

# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



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TRAVEL WORLD NEWS - SECTION TWO - APRIL 2007



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# Dominican Republic: Samaná – The New Destination In The Caribbean

Look what the Dominican Republic had squirreled away.

BY D. O. CHRISTIAN RIEGER IV

**T**he Samaná Peninsula is a gem of a piece of territory in the northeastern corner of the Dominican Republic. Miguel Bezi, Assistant Tourism Minister for Samaná, says, "The hills of the province are covered with tall, graceful coconut palms — 40 million of them. Here, one experiences the unspoiled beauty of mountain waterfalls, lush rainforests and endless picture-perfect beaches. The place looks like it fell out of a vacationer's dream. It is the kind of vacation destination one just does not often find."

Considering that almost every area of the Caribbean has extensive tourism, it is amazing that the Dominican Republic has been able to pull out of a hat an unspoiled stretch of mountainous tropical rainforest, seemingly endless miles of coconut palms and long-long beaches. The jutting peninsula creates within it the Bay of Samaná. The region's combination of natural features creates one of the most beautiful landscapes in the Dominican Republic.

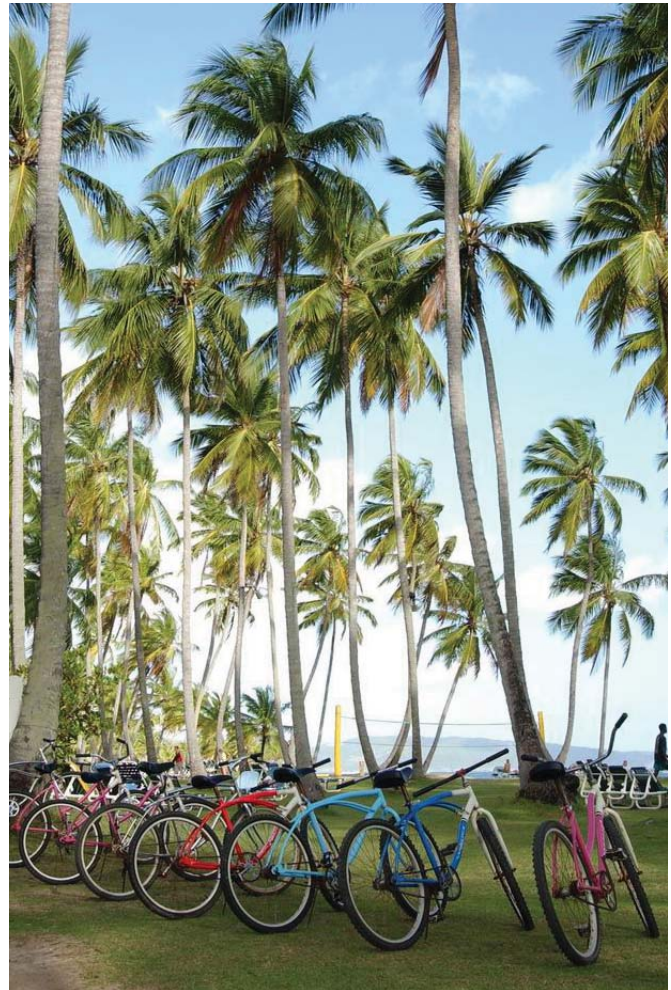
One of them is El Salto del Limón, a 131 foot waterfall with impressive beauty. Access is by mule or horse back as well as on foot. The trails leading to the falls are maintained by ACE-SAL (Association for Community Ecotourism of Salto del Limón.). Its members run so-called *paradas*, where they offer the guided horse and mule tours to the waterfall and other places of natural beauty, such as Playa Limón, or horseback tours to El Valle via Palmarito.

The landscape surrounding the falls is picturesque. Small houses are painted in vivid colors and made from locally available materials such as palm wood and thatch. The area is predominantly agricultural, with home gardens and vegetable plots bordering plantations of banana, cacao, coffee and coconut.

Most tours include *comida criolla* (local cuisine) and soft drinks. They also stop at shops for opportunities to buy locally produced arts and crafts as well as locally grown organic cocoa, and locally grown & roasted organic coffee. For clients with a love of nature and outstanding natural beauty, with a lively curiosity and sense of adventure, this is a not-to-be-missed destination.

During four months every year, the eyes of vacationers turn to the waters of the Samaná Bay and the Banco de la Plata, places visited by hundreds of humpback whales from January to April. These immense creatures delight tourists with a magical show of movement and "singing" communication sounds.

These mammals travel from faraway places to perform their dances and love songs in the warm waters of the tropical Atlantic and the protected bay — protected from the rough



The flat coastal roads and winding hillside trails are an invitation to bike ride in Samana, Dominican Republic.

seas and protected by environmental laws. They come from the northern Labrador, New Foundland, Greenland, Iceland and the Gulf of Maine to breed and prepare their calves to return to the frozen northern waters, in journeys that can take them as much as 40,000 miles.

Other interesting attractions are tours to the small island of Cayo Levantado, visiting Los Haitises National Park or SCUBA diving into ocean depths.

## Diverse Culture, Diverse Cuisine

The Ciguayos, the original inhabitants, were driven out of the region with the arrival the Spanish. The main period of settlement occurred during the 1820's when hundreds of freed slaves from Philadelphia went there at the invitation of the president of the country. (In 1855, the United States was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## SAMANA FROM PAGE 3

offered an opportunity to buy the peninsula but the Senate turned it down.)

During the latter half of the 19th century more immigrants from Europe and a variety of English-speaking Caribbean islands were attracted to the area by an economic boom. They became known as Los Ingleses. They brought with them their language, customs and beliefs and many of the older residents speak English to this day.

