

Fascinating Falklands



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Fascinating – And Frankly Rather Difficult of Access – Falklands

For that small handful of folks who, no kidding, really want to get away from it all.

BY MARK ZUSSMAN

The Falkland Islands may never have been a whole lot more than the answer to the stumper question on a TV quiz show, if not for Argentina's quixotic 1982 decision to invade and occupy and drive out the perfidious British, or at least the perfidious British government. For those who watched the conflict closely at the time, but did not exactly have a dog in the fight, the situation was a perplexing one, and one that necessitated a review of one's very most fundamental notions as to right and wrong. On one side of the equation was the map. The Falkland Islands, a sparsely inhabited archipelago of two largish islands and some 700 smaller ones, are located at a distance of only a few hundred miles off the Argentine South Atlantic coast, and not off of Buenos Aires, either. The Falklands are off of the bottom of Argentina, at about the latitude of the Straits of Magellan and the Tierra del Fuego. (Looking for the Cape of Good Hope at the bottom of the African continent? Head east, yes, but also head some 17 or 18 degrees of latitude north.) If geography alone were the guide, then, the Falklands would all but surely have learned to fly the blue and white flag of the Tango Republic.

But geography was in fact not the only guide. The Falklands had been a British possession, and later a British Overseas Territory, since way back in 1833. The great majority of the inhabitants were at the time of the war, and as they still are today, of British stock, notably Scots and Ulster-Scots, though, given the presence of the inevitable expatriate Frenchman, folks of Scandinavian and Hispanic descent, some hardy Australians and New Zealanders, and another one from Column A here and one from Column B there, hardly exclusively so. Manners, customs and traditions were, and are still, British — the islands' so-called "smoko" is not all that different from a proper English tea — and English is the island group's language. The inhabitants themselves, not so very surprisingly, therefore, preferred British rule to Argentine rule and all the more so because Argentina at the time was being led, or misled, by a loutish military junta, and it was impossible not to perceive the invasion as a rather cynical means of firing up a spirit of national unity, out of the embers of a sense of national hurt, and thereby diverting attention from Argentina's real problems.

The British, for those who are now too young to have paid any attention to the conflict, vowed to retain the islands. The Queen Elizabeth 2, then, before the advent of the Queen Mary, the most prestigious ocean liner afloat, was pressed into service as a troop carrier. The cost of the conflict was, on the Argentine side, 649 lives; on the British side, 258 lives. The Islands remained — and remain — British; Argentines to



Saunders Island.

this day, or at least jingo Argentines, remain resentful. A detail, again primarily for the younger folks in the audience: the Falklands War was the first significant world conflict that homebodies got to watch reported in obsessive detail via CNN.

Nowadays, a quarter century after the war, tourism is the Falklands' number two industry immediately after fisheries

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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and the sale of fishing licenses and ahead of agriculture, which for all practical purposes means sheep farming. No, this is not, needless to say, Las Vegas. 'Taint Branson, Missouri, either. By the standards of the world's big tourism destinations, the numbers are, predictably enough, modest, and so they are likely to remain.

During the 2006-2007 Southern Hemisphere cruise season, October to the end of March, some 41 vessels of 35 cruise lines made a total of 182 port calls in the Falklands, and a total of 51,282 cruise ship passengers — on itineraries that also included the South Orkney Islands, the South Shetland Islands, South Georgia, the Patagonian coasts of Argentina and Chile and of course the Antarctic coast — were cleared for disembarkation. (Why the coy language? Because it's unknown exactly how many of the 51,282 actually did go ashore instead of hanging around their ships' swimming pool, or pools, and/or bar.) Not bad actually, those 51,282. What with landing fees, land excursions, the purchase of a book about penguins here, a beer in a pub there, the change these day-trippers leave behind makes a real difference in what is obviously something less than a supercharged economy.

Land-based visitors to the Falklands — those not getting off of cruise ships but rather arriving by air for stays, typically, of at least a full week (the infrequency of inbound and outbound flights being just one of several factors militating against whistle-stop visits of the if-this-is-Tuesday-it-must-be-Belgium variety) — numbered, on the other hand, only around 1,200. One thing for sure, visitors who stay overnight aren't going to be bumping into other visitors who stay overnight. You want to get away from it all? Down here in the South Atlantic, there are islands that you can have virtually to yourself.

And what kind of numbers might the Falklands be looking for, or hoping for, in the way of land-based visitors? The Falkland Islands Tourist Board is, to ap-

pearances, an extremely competent entity. It does not dine on pie-in-the-sky. It prefers reality to fantasy. It operates one of the most intelligent and informative travel-and-tourism Web sites to be found on the Internet. According to Liz Dimmlich, the acting general manager of the FITB, a national tourism strategy is still only under development. Growth on the order of a modest 10-15 percent annually, however, would be most welcome and, given current infrastructure, perhaps very nearly as much as could comfortably be accommodated.

Let's return in due course to the somewhat nettlesome logistical question of how to reach the Falklands in the pre-



Curious King Penguins.

dictable enough, and already hinted at, absence of regularly-scheduled non-stops out of Hartsfield or O'Hare. Let's also put off the question of what other destinations the Falklands might combine with, given the island group's remoteness.

The Why and Wherefore

First, why should anyone go to the rather considerable trouble — and, with it, the rather considerable cost — of a trip all the way down to these faraway dots of land?

First part of the answer: Though there is much to be said for the aforementioned Las Vegas and Branson, for rollicking U.S. theme parks, for do-easy resorts in the Caribbean, and for Europe's great cities, there is also much to be said for the grandeur of bleak horizons, of profuse and unusual wildlife, of

the sense of being not at the edge of the inhabited universe but a couple of steps beyond it. People who have arrived at the end of the Dingle Peninsula in southwest Ireland and looked out at the Blasket Islands or watched the videos at the Blasket Island Centre will understand the tug of this kind of place. So will people who have been to the tip of Brittany or to the quite desolate westernmost point of the whole European continent at Cabo da Roca in Portugal or who have gone to, or dreamed of visiting, the Tierra del Fuego itself or that other improbable yet increasingly popular tourism destination, Antarctica.

