medium-distance hikes and tend to walk through the recreation area on their way to an easy trail or go to El Hippy and explore the waterfall. This group prefers well-marked trails, the possibility of buying food and beverage, nearby accommodations, directional signs, and level ground. "Hikers" refers to people usually between the ages of 20-50.

HIKER-PLUS

The "Hiker-Plus" category takes the "Hiker" typology and stretches its boundaries. These visitors to El Yunque tend to be fit, younger (20-40 years old). They come to the rainforest with the intention of hiking specific trails to more distant destinations. They like more challenging trails that are not necessarily maintained. Many of these visitors go to the Infinity Pool.



(Antonio Marquez, August 2021, All Trails)



(M. Ciota, personal communication, November 6, 2021)

TRANQUIL

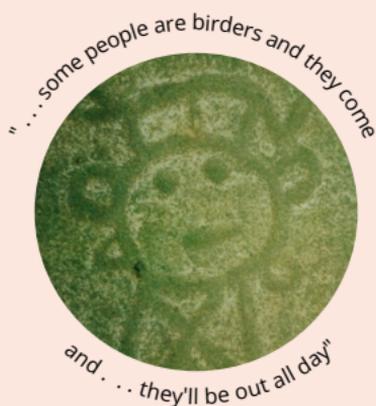
"Tranquil" visitors prefer to come to El Yunque on their own or in small groups. They want to connect with the forest in a relaxed manner. They tend to stay on the path in the Rio Sabana Recreation Area and go on groomed trails. These visitors tend to be worried about the peace being disrupted by crowds and noise.

EXCLUSIVE

This category refers to visitors who are willing to pay high prices for comfort, exclusivity, and access to secluded areas. These tourists would most likely stay at Casa Flamboyant, the most expensive bed-and-breakfast in the area. "Exclusive" visitors are able to utilize "secret" recreation features such as hidden waterfalls, swimming holes, etc. on private property where access is controlled by the bed-and-breakfast.



(Caitlin C, August 2021, TripAdvisor)



(M. Cobb Kavanaugh, personal communication, November 21, 2021)

SPECIAL INTEREST

Visitors in the "special interest" category are visitors that are looking for something very specific while traveling. These visitors tend to form groups around this common interest or hobby and travel together. These interests might span from looking for waterfalls to birdwatching. This typology of visitors usually stays in the area that caters to their interest for a few days. They are interested in small tours that feature their interest.

Recommendations

ADDITIONAL SIGNS

Online reviews and visitor interviews revealed that visitors would like more signs that indicate where the Rio Sabana Recreation Area and trails are located. We identified three main locations for signs to be placed (Figure 1).

The first spot is in the barrio Florida at the point where PR-191 takes a sharp left. Visitors sometimes miss the turn and would benefit from a sign (see Figure 2 for an example).

The second location is the entrance gate for the recreation area. Placing a sign here would encourage visitors to visit the recreation area (see Figure 3 for an example).

The third location is in the Rio Sabana Recreation Area itself. The first type of recommended sign is a sign for the Rio Sabana Trail. The next type of recommended signs are signs about the flora, fauna, and history of the area. Several visitors expressed interest in learning more about the area (see Figures 4 and 5 for examples).

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

There were mixed reviews from visitors about the lack of maintenance of the Rio Sabana Trail and how it affected their experience. Some visitors noted that this negatively affected their experiences while others found hiking on the trail to be a worthwhile challenge. Based on visitor feedback, we believe the best way to appeal to a wide range of visitors is to maintain the trail more regularly but to keep it as natural as possible. We also believe it would be beneficial to add more trails that connect throughout the forest. A larger trail network could better connect the North and the South of the forest, a connection that has been lost since the division of PR-191.