In the last 30 years, tourism has brought a wave of European immigrants, especially French, French-speaking Canadians, Italians and Spanish, who have contributed new facets to the culture. Consequently, the region of Samaná is characterized by a rich mix of cultural diversity

The region is characterized, especially the towns of Las Terrenas and Las Galeras, by small, attractive bars and restaurants. These also dot the beaches and offer fresh seafood that is frequently prepared by European chefs who serve

a cosmopolitan clientele.

The region's gastronomic offerings are a sample of the world's cuisine. These are often served up in small, attractive, restaurants set up in oceanside cabins made of Royal Palm logs and were occupied by fishermen families two decades ago.

Since coconut trees are the predominant vegetation, and are present on the hillsides of the mountain range that stretches along the peninsula's interior, coconuts have a strong and universal presence on local gastronomy. Regional dishes are distinguished by coconut flavor, such as in the "pescado con coco," a delicacy native to this area consisting of fish stewed in a subtle coconut and tomato sauce.

Another feature of Samaná is the abundance of small hotels and inns established by Europeans. There is also an array of all-inclusives from family to luxury. In addition, tourism development is breaking the traditional isola-

tion of this beautiful region by modernizing the transportation network to the rest of the country and the world. This includes the new El Catey International Airport that can accommodate large, intercontinental flights.

A new highway is being constructed that will reduce travel time considerably to and from Santo Domingo from six hours to one and a half. This also serves to shorten distances with the country's main international airport.

Hotels are being rebuilt in the area to cater to American standards, which includes Ocean Paradise in Las Galeras, owned by Ocean Hotels.

Also renovating their property in the area is Amhsa Marina Resort's 200 room and 50 bungalow all-inclusive Casa Marina Bay. The property overlooks a quiet lagoon protected by a reef. So the waters are generally quiet and fine for snorkeling.

### **Ocean Hotels,**

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## **CASINO DOMINICUS OFFERS LAS VEGAS-STYLE GAMING IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Casino Dominicus has unveiled an unparalleled gaming experience in the Dominican Republic. The casino offers gaming and entertainment Las Vegas-style with a Caribbean twist and features a Players Club and the highest limits in the nation. Gamers can try their luck at Blackjack, Roulette, Caribbean Stud Poker, Three Card Poker, Texas Hold 'Em Poker, Mini Baccarat and Craps. Same-day cash back, comps for free rooms, meals and airfare, ticket-in and ticket-out, and exclusive slot machines are available.

Encircled by the nation's natural beauty of La Romana and Bayahibe, Casino Dominicus offers a theatre, a disco, restaurants and boutiques.

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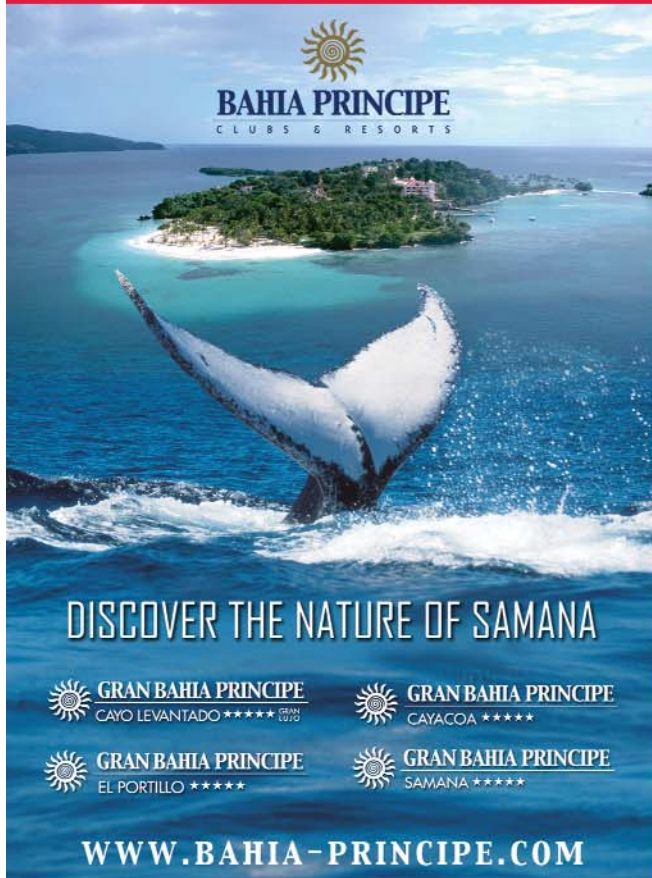



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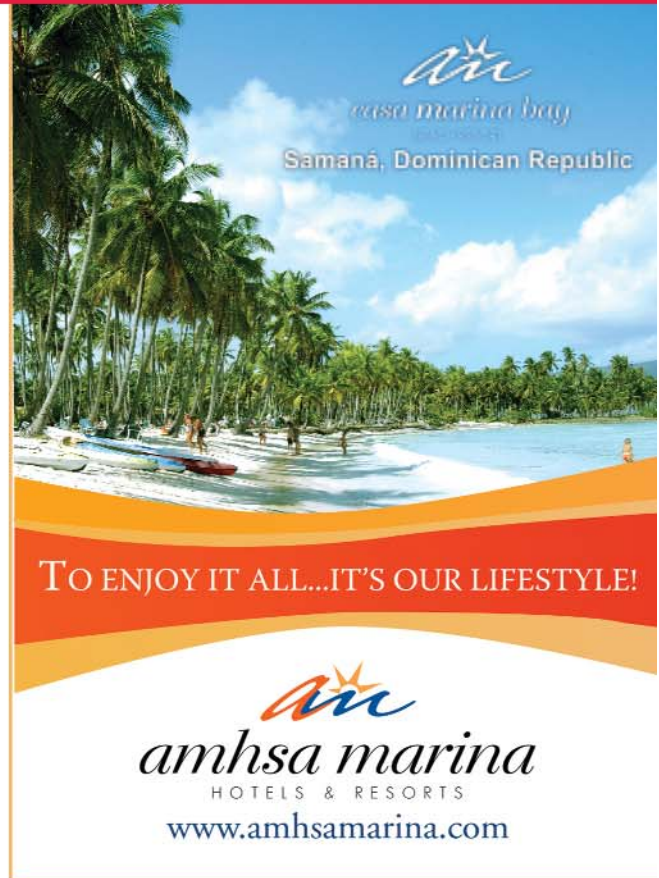