Nothing wrong with taking a trunkful of books, but one or two fat ones are likely to be quite enough and, as for clothing, no, the islands really must not, despite any ideas anyone might have about their location, be confused, weather-wise, with, say, the U.S. Northern Plains states. Temperatures in the Falklands during the Southern Hemisphere winter (same months as the Northern Hemisphere summer of course) do dip into the 20s (Fahrenheit). There is occasionally some light snow. Overall, though, the annual weather cycle might be said to resemble that of the U.K. itself, albeit with summer temperatures a mite lower, with distinctly more sunshine, and with less rainfall.

Why and Wherefore, Part II

And what is there to do in the Falklands? For special-interest travelers, angler types first, there are great opportunities on the sea, in the estuaries, in the pristine rivers. Watch in particular for sea trout of two to seven pounds in weight but with a record catch, back in 1992, of a hefty 22 pounds, 12.5 ounces. The sea trout are plentiful and are great fighters.

Dive enthusiasts will be kept busy and happy with the rather gruesomely large inventory of shipwrecks. Golfers will enjoy the rugged terrain of the 18-hole course at the Stanley Golf Club. Golfers will be surprised at the number of other courses around the islands.

Painters, both professional and ama-

teur, will thrill to the rolling plains, the big skies and the endless horizons. Local water-colorist Richard Cockwell in fact hosts regular painting holidays; he provides easels and drawing boards as needed.

All travelers, special-interest and general-interest types alike, will enjoy island-hopping on the twin-engine nine-seater Islander aircraft operated by FIGAS, the Falkland Island Government Air Service. They will enjoy tramping around on the moors. They will enjoy riding cross-country in various 4x4 vehicles. They will enjoy the long sandy beaches, the farms, the dramatic cliffs, the reach-out-and-touch-them mountains, the vistas. They will be dazzled by the variety and the abundance of wildlife — the King, the Gentoo, the Magellenic, the Rockhopper and the Macaroni penguins; Southern sealions and elephant seals and at times fur and leopard seals; grebes, black-necked swans, geese, wild ducks; albatrosses, giant petrels, buzzards, vultures, cormorants, herons, and a large bird of prey called the striated caracara, which Darwin himself took special notice of in the course of his own 1833-4 visit to the Falklands aboard the good ship *Beagle*. These last birds — “very mischievous and inquisitive, quarrelsome and passionate,” in Darwin’s words — are nowadays all but unique to the Falklands. Whales and dolphins of various species patrol the waters offshore.

Accommodations

On the accommodations front, there is, needless to say, neither a Sheraton nor an Intercontinental, neither a Breezes nor a Club Med, but, then, it’s not any of the above that Falklands Islands visitors are likely to be looking for, is it? In Stanley, the Falklands capital, the spiffiest lodging establishment, the Malvina House Hotel, has all of two “executive” rooms and 14 standards, but one marker of its ambitions is that in every bathroom there is a built-in hair dryer. Outside of Stanley, lodging tends to be of the B&B variety — but not just

clean, cozy and friendly. Your hosts are the ones who act in effect as local airstrip managers. When they know you’re coming, they don’t just bake a cake. They go out and put up the airstrip wind sock, they open up the shed that houses the emergency equipment, they get into radio contact with the pilot. In addition to acting as local airstrip managers, they also often act as local tour guides. Food is at a minimum good.

How to get to the Falklands? Leaving out yacht charters and other such extravagant approaches, there are three options. One, you visit, as already suggested, in the course of a Southern



4-wheel driving on Paloma Beach.

Hemisphere cruise, but in that case you are probably not choosing the Falklands as a destination. You are choosing Patagonia or Antarctica or both. The Falklands simply turn out to be a more or less unanticipated bonus.

The Air Approach

Two, you get onto one of the six-times monthly British Defense Ministry charter flights out of the RAF base at Brize Norton, Oxfordshire. This flight, end to end, takes roughly 18 hours, including the one to two-hour refueling stop at Ascension Island out in the Atlantic about halfway between Recife, Brazil and Luanda, Angola. There’s usually plenty of room on the MoD flights. Passengers are able to spread out and make themselves comfortable. Not likely, though, that this is a routing that a lot of North American travelers, either

the readers of this magazine or the clients of readers of this magazine, are going to opt for.

The way North American travelers are likely to reach the Falklands is via Santiago, Chile, on the Chilean airline LAN’s weekly Saturday morning flight via Puerto Montt and Punta Arenas in Chilean Patagonia and a stop once a month in Rio Gallegos in Argentine Patagonia. The lapsed time between Santiago and Mount Pleasant Airport, the Falkland Islands facility handling both civilian and military traffic, is about six hours. The Falklands quite obviously, then, lend themselves to combination with Chilean destinations. There is a British birdwatchers group, Birdfinders by name, that in fact combines the Falklands and Chile quite imaginatively — days one to 12 in transit to or on the Falklands, the later part of day 12 to day 17 in Chile or in transit back from Chile to the UK. LAN is a classy airline, and it has long reach. U.S. travelers using LAN can combine the Falklands not just with Chile but with any number of other South American destination.

There are lots of good tour operators on the Falklands, by the way. But, since they do not all necessarily do the same thing, it’s just as well to find the one that fits with the objectives of any particular client through the good offices of the Falkland Islands Tourist Board. The Falklands, given their remoteness, are obviously not a place where someone on, say, a round-the-world ticket just drops in, saunters up to the information booth at the airport, asks for a listing of lodgings in one or another price range, walks outside and grabs a cab or looks around for a bus that says Stanley on it. Neither, given the substantial cost of getting to the Falklands and its non-contiguity with anything else, is it a place for backpackers.