FOOD AND BEVERAGES

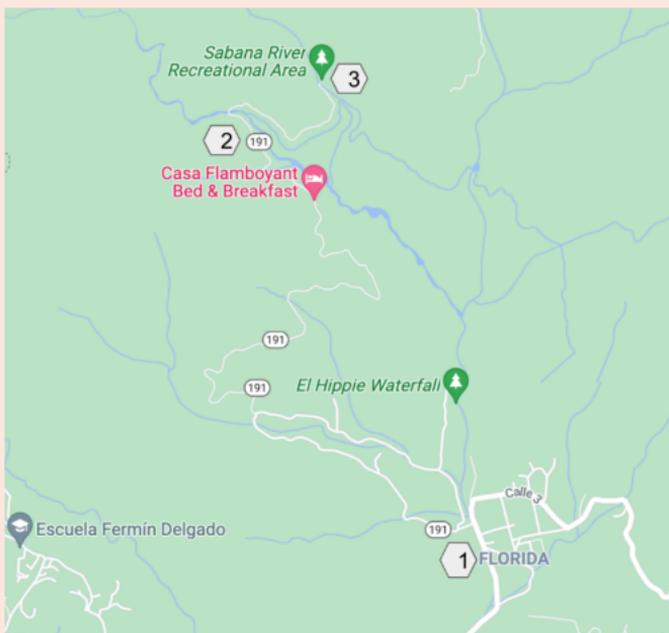
The sale of food and beverages at the Rio Sabana Recreation Area and in the Cubuy area would make those locations more attractive to many visitors. Many visitor groups interviewed mentioned that they would like it if there were restaurants/refreshments at the recreation area or El Hippié, and local business owners said that restaurants in the area would likely appeal to guests.

SOLICITING PUBLIC ATTITUDES

The gate that blocks PR-191 before the Rio Sabana Recreation Area was an effective place to stop visitors and conduct interviews on their way out. When the gate is closed visitors must park here and it is the only exit point from the recreation area. It would also be beneficial to conduct interviews on a variety of days and at a variety of times in order to get information for a wider range of visitors than our research was able to encompass.

Figure 1:

Map Showing Potential Locations for Directional and Informational Signs, for the Rio Sabana Recreation Area, Along PR-191



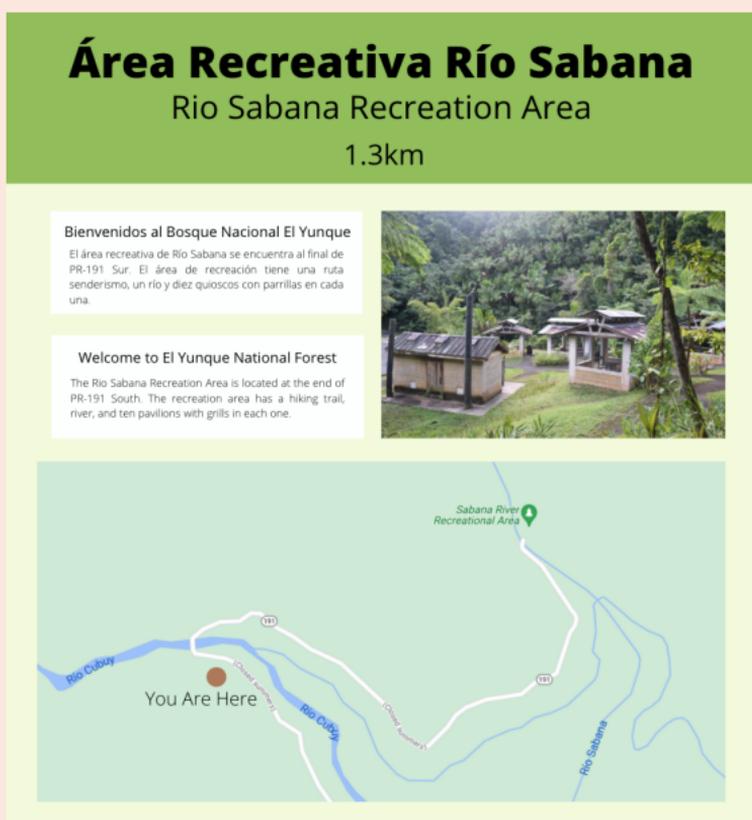
Note. (Google Maps, n.d.).

Figure 2:
*Example of Directional Road Sign for
the Rio Sabana Recreation Area*



Note. Figure created for this report.

Figure 3:
*Example of Informative and Directional
Road Sign for the Rio Sabana
Recreational Area*



Note. Figure created for this report.

Figure 4:
Map and Information for Mt. Britton Trails



Note. This is a map of Mt. Britton trails with information about the trails. A permanent map like this one can be added to the Rio Sabana Trails to help hikers understand the distance of the trail and where it leads to.

Figure 5:
Examples of Informational Signs about Flora and Fauna



Note. These images were taken of signs in northern El Yunque (upper-left and lower-right) and the bed-and-breakfast Casa Flamboyant (upper-right and lower-left).

Typology Adapted From:

Cochrane, J. (2006). A typology of tourists to protected areas. *Parks*, 16(2), 10-17..

Figure 1 Adapted From:

Google. (n.d.). Sabana River Recreational Area. Google Maps.