  
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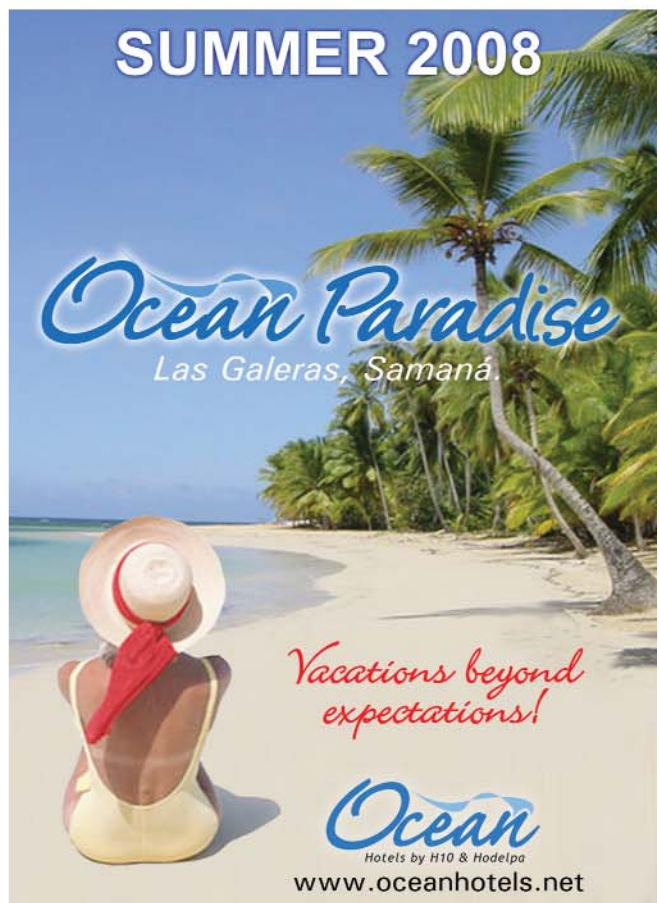
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# Dominican Republic: The New Event And Conference Destination In Cofresi

Ocean World Adventure Park And Casino, and Lifestyle Hacienda Resorts & Spa pair up to present a dynamic, fun, new tourism package.

BY D. O. CHRISTIAN RIEGER IV

Cofresi is on the North Coast of the Dominican Republic. Two of its major properties, Ocean World Adventure Park And Casino, and Lifestyle Hacienda Resorts & Spa have teamed up to offer an irresistible vacation and convention destination.

Ocean World is the largest marine adventure park in the Caribbean. This is a place where marine animals and their human counterparts can meet on common ground to gain a new understanding of one another. It offers a unique, life expanding experience for people of all ages.

It is not merely a park carved out of in-shore land. The park is set into a natural promontory with a rain-forest and hills rising behind it while jutting out into the breeze-swept Atlantic. Its main feature is the dolphin encounters and swims. Unlike many sea-adventure parks, this also has sea lion encounters and swim experience. Those same animals perform several times a day with the ocean as a backdrop. This gives a sense of total immersion in the event.

## Not so Fearless

For the fearless visitor there is the shark encounter and swim. Actually, not so fearless works fine. These are the gentle sharks of the sea — nurse sharks. All the same, it is the exhilaration of the experience that makes it unforgettable. After seeing how gentle and graceful they are as they glide through the water, guests will want be one of the few who have touched, petted and fed the sharks that inhabit Ocean World's 200,000 gallon shark pool. These mysterious sea creatures, many of which are over six feet long, swim right up to guests who stand stand on a platform in the water.

There are also encounters with



Dolphin Encounter at Ocean World Adventure Park And Casino.

stingrays. What other marine park offers the opportunity to hand feed stingrays or hold a seven foot nurse shark in ones lap? In their Stingray Bay, guests can float with, feed and pet these gentle creatures and discover they don't really sting at all!

Tropical birds and rare parrots fly freely in their own structure that is filled with plants and trees, just like their home in a rain forest environment. Not-to-be missed is the experience of swimming in the same pool with enormous tigers. Not too sure about this? This will make it easier on the nerves — a glass wall separates you from them.

They have a tiger feeding program in which guests can feed tigers through a hole in a glass wall. The Tiger Grotto is lush and green, filled with waterfalls and abundant vegetation, creating a true jungle experience.

Perfect for the kids and fun for adults is a large aquarium filled with corals and fish from the Caribbean waters. The difference between this aquarium and

others is customers can dive in, and snorkel in, this special environment — usually only a privilege allowed vets and caretakers.

But Ocean World goes beyond the thrill of interacting with some of the world's most fascinating animals. Part of their \$70 million investment program involved creating a sparkling, Las Vegas-style Casino and bravissimo show. They have a cocktail lounge that can accommodate up to 200 people and state-of-the-art conference room, with stage, that can accommodate up to 350 people for dining. Both are designed for conventions and incentive trips in mind.

To round off the list of this high-end eclectic tourism mix, Ocean World has a white-sand private beach, a top standard international marina for megayachts, a pool deck bar and international marina restaurant.

It is the sort of place to spend a day, or more, and take home memories to last a lifetime.

## Upgrading Your Lifestyle

The other half of the partnership is Lifestyle Hacienda Resorts & Spa, which has just completed a \$ 15 million rebuilding and refurbishment program. More than a resort, it is a compound of four resorts each with a different personality and price range to appeal to a variety of vacation lifestyles and pocketbooks. The entire complex is rated as one of the top 3 resorts on the Dominican Republic's north coast. It is a scenic, 25 minute ride from the international airport in Puerto Plata.