A tour operator, in short, isn’t just desirable. A tour operator is indispensable.

The Falkland Islands Tourist Board, www.visitorfalklands.com, info@visitorfalklands.com

Iberostar Puts Its Stamp on Brazil

The Iberostar name has gone up on a famous Copacabana hotel tower, on a sprawling new Bahia resort, and on a luxury Amazon cruise liner.

BY MARK ZUSSMAN

Emerge from the last of the tunnels. Follow the dazzling sunlight the last couple of hundred yards along the Avenida Princesa Isabel in the direction of Copacabana Beach. There's a surprise in store. The logo at the top of the famous 37-story hotel tower at the high-visibility corner on the left, directly across from the beach, no longer reads Méridien. Now what it says is Iberostar.

Le Méridien: originally a subsidiary of Air France, now a Starwood brand. Iberostar: Spanish. For someone who has been checking in to the upscale 450-room, 54-suite Rio de Janeiro property for the last two decades or so, and has accustomed himself to greetings in the local language, which is Portuguese, or in English or sometimes in French, it was a touch disconcerting one recent weekend to have a liveried employee beg "permiso" in an only ever-so-slightly-accented Spanish or, at the entrance to the breakfast rooms, to be asked, again in Spanish, for the number of one's "habitación."

Truth, though, is that the Méridien had turned a touch shabby in recent years. Its style may be said, generously, to have deteriorated into the nondescript. The hotel will remain open through the Pan-American Games, some of whose events — beach volleyball, notably — were going to be watchable, as it happens, right out of Iberostar windows, in a bright blue stadium that has been erected on the sands. Then it will close for four months, while a crew of hundreds, if not thousands, tears the place apart and puts it back together again.

The hotel will re-inaugurate as the Grand Iberostar Copacabana in time for Rio's dazzling New Year's Eve celebration (one of the world's greatest fireworks displays, offerings to the sea goddess Iemanjá immediately in front of the hotel throughout the evening) and of course Carnaval 2008.

The Grupo Iberostar, for those for whom the name may still be unfamiliar, has been in business since way back in 1930 with headquarters on the island of Mallorca — and with any number of world's-best-hotel-and-resort-chain awards under its belt. The company employs 10,000 persons. Its earnings were of 3 billion euros in 2005. Its more than 100 properties are located in warm-weather vacation lands as diverse as Greece, Turkey, Montenegro, Cyprus, Tunisia, Morocco, Mexico, Cuba, Jamaica. Spain, too, of course.

Iberostar has two major properties in Brazil in addition to the Iberostar Copacabana. In the exotic northeastern state of Bahia, in a palm-shaded, and formerly fairly time-forgotten, oceanfront village partway from Salvador International Airport to the big resort complex at Porto Sauípe, the Iberostar Praia do Forte Golf & Spa Resort e Vilas has been operating for just over a year at a strength of 632 apartments, all with



The Iberostar Copacabana.

partial or full view of the beach and on an all-inclusive basis that includes, by the way, eight-year whiskey. The 18-hole golf course was designed by P.B. Dye. There are four swimming pools.

By the end of 2008, Iberostar will open a second hotel on the property with 536 apartments. The following year it will complete a third hotel with 406 apartments and nine more holes of golf.

The Iberostar Grand Amazon, with 72 luxury cabins and two suites as well as a pair of restaurants, a pair of bars, a pair of swimming pools, and a fitness center, offers three-night cruises along the Solimões River west from Manaus — the Solimões is the one that gets called the Amazon again as soon as its in Peruvian hands on the other side of the border — and four-night cruises along the Rio Negro northwest from Manaus in the general direction of Colombia. Alternatively, stitch the two cruises together into one unforgettable seven-night Amazon adventure.

Iberostar Hotels and Resorts, www.iberostar.com

REED BOAT *ABORA III* SHOWCASED BY CRILLON TOURS

Based on several prehistoric stone carvings of the Samaritans, Phoenicians and some paintings discovered in Egypt, Thor Heyerdhal proved in 1970 that ancient people could have crossed the Atlantic Ocean from the Mediterranean Sea to America using reed rafts, favorable trend winds, and the reed boat builder's skills, made famous by the Limachi Brothers, by using the local reeds called Totora.

Half a century later, the German scientist Dominique Goerlitz, with a similar reed boat built with Totora by the same family on the shores of Lake Titicaca, proved that this craft called *Abora II*, could easily navigate with side and front winds by using 14 maneuverable side-swords instead of a traditional rudder. During 2002, *Abora II* sailed on the Mediterranean Sea from Alexandria to Lebanon, Rhodes, Crete, and back to Alexandria.

Professor Goerlitz additionally studied the cave drawings of the Magdalene Old Stone Age found in France and Spain and the remains of nicotine and cocaine discovered in some Egyptian mummies. These facts assured him that in prehistoric times, people from America could have also reached Europe and the Mediterranean, navigating with the north Atlantic currents and oriented during their voyages by several constellations.

His research will come to life with his latest reed boat, the *Abora III*, which will set sail from New York in July to cross the North Atlantic to Spain. This reed boat is already in New York and can be seen at Liberty Harbor marina in New Jersey.

The *Abora* reed boats were built at the shipyard of Crillon Tours harbor of Huatajata located on Lake Titicaca. Crillon Tours has always fully cooperated with these scientific expeditions and in 2006 they presented the original *Abora II* at the entrance of the ITB in Berlin. They have also brought Aymara Fermin Limachi to ITB, who is the only one of his family who had been part of the crew during the *Abora II* and who will also be on board the *Abora III* expedition.