In all, there are 630 units in the four different hotels. Lifestyle Tropical Beach Resort and Spa is on the beachfront property offering prime spa treatments and, alternatively, dancing till dawn. Lifestyle Vitalis Garden Club is a refuge offering peace and tranquility on a hillside garden setting. Lifestyle Crown Residence Suites offer the well-heeled vacationer spacious one and two bedroom apartments to provide plenty of room for their privacy. These present the perfect setting for a family vacation or a get-together with friends. Lifestyle Crown Villas has 90 villas each with private pool in individualized garden surroundings. Each has a master bedroom suite and several tropically appointed bedrooms, its own pool, and indoor and outdoor dining areas.

All facilities are adopted to the United States market tastes and requirements from coffee makers and ironing boards in all rooms, to elegant bathrooms and amenities. There are special V.I.P. sections and V.I.P. beach and lounge areas for high-end clients who want something special,

Lifestyle Hacienda Resorts & Spa also has an 85 foot mega catamaran for event cruising and moonlight cruises. Helicopter transfers from and to the airport available can also be arranged. A 10-person stretch limo is also available to carry guests from and to the airport. It is the most complete beach resort in the Dominican Republic under one corporate roof on one compound.

## Special Package Rate

Lifestyle Hacienda Resorts & Spa is offering a special combination package rate. This is \$89.00 per person per night and valid for 5 night stays. It includes accommodations at Lifestyle Tropical Beach Resort & Spa with its 24 hour all inclusive food and beverages service, including four a la carte restaurants. This comes with programmed daily activities including non motorized water sports, tennis, gym, bicycle use, aerobics, pool and beach volleyball. This incorporates admission to Ocean World Adventure Park, per person, per stay and entrance per person to the Bravissimo Show. And this includes all taxes and gratuities. The package is commissionable at 10% for travel agents.

Working together, these two properties form a strategic alliance which promotes themselves and Cofresi as a new destination for events such as spectacular weddings and receptions, conventions, and incentive meetings for as few as eight participants to as many 350.



Lifestyle Tropical Beach Resort & Spa pool.

Special offer for travel agents with \$79 per person, per day until December 20, 2007. The rate applies for spouses and friends. It is the same as the above package, but without the bravissimo show. However, it does include a \$5 gaming coupon. A stay for five nights or more gets you a free helicopter ride over the Lifestyle Hacienda Resorts & Spa, and the Ocean World Adventure Park and Casino.

**Ocean World Adventure Park and Casino,**  
**jcorporan@ocean-world.info, www.oceanworld.net;**  
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## ANGUILLA'S NEW BIRD OF PARADISE OFFERS SPECIAL SUMMER RATES

Bird of Paradise, named after a rare and exotic bird of Papua New Guinea, is a villa designed by the prestigious design firm, Wilson & Associates in Dallas and is the newest jewel in Anguilla's offerings of elegant destination villas. Wilson, well-known for its five-star resorts and homes around the world, including Park Hyatt Dubai, Little Dix Bay, Atlantis Resort Bahamas, Georges V Paris and a long list of Four Seasons and Ritz Carlton's, has just completed Oprah's girls' school in South Africa and the Bird of Paradise in Anguilla.

After over 20 years traveling the world and always on the lookout for the "perfect" beach, the owners, Jon and Melody Dill of Wisconsin, decided on Anguilla to build their second home. They designed the villa in an Asian tropical style. The Bird of Paradise also provides the most extravagant lagoon-style pools of any villa on the island. The home showcases the owners' Oceanic art collection. Special amenities include a private verandah in each suite; an equal panoramic view; its own refrigerator and coffee service; Frette linens; bathrobes and slippers; Voss water; Kona coffee; and full-sized Bvlgaria amenities. Maid and concierge service is included.

At Christmas, the Bird of Paradise rate is \$5,200/night. The special summer rate is from \$2,200/night. These rates include 12 percent government tax and fees and 10 percent service charge.

Bird of Paradise Villa, [anguillabird@yahoo.com](mailto:anguillabird@yahoo.com),  
[www.anguillabird.com](http://www.anguillabird.com)

## CAP JULUCA SALES & MARKETING TO NOW BE DONE IN-HOUSE

Cap Juluca, the award-winning hotel on Anguilla, has taken its sales and marketing operation in-house. Effective immediately, General Manager Hans Maissen is heading up the team.

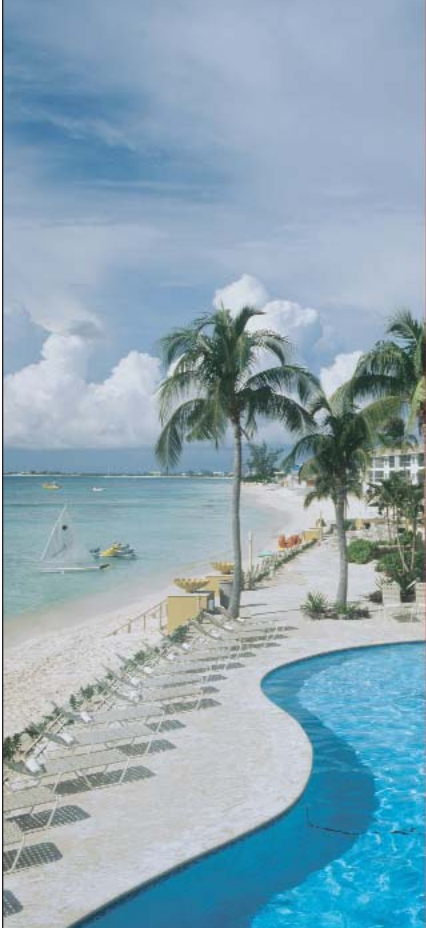
"We have decided to consolidate the sales and marketing efforts for Cap Juluca, bringing its home base to the hotel while retaining the representatives who are already in the field," said Dion Friedland, owner of the hotel. "At the same time, we recognize the dedicated effort put forth over the years in this capacity by Sue and Robin Ricketts. We greatly appreciate their valued contribution in helping establish Cap Juluca as one of the world's finest hotels."

Cap Juluca is a 179-acre retreat with 58 luxury rooms and junior suites, seven suites and six pool villas located in 18 private two story beachfront villas. All rooms have ocean views and are air-conditioned.

There are three restaurants under the supervision of Executive Chef George Reid: Pimms, renowned for its outstanding Asian-Caribbean cuisine; Kemia known for its spectacular international delicacies; and Georges, for more casual dining.

There is also a junior Olympic sized swimming pool, three tennis courts with a resident professional, water sports, a golf range, and a choice of two beaches - Maundays Bay and Cove Bay. Cap Juluca has won numerous awards for service excellence and is a member of Leading Small Hotels of the World.

Cap Juluca, 888-858-5822 (8JULUCA),  
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## DESERT ROSE ESTATE OFFERS UP TO 50% SAVINGS



To celebrate its first spring/summer/fall season, Desert Rose Estate, Anguilla, which made its debut in November 2006, is offering up to 50 percent savings for rentals April 14-December 17, 2007. The rate for one bedroom, with exclusive use of the Estate is \$2,000 during the winter and is now \$1,000 from April 14; two bedrooms, which go for \$2,300 in the winter can be rented for \$1,300; and all three bedrooms, with a winter rate of \$2,500, are \$1,500 from April 14 until December 17, 2007.

Overlooking the sea on Anguilla's northeastern shore, this 11,000 square foot oceanfront villa with 86 glass windows and doors is owned by Eudoxie and Sandra Wallace, who also own "Gorgeous Scilly Cay," Anguilla's legendary luncheon islet. More like a luxury home, the villa also has a family room, three-and-a-half bathrooms, spacious living room, gourmet kitchen and dining room. It is a singular location for friends, family gatherings, small executive retreats, weddings and honeymoons.

Bedrooms feature king size beds and virtually every room opens onto a 140-foot veranda. There is an infinity edge pool and a tennis court on the Estate's four acres.

Rates include the guests' own deserted island for a day at Scilly Cay and complimentary lunch there. Also included is daily house-keeping, continental breakfast, and complimentary phone service to the U.S. and Canada. Children must be 10 years or older. 10 percent government tax and 10 percent service charge are extra.

Arriving guests can arrange for stocking of provisions and services of a butler and/or chef. The concierge service assists with island tours, car rental, restaurant reservations, and deep-sea fishing excursions, as well as suggestions for the best snorkeling, scuba and sailing spots.

For visitors to the island, Eudoxie Wallace is something of local legend, captivating guests with his stories. At Scilly Cay, he and Sandra are full-time hosts and unofficial island ambassadors.

Desert Rose Estate, [villas@rickettluxury.com](mailto:villas@rickettluxury.com),  
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\* Daily flights from San Juan to Anguilla leave at 2:00 p.m. & 8:55 p.m. Returning flights depart Anguilla at 8:35 a.m. & 3:40 p.m. American Eagle features ATR 72 turbo-prop aircraft with a capacity for 64 passengers. Flight times are subject to variation. Anguilla offers no specific guarantee for departure or arrival times.



# Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort Going Strong Following Renovations

**I**deally situated on Grand Cayman's expansive Seven Mile Beach overlooking some of the world's cleanest and clearest rich blue and turquoise waters, the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort provides a wide array of modern amenities combined with the attentive services of a friendly and well trained staff that will satisfy your best customers, leisure or business, when traveling to the Cayman Islands. If you haven't visited recently you will be particularly impressed with the new look and feel that the resort exudes as a result of a \$15-million renovation in 2005 that refreshed the entire property. In keeping with its tropical setting the color scheme features a visually soothing combination of gold, tangerine, and avocado throughout. The 305 rooms and 4 suites are spacious and well appointed for today's traveler and offer wireless Internet access, 300-thread-count triple sheeting, marble baths, and private balconies with garden or ocean views. On the business side meetings and private parties take place in newly expanded function spaces. The largest, the island-inspired Orchid Ballroom, holds groups of up to 550 accompanied by the latest audiovisual resources and expert catering. Having stayed there on numerous visits over the year's your clients will also be quite satisfied with this resorts location at the start of Seven Mile Beach; within close proximity and convenience to Georgetown and walking distance to a wide variety of off property shopping, dining, entertainment and nightlife.

## Cayman Classic

The Cayman Islands Department of Tourism is hosting its 4th Annual Cayman Food & Wine Classic this spring, in Grand Cayman from May 10 – 13, 2007 at the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort. In partnership with FOOD & WINE Magazine, the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism will provide guests with three-days of fabulous food and wine seminars, led by award-winning Sommelier Joshua Wesson (pictured above); Head Chef and Owner of Aries in Houston,



Casual luxury on seven-mile beach.

Texas, Scott Tycer; and a second guest chef to be announced soon. Guests will be entertained by cooking classes taught by world-class chefs and industry experts, land and water activities, and special gala dinners with live entertainment. This popular long weekend is designed to attract food-lovers from around the world and showcase the Cayman Islands' gourmet dining options, while highlighting the local cuisine and flavor. Do not worry if your clients can't make this year's Cayman Classic because at the Grand Cayman Beach Resort a high quality food&beverage operation is a year long pursuit. The resort has four restaurants (Solana and Red Parrot) and lounges (Balboa's Lounge and Sol Bar) from casual to gourmet featuring fresh decor and new cuisine offering guests an array of choices. The resorts culinary team won gold, silver, and bronze medals at the 2006 Cayman Islands Culinary Competition and head Chef Roman Dolejs garnered Chef of the Year honors.