This unique presentation became one of

the best promotions of Bolivia by Crillon Tours. The international and local media will cover the sail of *Abora III* from New York to Spain and diplomatic representatives of the involved countries will be present on both occasions. Crillon Tours will be present as well, and they believe that this reed boat expedition will be remembered for many years to come.

A new trend of tourism is evolving, emphasizing exploration and adventure and this scientific voyage will become a memorable and unusual story which could be used by imaginative tour operators.

Crillon Tours, www.titicaca.com

NEW ACQUISITIONS FOR TAM FLEET

TAM S.A., Brazil's largest airline company, has announced the acquisition of four additional new Boeing 777-300ERs and 22 Airbus A350 XWBs.

The fuel efficient B777-300ER is the world's largest long-range twin-engine jetliner and is capable of carrying approximately 370 passengers in TAM's three class configuration. TAM became the first Latin American airline to incorporate this airplane type as part of its long-range fleet plan after announcing an initial order for four aircraft last year.

Marco Antonio Bologna, TAM's CEO, stated that this new acquisition is an important step for TAM's growth in the long haul international market. The company ended May with 72.4 percent market share among Brazilian companies operating in the international market, according to official ANAC (Brazil's National Civil Aviation Agency) statistics. TAM's international segment strategy is to grow by increasing

flights to countries where it already operates in Latin America, the United States and Europe, as well as launching other potential destinations to attract leisure and business passengers.

Currently the largest Latin American Airbus operator of A319s, A320s and A330s, this is the second TAM acquisition of Boeing airplanes which takes its 777-300ER fleet to eight in total.

In addition, TAM also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to acquire 22 Airbus A350 XWB (Xtra Wide Body), models 800 and 900, with 10 more options, to be delivered between 2013 and 2018. The company will be the first in Latin America to have these new aircraft in its long haul fleet. As well as the A350s, TAM also confirmed it was exercising four more A330 options, which will be delivered by the manufacturer in 2010 (two planes) and 2011 (two planes). According to the price list, the total value of the 22 A350 aircraft and four A330s is around \$5.4 billion.

The large A350-800 and 900 aircraft will begin commercial flights in 2013, and will be equipped with all of the new technology developed for the A380.

"To have a customer like TAM confirm its choice for the A350 XWB is a matter of pride for us," said Rafael Alonso, Senior Vice President, Latin America, Caribbean and Spain, for Airbus. "We are thankful for this strong endorsement of the A350 XWB program and we are pleased to accompany TAM's successful expansion with the A330s on its long-haul network. We are delighted with this long-standing partnership with TAM and look forward to continuing this relationship in the future."

TAM, www.tam.com.br

The Falkland Islands

Take the road less travelled and discover the difference



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ENJOY THE MAGIC OF THE HOTEL SANTA CRUZ IN CHILE



Hotel Santa Cruz is located in front of the Plaza de Armas (Main Square) of Santa Cruz in Chile. The hotel has charmed visitors for years and is unique in that it not only provides guests the ultimate in relaxation and comfort, but it invites guests to be part of the history and winery activities of the Colchagua Valley as well.

Upon entering the Hotel Santa Cruz, guests will step back in time to a very different era. Every detail of the architecture and decor are tributes to the area's history. The 85 rooms, including 16 suites on four floors, with a view of the square and the interior park are all tastefully decorated. The hotel and its staff provide the utmost in quality service and personalized attention.

The hotel features a pool and a Jacuzzi. There is also the store "Almacruz," where guests and visitors can acquire wine from the vineyards of the area, the liquors from "Espíritus de Colchagua" (Spirits of Colchagua), and a wide assortment of souvenirs.

Gourmet cuisine is offered in the restaurant "Los Varietales," where award winning chef Hernán Hernández has developed a menu featuring a variety of typical Chilean cuisine, made with local ingredients. There is also a pizza restaurant "Chamán."

The hotel's modern convention center can accommodate 800 people, and is suitable for conferences, reunions, weddings and other events.

Hotel Santa Cruz Plaza, www.hotelsantacruzplaza.cl
Sportstour, mailbox@sportstour.cl

FORMULA 1 AND NEW YEARS PACKAGES THROUGH TOURS BRASIL

Tours Brasil is a professionally-staffed Rio de Janeiro-based ground operator with more than 30 years of experience in organizing travel for FITs and leisure and incentive groups in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru.

Their GP Brasil Formula 1 package from October 19-22, 2007

includes airport and hotel transfers, three nights accommodations at the three-star Normandie Design Hotel with buffet breakfast included, and transfer from the hotel to the Autodrome on Saturday and Sunday. Price is \$320 (double) and \$304 (triple). Prices are commissionable for 15 percent for agencies.

To celebrate the new year, Tours Brasil is offering a New Years special at the five-star Hotel Intercontinental, which features 10 nights hotel accommodation with daily breakfast. Superior rooms are \$1,645 (single) and \$823 (double) and Deluxe rooms are \$1,837 single, \$920 (double). A New Years package at the five-star Sheraton Rio Hotel & Resort for 10 nights including daily breakfast is priced at \$2,060 (single) and \$1,030 (double).

Tours Brasil, director@toursbrasil.com.br,
www.toursbrasil.com.br

AQUA EXPEDITIONS VENTURES INTO THE PERUVIAN AMAZON IN HAUTE LUXURY

The *M/V Aqua*, the Peruvian Amazon's first truly luxury expedition vessel, will set off on its virgin voyage January 12, 2008 from the port city of Iquitos, Peru, to explore some of the more remote and pristine areas of the Amazon River and its tributaries. The *M/V Aqua* will cater to discriminating, adventurous travelers, and will journey into areas only a privileged few have had the opportunity to experience, including parts of the Peruvian rain forest and the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve and flooded forest. Iquitos, where the company is based is located deep in the Peruvian Amazon jungle, only reachable by boat or plane.