## Sports and Recreation

The addition of a quarter million investment in reef balls to stimulate reef growth will enable the beach at the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort to retain more powder-white sand and attract sea life, providing on-property snorkeling. In addition to the beach the beachside pool area has new deck-

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ing and landscaping. Improved and new landscaping continues to the lush tropical garden featuring a turtle lagoon and walkways that separate the main lobby and beach area. At the pool, concierges spritz sunbathers with mist and offer chilled towels, fresh fruit, and smoothie samples throughout the day. Water based activities range from snorkeling to scuba diving, kayaking, waterskiing, and submarine excursions. Golfers have access to the nearby 9-hole Britannia Golf Course and 18-hole The Links at Safehaven golf courses. Caribbean-style relaxation reaches a peak of sorts at the new La Mer Spa. Gleaming from a 15-foot tall windowed wall inviting guests to transcend their solid state and penetrate into a placid paradise, La Mer Spa offers a range of pampering pleasures, tranquil treatment rooms and a mood-altering spa menu that include Just for Men facials and age defying anti wrinkle treatments, replenishing body wraps and comforting warm stone massages.

### Families

If you have clients seeking a value packed summer vacation you should recommend the Cayman Summer Splash (CSS). Perfect for families looking for an exciting and memorable summer vacation CSS offers discounted accommodations, airfare, meals and activities for kids. By booking a Cayman Summer Splash package with Cayman Airways, children fly 50% off the adult fare, with an accompanying adult from all Cayman Airways gateway cities; and once they arrive in the Cayman Islands they receive a Book 5 Nights Pay for 4 hotel discount at the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort plus discounts at participating restaurants, providing families with deals and varied choices of cuisines, from traditional local Caymanian fare, to more exotic dishes from around the world. This summer, every Cayman Summer Splash vacation package comes complete with a Cayman VIP Card for discounts on entrance fees to attractions such as Boatswain's Beach, Atlantis Submarine underwater adventures, Jolly Roger cruises, and QE II Botanic Park. "Families who visit the Cayman Islands can choose from a variety of adventurous activities, or they can visit main attractions such as the famous Seven Mile Beach. This year's Summer Splash package makes all of these activities possible for families on any type of budget," said Pilar Bush, Director of Tourism.

### Rates

Rates for Island View rooms in high season range from \$384 to \$479 and \$184-\$289 for low season. Ocean View rooms in high season range from \$484 to \$579 and \$284 to \$389 for low season. Ocean Front rooms in high season range from \$584 to \$679 and \$384 to \$489 for low season. Through a current Sand Dollars Package at Marriott and Renaissance Caribbean & Mexico Resorts guests will get an extra night free and \$100 dining credit. Travel agents are encouraged to visit the resort and should contact the property directly about special "FAM" rates that are available. Enjoying a consistent

high occupancy rate throughout the year the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort has received the prestigious World Travel Award as "Grand Cayman's Leading Hotel". Whether your clients are a couple looking for a beach getaway, a family, divers, on business you can recommend the Marriott Grand Cayman Beach Resort with confidence.

**Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort,  
800-228-9290, [www.marriott.com/gcmgc](http://www.marriott.com/gcmgc)**

### HEINZ SIMONITSCH HONORED WITH LIFETIME AWARD

Professor Heinz E. W. Simonitsch C.D., the great maestro of luxury hotels who brought the Half Moon Tennis, Golf and Beach Resort in Montego Bay to the fore of luxury hotels while setting high standards in Jamaica, was honored with the Lifetime Award 2007 at the recent ITB International Tourist Fair in Berlin. This is the first time that a lifetime award has been presented by SENSES and it is in recognition of his considerable contribution to tourism over the last 50 years.

In presenting the award, Dr. Peggy E. Bien, editor in chief and founder of SENSES, said, "This award is for outstanding achievement in the luxury hotel sector focusing on the wellness and spa business. We want to set standards and quality criteria in this fast growing industry and pay tribute to those who have proven themselves to be reputable and outstanding in the wellness industry."

Elegant Resorts International, [www.elegantresortsint.net](http://www.elegantresortsint.net)  
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## CAYMAN AIRWAYS ANNOUNCES NEW YORK ROUTE

The Honourable Charles Clifford, Minister of Tourism, Environment, Investment & Commerce of the Cayman Islands, has announced that the National Flag Carrier, Cayman Airways Ltd. will, subject to regulatory approval, begin non-stop service from Grand Cayman to New York on June 23, 2007.

"I am pleased to accept this recommendation from the CAL Board of Directors whose decision is based on analysis and support from the CAL management team, the Lufthansa Consultants and the Department of Tourism," said Mr. Clifford.

"The start of this route signals the Government's commitment to ensuring the National Airline continues to be a driver of the local economy. The route addresses the needs of the tourism industry and will be convenient for the financial services industry. The New York area is the single largest source market for the Cayman Islands tourism industry with more than 30 percent of all United States air arrival visitors, coming from the tri-state area."

According to CAL CEO, Patrick Strasburger: "Arrival figures show a 95 percent increase in the number of visitors in 2006 versus 2005 from the Northeast. This is excellent competitive positioning for our airline providing access to a proven travel market for the Cayman Islands."

Although the 'Big Apple' is enticing, Cayman Airways isn't going at it alone. "We have developed a comprehensive marketing plan with the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism which will feature television advertising and, working with the on-island hotel part-

ners, we have excellently priced vacation packages," said Strasburger.