The flagship of Aqua Expeditions, the *M/V Aqua* is a 140-foot-long vessel with 12 spacious guest suites. All of the suites are 230-240 square feet with large outward-facing picture windows and ensuite sitting areas; eight are interconnected to cater to families. Guests can intermingle in the ship's dining room, bar, indoor lounge, observation deck and outdoor lounge. Each sailing will have a crew of 14 plus three naturalist guides to accompany guests on local excursions.

Lima star chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino has been appointed to oversee the restaurant, which will offer a menu of fresh, delicious Peruvian fare, served both on-board or on excursions. Owner of Lima's renowned Malabar restaurant, Schiaffino has designed a dinner menu perfectly matched to the region and paired with select South American wines.

Travelers can choose year-round from three-, four-, and seven-night itineraries. Every voyage is uniquely appealing, as the changing seasons vary the sightseeing and wildlife. Guests will venture off the boat daily on a fleet of three launches, each with its own naturalist guide, to navigate the Amazon near its source and to explore the smaller inlets and river systems that make up the flooded forest. Pacaya Samiria National Reserve, located at the headwaters of the Amazon, covers more than five million acres and is teeming with wildlife and aquatic life, including such threatened or endangered species as the Pink Amazon dolphin, three-toed sloth, black alligator and giant river otter.

Aqua Expeditions, fgz@aqualexpeditions.com,
www.aqualexpeditions.com

HILTON PAPAGAYO RESORT ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF OLIVIER MAUMAIRE AS GENERAL MANAGER



OLIVIER MAUMAIRE

The new Hilton Papagayo Resort in Costa Rica has announced the appointment of Olivier Maumaire as General Manager. Olivier most recently served as Director of Operations and

Executive Assistant Manager of the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

A 20-year Hilton veteran, Olivier began his career at the Hilton Strasbourg, France. Since then, Olivier has held several management positions at hotels in France, Venezuela and Puerto Rico. He holds a Brevet de Technicien en Hotellerie (Hotel business Technician Licence) from the Hotel & Tourism School of Strasbourg, France.

The Hilton Papagayo Resort is scheduled to open in December 2007 upon completion of extensive renovations. Offering 202 rooms, including 71 private bungalows, guests will enjoy plush accommodation with panoramic views surrounded by nature. Located on a private beach on the Bay of Papagayo in Guanacaste, 20 minutes from Liberia International Airport, the hotel features two outdoor swimming pools, non-motorized water sports, spa, fitness center, tennis courts, kid's club, three restaurants, two bars, casino, and entertainment.

Hilton Papagayo Resort,
www.hiltonworldwide.com

TABACÓN GRAND SPA THERMAL RESORT NAMED CENTRAL AMERICA'S FIRST 'LEADING SPA OF THE WORLD'

Featuring a dramatic rainforest setting at the foot of Arenal Volcano, hot springs and the new Grand Spa, Tabacón Grand Spa Thermal Resort has been named a member of Leading Hotels of the World which also named its spa a "Leading Spa of the World," the only such spa in Central America. Reflecting the resort's recent up-

grades and renovations, the resort was also selected for inclusion in the prestigious Condé Nast Johansens Recommended Hotels, Inns, Resort & Spas collection, making it one of only four resorts in Costa Rica and the only luxury spa in Central America.

The Grand Spa has 11 outdoor treatment bungalows, an extensive menu of indigenous and therapeutic treatments, and an open-air Yoga Studio. The Spa capitalizes on its hot springs location with a three-unit Temazcal, the only one in Central and Latin America; volcanic mud wraps and rinses in outdoor river pools; mineral water treatments; coffee and coconut scrubs; and massage with volcanic stones. The Spa features individual bungalows, couples bungalows, and an "all-day" bungalow suite (including meals and treatments) for adults or families. Awarded five-star status and three-leaf Certification for Sustainable Tourism, the 114-room resort is located in northern Costa Rica in La Fortuna. Included on Travel + Leisure's "World's Best" and Luxury SpaFinder "Reader's Choice" lists, Tabacón sits in a lush setting with 12 natural hot spring pools and lagoons, thermal pools, exotic gardens and trails. Dining is open-air and also includes a signature gala dinner in a private rainforest bungalow with private chef and server.

Tabacón Grand Spa Thermal Resort,
www.tabacon.com

CAYO ESPANTO IN BELIZE TO CREATE OVER-WATER BUNGALOWS

Similar to over-the-water bungalows in the exotic locales of French Polynesia, Malaysia, and the Fiji Islands, Cayo Espanto, an exclusive private island retreat off the coast of Belize, will soon offer guests incomparable 360 degree water views from two new villas.

Casa Ventanas, the first of two planned additions to the five existing luxury villas on the island, is scheduled to debut in August of 2007 and is now accepting reservations. The one bedroom over-the-water bungalows will be designed in the same style as the other villas, with every imaginable comfort and custom-crafted furnishings by the world-renowned Los Angeles

firm, Darrell Schmitt Design Associates. These bungalows are sure to be the most intimate, romantic and popular accommodations on the island. Casa Ventanas will be situated on the island's main dock, which stretches over 150 feet off the island for the ultimate in privacy. Cayo Espanto rests in the Western Caribbean, just off the coast of Belize. It is located southwest of Ambergris Caye, three miles from the San Pedro Airport. Each five-star villa offers the ultimate in attentive service with private butler, personal chef, and a staff ratio of two to one, while embodying the fantasy of being all alone on a beautiful deserted island.