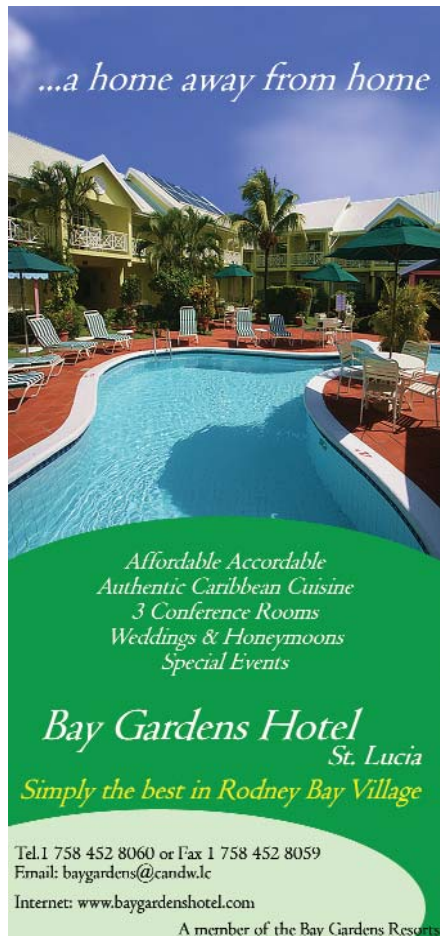
Leading the planning effort on behalf of the private sector is Ms. Jean Cohen, Vice President and General Manager Ritz Carlton Grand Cayman and the Cayman Islands Tourism Association's (CITA's) Chairperson for the Hotel Sector. Ms. Cohen welcomes the New York route; "The Northeast USA is critical to the success of the Cayman Islands as a tourist destination. CITA and all of its member hotels are working closely to ensure the success of CAL and this new route."

These sentiments were echoed by Mr. Clifford, "The data clearly indicates how important the Northeast market is to our tourism industry. I commend the Board and Management of Cayman Airways for responding to this demand with the introduction of the New York route. As we have stated in the past, one of the key roles of our National Airline is to support the Islands as an engine of economic growth. I am therefore extremely pleased to see the industry come together in this fashion."

"Moreover, I am confident our local residents will enjoy the convenience of the non-stop service for leisure, cultural and shopping opportunities in the Big Apple," Mr. Clifford continued.

Cayman Airways will operate the three weekly flights to John F. Kennedy International Airport. The flights leave Grand Cayman on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 4:10 p.m. and depart New York at 9 a.m. on Thursdays, Sundays and Mondays.

Cayman Airways, 800-4-CAYMAN, [www.caymanairways.com](http://www.caymanairways.com); Cayman Islands, visit [www.caymanislands.ky](http://www.caymanislands.ky), [www.divecayman.ky](http://www.divecayman.ky)



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## BONAIRE ANNOUNCES NEW DIVE INTO SUMMER PROMOTION



Experience the Caribbean's top rated dive destination with Bonaire's new summer-long promotion, Bonaire Dive Into Summer 2007. Taking place June 3 – September 29, 2007 this island-wide event will focus on scuba diving through a series of specialty topics: Family, Fotography, Fish and Fun!

There is no registration fee to participate in Bonaire Dive Into Summer (select activities may have a nominal cost involved) and all activities are open to anyone on island wishing to take part. Bonaire Dive Into Summer will also feature a free coupon book (valid June 3- September 29, 2007) filled with valuable discounts for hotels, restaurants, shopping, activities, rentals and more that will be available to all visitors to the island.

The "Family" topic will introduce guests to the many activities and programs available on-island for the entire family to enjoy; the "Fotography" topic will include guest speakers and events designed for professionals and those interested in photography to enjoy; the "Fish" topic will be all about marine conservation and the ocean planet; and the "Fun" topic will feature everything diving such as speakers encouraging divers to take new courses and non-divers to become certified. During September, solo travelers and singles traveling in groups can take advantage of dives, snorkels and events just for singles. Each month people will also have the opportunity to enjoy A Taste of Bonaire, an event showcasing local food, handicrafts, culture and music.

"Creating a summer-long, island-wide promotion will give more people the opportunity to learn about and participate in the many activities Bonaire has to offer," said Ronella Croes, Director of the Tourism Corporation Bonaire (TCB). "Also by offering specialty themes aimed at families, photographers, people concerned with marine conservation and special singles events in September all focused on scuba diving we can target niche markets and bring different groups of people with similar interests together."

Bonaire Dive Into Summer is being sponsored by the Tourism Corporation Bonaire (TCB) and Scuba Diving magazine. Tourism Corporation Bonaire, 800-BONAIRE, [www.bonairediveintosummer.com](http://www.bonairediveintosummer.com)

## IBEROSTAR GRAND HOTEL PARAISO OPENS ON RIVIERA MAYA

The brand new Iberostar Grand Hotel Paraiso opened in March 2007 on Mexico's Riviera Maya. This all inclusive 5-star hotel offers state-of-the-art facilities and is located 30 minutes from the Cancun International Airport. This adults-only resort features luxurious suites with concierge and butler service, all-inclusive 24-hour service, live entertainment, and intimate a la carte dining.

There are 312 rooms: 120 ocean front, 90 sea view junior suites, 90 standard junior suites and 12 suite style "Honeymoon Villas" with private pools. Rooms have air conditioning, safety deposit box, telephone, cable TV, ceiling fan, DVD player, minibar, tea/coffee maker, bathrobes, balcony or terrace. Two double beds or king size beds are available. The first adults-only Iberostar resort features bars, shops, three swimming pools, and all-suite accommodation. As an exclusive feature, Iberostar Grand Hotel Paraiso offers a unique butler and concierge service in each building.

Iberostar Grand Hotel Paraiso also offers a main buffet-style restaurant and four specialty restaurants with a la carte service, Internet room, and beauty salon. Guests are entitled to use all facilities of the three neighboring hotels. The Star Friends offer an array of activities and social games during the day and every night there are different shows and life music.

The Grand Hotel Paraiso will also have its own private mini-spa offering couples' treatments and massages for hotel guests. The hotel's visitors will have access to El Spa located across the street. Guests of the new hotel will also have complete access to all the restaurants and activities at the Iberostar Paraiso Beach, Iberostar Paraiso Del Mar, Iberostar Paraiso Lindo and Iberostar Paraiso Maya hotels. Guests can also take advantage of free shuttle bus to Playa del Carmen. Active visitors can participate in the water sports activities offered along the beach and in the pools. Golfers will enjoy playing the championship, 18-hole, par 72, Playa Paraiso Golf Course, designed by P.B. Dye.

Iberostar Grand Hotel Paraiso, [www.iberostar.com](http://www.iberostar.com)

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## ROYAL HIDEAWAY BY OCCIDENTAL WINS AAA FIVE DIAMOND AWARD

Occidental Royal Hideaway Resort and Spa has earned the prestigious 2007 AAA Five Diamond Award and is one of only two all inclusive properties to win this award.

"AAA's Diamond Rating System is the most respected lodging and restaurant rating system in the industry," said Tony Perrone, Regional Manager, AAA National. "The Five Diamond Award is only given to establishments that will exceed guest expectations; otherwise they would not have achieved a Five Diamond rating."

"We are extremely pleased to have earned this award," said Jean Agarrista, Gerente General. "It is recognition of the hard work that goes into creating and operating an exceptional establishment."

Occidental Royal Hideaway Resort and Spa is the only lodging in Playa Del Carmen to receive the Five Diamond Rating and is one of approximately 93 lodgings that will earn the Five Diamond recognition from AAA this year. Approximately 50,000 establishments will be listed in the 2007 AAA TourBook guides and database but only an estimated .25 percent will receive the Five Diamond Award. In Mexico, AAA rated 559 lodgings in 2007- only six achieved the five Diamond rating status.

To be considered for AAA approval and rating, lodgings and restaurants undergo a thorough inspection by one of AAA's 60 full-time professional evaluators. AAA first started listing accommodation information in its travel publications in the early 1900s. In 1937, the first field inspectors were hired, and the current Diamond Rating System was introduced in 1977.

As North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA provides its 50 million members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1902, the not for profit, fully tax paying AAA has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers.

Occidental Hotels & Resorts, 800-999-9182, [www.royalhideaway.com](http://www.royalhideaway.com)

## RIVIERA MAYA IS HOT DESTINATION FOR 2007; NAMES JAVIER ARANDA PEDRERO AS NEW DIRECTOR OF TOURISM



J. ARANDA PEDRERO

On February 1, 2007, Javier Aranda Pedrero became Director of Tourism for the Riviera Maya Tourism Promotion Board (FPTRM). Aranda Pedrero joined FPTRM following his work as Under Secretary of Tourism Promotion for the Tourism Secretariat in Quintana Roo and has extensive experience in the tourism industry in both private and public sectors for over 20 years. As Director of Tourism, Aranda Pedrero said that his strategy would include marketing and promotional efforts to draw even greater interest from the top markets for Riviera Maya, the U.S. and Canada, as well as Europe. He said: "It is my goal to ensure that the Strategic Promotion Plan for 2007 will be continued and that in the year ahead we will strive to exceed expectations and keep the Riviera Maya among the top destinations worldwide."

tations and keep the Riviera Maya among the top destinations worldwide."

Recently released by the Riviera Maya Tourism Promotion Board, the 2006 tourism statistics and trends revealed that the Riviera Maya is again a hot destination for 2007. The final numbers reported a 20.7 percent increase in tourist arrivals for 2006 (welcoming approximately 2,673 people) compared to 2005, and almost 10 percent compared to 2004. This growth in tourism to the Riviera Maya equates to almost five times more than the international index, since worldwide tourism increased by 4.5 percent in 2006.

The Riviera Maya Tourism Promotion Board noted that 2005 was an unusual year due to hurricanes Emily and Wilma, which is why it is also important compare 2006 numbers to statistics from 2004. The increase in tourist arrivals in 2006 as compared to 2004 was 9.5 percent, which equates to double the growth rate of worldwide tourism.

Tourism increases are also evident in Riviera Maya's hotel room inventory, which has reached 30,705 rooms in 2006, compared to 26,980 available rooms in 2005 and 23,512 in 2004. In terms of hotel occupancy, 2006 showed an increase to 71.9 percent occupancy as compared to 74.5 percent occupancy in 2005, although not quite reaching 2004 occupancy of 86.4 percent. However, room night occupancies had a considerable increase in 2006 as compared to 2004, reaching 7.889 million occupied room nights in 2006 versus 7.151 million in 2004.

The U.S. continues to be the leading country of origin for tourism to the Riviera Maya, accounting for nearly 45 percent of the 2.6 million arrivals, followed by Europe with 27.95 percent, Canada with 16.41 percent and Mexico with 10.40 percent.

Based on the outstanding statistics for 2006, nearly three million tourists are expected to visit the Riviera Maya in 2007 with occupancy reaching approximately 78 percent. Forecasts for 2007 also show an increase in the number of hotel rooms to 34,113.

The Riviera Maya, 877-760 MAYA, [info@rivieramaya.com](mailto:info@rivieramaya.com), [www.rivieramaya.com](http://www.rivieramaya.com)

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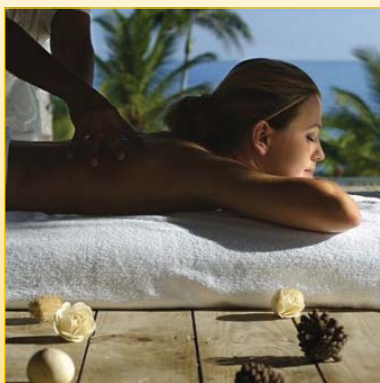
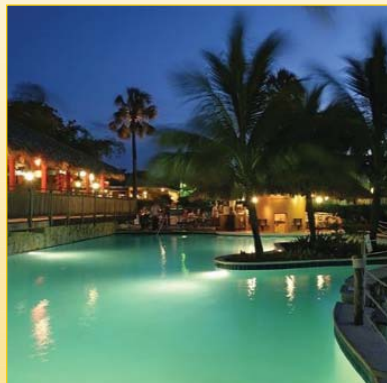
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