Guests can fly fish right outside their door, opt for scuba diving or snorkeling excursions 20 minutes away at the second largest barrier reef in the world, or hop on a boat or a plane and play 18 holes of golf on a nearby island. Although Belize is less than two hours from Miami and Houston and is easily accessible via Delta Airlines, Continental Airlines and American Airlines, it remains virtually undiscovered.

Cayo Espanto, 888-666-4282,
www.aprivateisland.com

SUNBREEZE HOTEL

Ambergris Caye, Belize Packages Available
1-800-688-0191
www.sunbreeze.net

SPECIAL RATES AT HOTEL VILLA CALETAS



Hotel Villa Caletas in Costa Rica is offering special rates for a three night stay. From August 1 through November 14, 2007, price for a standard room is \$135 + tax per night, a Deluxe room is 150 + tax per night, and a Villa is \$175 + tax per night. From November 15 through December 15, 2007, price for a standard room is \$155 + tax per night, a Deluxe room is \$170 + tax per night, and a Villa is \$200 + tax per night.

Inspired by French-colonial architecture and the style of Victorian homes still found in San José, Costa Rica, Hotel Villa Caletas

exudes old-world charm. Villa Caletas expresses a truly unique combination of mountain and seaside resort. Looming 1,150 feet above the Pacific Ocean, Villa Caletas stands out not only for location, design and décor, but also for outstanding facilities.

Hotel Villa Caletas has 37 rooms, divided in seven categories. All rooms are equipped with private bathrooms with hot water and hairdryer, air conditioning, ceiling fans, telephone, safety box, mini bar, coffee maker and Direct TV.

Hotel Villa Caletas, www.villacaletas.com

VIAVENTURE & AZUL VILLAS ANNOUNCE SPECIAL OFFER FOR AUGUST

Viaventure has announced a 35 percent discount for August 2007 from the luxury villas of Azul Villas, A New Level of Relaxed Luxury. Viaventure is offering 10 percent commission on the following rack rates: double occupancy, \$1,234 and quadruple occupancy, \$1,482. This is a discount of 35 percent off the normal price.

Azul Villas is situated on 400 feet of beachfront at North Beach, San Pedro Town, in Ambergris Caye, Belize. The two private luxury 3000-sq ft villas combine the space, privacy and comforts of a private villa, with the amenities and services of a world-class resort.

Azul Resort is an all-inclusive resort. Rates are inclusive of a daily full breakfast, lunch and dinner for two in the resort's restaurant, all drinks (excluding top shelf, wine and champagne), round trip transfers from the San Pedro Airstrip, and all government taxes and gratuities, as well as a long list of villa amenities.

Situated on the water's edge, guests can snorkel right outside their door and find lobsters, thousands of tropical fish or Spotted Eagle Rays. Or, visitors can kayak out 10 minutes to the Barrier Reef, the longest reef in the Western Hemisphere, and second largest in the world. Enjoy your favorite dishes, drinks or exceptional wines at the resort's own and famous restaurant, Rojo Lounge. The owners / managers of the Villas are always on hand to organize day trips such as helicopter tours to a private is-

land, fishing, or anything else guests require. The maximum number of guests at Azul Resort is 10 and all accommodations are non smoking.

Viaventure,
marcia.vanog@viaventure.com,
www.viaventure.com

DAYSTAR PROPERTIES COMPLETES BAHIA AZUL IN COSTA RICA; OFFERS AGENT COMMISSIONS

DayStar Properties, the leading beach-front condo developer in Jaco Beach, Costa Rica, has announced the completion of Bahia Azul. An intimate ocean front community of 30 two- bedroom beach vacation rentals, Bahia Azul is one of the first fully functioning condo hotels in Jaco Beach, and leads a new trend for luxury accommodation in Costa Rica.

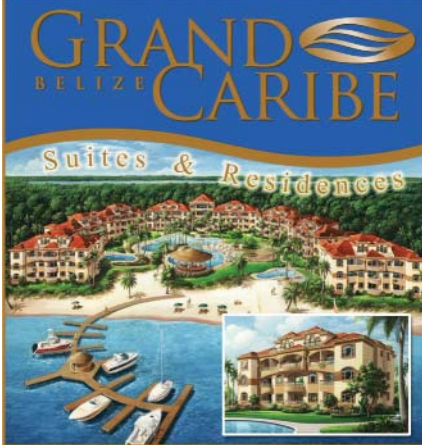
Blending the first-class services of a boutique hotel with the added convenience and comfort of exclusive private residences, Bahia Azul employs the condo hotel concept, which is a relatively new phenomenon in Costa Rica. As the local hospitality industry continues to evolve, lodging venues like Bahia Azul are becoming increasingly popular with families and groups of friends traveling together who want more than just a room.

Among the first examples of a fully functioning condo hotel in Jaco Beach, Bahia Azul sets the trend for many similarly designed projects in the area, some planned by industry giants like Ramada, St. Regis and the ever-expanding Los Suenos Marriott.

DayStar Properties pays a 10% commission on the total sum of each booking. If discounts are applied to the nightly rate, commissions are paid on the discounted total. Commissions are deducted from the total owed to DayStar. For example, if the total booking amount is \$1,000, the travel professional would pay DayStar \$900 (keeping 10 percent as a commission). DayStar Properties is also currently offering a 30 percent discount on all stays completed during Green Season, which ends November 15, 2007.

Bahia Azul, www.bahia-azul.com
DayStar Properties, 877-552-6825,
www.daystar-properties.com

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CENTRAL PACIFIC BIG FIVE WITH TEAM CRT

Team CRT presents a two-day/one night program to visit the Central Pacific Big Five, including the San José Courtyard by Marriott, Bijagual Waterfall, Villa Lapas Sky Way, Punta Leona Hotel and Turu Ba Ri Tropical Park.

Plunging from cliffs deep down in the jungle, the Bijagual Waterfall awaits to be discovered by explorers willing to take the challenge and extract its secrets. Travel a country gravel road and enjoy breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean. After this scenic drive, continue on horseback to access this magical place. A short but physically challenging trail will lead down to the waterfalls. Enjoy a plunge into the pristine pools at its base. Explore this mystical site with your expert nature guide and observe the abundant wildlife.

Sky Way Villa Lapas is a combination of nature trails, with descendant slopes, and five hanging bridges throughout a wonderful transitional forest. During this excursion, observe flora and fauna and enjoy panoramic views of Carara National Park, the Pacific Ocean and the Tarcoles River.

On day two, visit Turu Ba Ri Tropical Park. Turu Ba Ri Tropical Park is a fresh destination with an unspoiled natural environment and a serious commitment to sustainable tourism. Beautiful and breathtaking scenery surrounds 650 acres, offering numerous activities.

Visitors have access to the park by using the Turu Ba Ri Sky Ride which is an aerial tramway over the forest. Some of the unique activities that this venue offers are a canopy tour ride, gliding from one tree to the other, the Sensational Cable where you fly like an eagle, and horseback riding, among many others. The Tropical Garden features a butterfly garden, ecological trails with centenarian old trees, an orchid gallery, a herbarium, bamboo, and more. This is a once in a lifetime experience.

Rates are \$415 (double), \$350 (triple) and \$71 for a single supplement. Rates are per person and there is a minimum of two participants. Price includes bilingual guide; two breakfasts, two luncheons and one dinner per person; ground transportation as

per itinerary; one night lodging in at Punta Leona; entrance fees and tours as per itinerary: Bijagual Waterfall, Villa Lapas Sky Way, TuRu Ba Ri. Tropical Park; hotel taxes and meal taxes; and hotel accommodations in Herradura. This package does not apply for peak seasons: Christmas Week, New Year Eve Week and Easter Week.

Team CRT, reserv@crtinfo.com,
www.crtinfo.com

NIKKI BEACH BREAKS GROUND ON NIKKI BEACH RESORT & RESIDENCES PLAYA BLANCA

Nikki Beach, one of the world's leading lifestyle and entertainment brands, has announced the official ground breaking for phase one of Nikki Beach Resort & Residences Playa Blanca. Located on the Pacific coast in Farallon, Panama, the three-phase project is scheduled to open in December 2008 and is considered to be the "sexiest project in Panama," according to top executives at Nikki Beach Hotels and Resorts, the newly formed luxury hotel and resort group.

Nikki Beach is considered the pioneer in combining luxury services, entertainment and fashion for an elite clientele, including actors, models and celebrities. They have selected Panama as the first destination in Central America to expand the brand. The master plan for the project features 500 units developed in three phases with an investment of approximately \$80 million. The first phase features a five-star Nikki Beach resort with a total of 144 luxury rooms and suites overlooking Playa Blanca beach. The resort has an 118,000-square-foot Nikki Beach Club, a signature Nikki Beach spa, a fully equipped gym, sushi bar, infinity pool and exotic Nikki Beach landscaping.

"We are proud to announce our expansion of the Nikki Beach brand in Panama. We are very excited about our first resort in this region," comments Gary Sims, President of Nikki Beach. "The Nikki Beach brand combines a five-star level of service and amenities with a fun and exciting entertainment atmosphere that is unique to the luxury resort segment."

Nikki Beach Hotels and Resorts is a new

division for the lifestyle entertainment company. Following 10 years of increasing success of its international brand of luxury beach clubs and restaurants in seven countries, the company introduced Nikki Beach Hotels & Resorts earlier this year. The hotel division will mark a new era in the history of the international Nikki Beach brand with the development of hotels and beachfront resorts in highly desirable locations around the world. Each hotel and resort destination will carry the Nikki Beach brand that has become the hallmark of the company, providing a unique entertainment experience for the international jet-set and celebrity crowd in some of the world's most prestigious locations.

"Moving into the luxury resort business was a natural progression of our lifestyle brand," comments Jack Penrod, Chairman and Founder of Nikki Beach. "Our customers have expressed their desire for a complete Nikki Beach experience which will now include a resort component."

Nikki Beach, info@nikkibeachhotels.com,
www.nikkibeachhotels.com



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NEW ZEPHYR PALACE FEATURES SEVEN UNIQUE SUITES



Zephyr Palace is a new, exclusive and luxurious building located within the grounds of Hotel Villas Caleta on the central Pacific Coast of Costa Rica. From this spectacular mountaintop location, guests can experience all the natural wonders of Costa Rica while enjoying the supreme comforts of this unique villa and its excellent staff. They have seven suites which are all themed and furnished with antiques.

The Royal Suite consists of two rooms and a shared terrace. The shared bathroom is spacious, and decorated with ceramic and marble. The terrace has a Jacuzzi, and a boasts a marvelous ocean view.

The 20's Years Suite remembers the past from the beginning of this century. The spacious bathroom is decorated with angels' paintings, and the professional Jacuzzi next to the panoramic window allows guests to enjoy the view. There is also a balcony/terrace.

The New World Suite is classically decorated and was inspired by Latin America; its people, art, and culture. The terrace offers the feeling of freedom, where guests can enjoy the ocean while having a relaxing massage at the Jacuzzi.

The Imperial Suite is a large suite featuring classic furniture style of the 18th and 19th centuries, with an exclusive gym, a personal sauna, and a bathtub with shower and separate multi-jets. There is a spacious dressing room with a resting bed, and the balcony features an ocean view with Jacuzzi.

The Oriental Mini Suite has been created from Oriental inspiration, with antique furniture selected for style and comfort. It includes two bathrooms with shower, (the larger one having a professional Jacuzzi), a private hall with a resting bed, and a terrace.

The Egyptian leads guests on a trip inspired by the kingdom of the Nile River, in front of the Gulf with the most amazing sunsets.

In the African Suite, African inspiration joins with true comfort with soft details in decoration all around the walls. The bathroom features a hot tub, separate shower and W.C., and the balcony/terrace offers an ocean view and Jacuzzi.

Hotel Villa Caletas, www.villacaletas.com

CRUISE WEST OFFERS SPECIALTY COSTA RICA & PANAMA CRUISES FOR FALL

Cruise West is offering five specialty cruises in Costa Rica & Panama this November and December 2007 onboard the 100-guest Pacific Explorer. Whether a photography or history buff, or interested in environmental issues, Cruise West's compelling expert lecturers reveal mysteries and offer a uniquely satisfying learning experience. Guests may also enjoy the holidays Central American style on either the Christmas or New Year's sailings, visiting a warm destination that is family-friendly and offers culture, sea and wildlife. Early booking savings are still available on these voyages with savings of up to \$175 for guests who book and pay their trip in full by September 14, 2007.

The eight-day Coast to Canal departure on November 3 features Panama Canal expert and 30-year employee of the canal, Eileen Boyd, who will share her knowledge about the history and future expansion of the canal. Professional photographer and educator Charles Edwards joins the departure on November 10. Amateur photographers and novices who are looking to hone skills will enjoy Edwards' vast experience in travel photography.

Sustainable tourism has become a hot topic in the travel industry, and Cruise West's Coast to Canal cruise provides the distinct experience of visiting untouched destinations and indigenous peoples that are difficult to reach other than by small ship. The December 1 cruise hosts expert Carlos Valerio, past professor at School of Biology and consultant to the National Institute of Biodiversity in Costa Rica, who will discuss the biodiversity, geology, climate and weather changes. Guests can expect this topic to complement the sights and sounds of this enriching voyage. All Coast to Canal cruises transit by day boat into parts of the Panama Canal and include tours of the Miraflores Lock, and visits to the remote Emberá Village in the Darién Jungle, Coiba National Park, Golfo Dulce, Caletas Beach and Manuel Antonio National Park, known for its prolific wildlife and bird viewing.

The December 18 Between Two Seas 10-day holiday sailing follows the route of the Coast to Canal itinerary and also includes the San Blas Islands and a Kuna Indian Village, Portobelo, and traverses the entire Panama Canal. Festive Costa Rican and Panamanian holiday activities complement a fun, relaxing Christmas among secluded islands and remote villages. Ring in Feliz Año Nuevo on the December 27 New Year's sailing amid the comforts and amenities of the Pacific Explorer with a midnight toast and a late night buffet. Spend New Years Day in Coiba National Park that is considered one of the top 10 diving and snorkeling locations in the world.

Receive an early booking savings of \$125 by booking and making a deposit by September 14, 2007, and save an additional \$50 by paying in full; total savings \$175. Prices are from \$3,074 per person for the Coast to Canal and \$4,024 per person for the Between Two Seas holiday cruises with the maximum early booking savings. Prices are based on double occupancy. Pre- and post-Costa Rica land extensions are available. All cruises depart from San José, Costa Rica and end in Panama City or reverse.

Cruise West, 800-689-1783, www.cruisewest.com

SUMMER OFFERS IN MEXICO FROM VILLA DEL SOL



This summer, take advantage of two exclusive offers from Mexico's most exceptional resort destination, Villa del Sol.

The "Barefoot Luxury" offer features three nights in a choice of Villa del Sol's quintessential accommodations and a \$100 Spa credit for use during the stay. Prices range from \$990 exclusive of tax and gratuity.

This package is available June 1 – October 31, 2007.

With the "Escape to Paradise" offer, stay four nights at Villa del Sol and receive the fifth night complimentary. Prices range from \$1,320 exclusive of tax and gratuity. This package is available May 15 – October 31, 2007.

Villa Del Sol, 866-905-9619, 866-905-9560,
www.hotelvilladelosol.com

SONESTA ANNOUNCES FIRST HOTEL IN MEXICO

Sonesta International Hotels Corporation announced its first hotel in Mexico. The 16-story, 460-room Sonesta Gran Posada Resort is scheduled to open in 2009. This destination resort is located on the beach in San Carlos, less than 10 miles from Guaymas International Airport and an hour from Hermosillo International Airport, in Sonora, Mexico. San Carlos is a five hour drive south of Tucson, Arizona. A condo-hotel, the resort is being developed by Playa de San Carlos, LLC and will be managed by Sonesta.

Sonesta Gran Posada Resort will offer panoramic views of the Sea of Cortez. To be built on nine acres of ocean-front property, the resort will boast over 600 feet of beachfront. The resort's one-, two- and three-bedroom (penthouse) units will offer hotel guests and unit owners luxurious, spacious appointments including a modern kitchen, marble bathrooms, ceramic tile floors and nine-foot ceilings. Each unit will feature wall-to-wall windows and large private terraces. The resort amenities include a tropical-style swimming pool with waterslide, children's tidal pool, full-service spa and wellness center, fitness center, several fine dining and casual restaurants and bars, and conference space.

San Carlos is renowned for its diving and fishing, and offers a naturally protected marina, 18-hole championship golf course, shopping, and restaurants within walking distance of the resort. The numerous islands in the area are well-known bird sanctuaries, making San Carlos an ideal location to observe many species of

seabirds. Offshore, the Sea of Cortez is noted for whales, porpoises, sea lions, sea turtles and more than 600 species of fish. San Carlos as a destination is the next significant emerging market in the State of Sonora.

Playa de San Carlos, LLC, developer of Sonesta Gran Posada Resort, is a partnership with design, architecture, construction, project planning and marketing experience. Based in Tucson, this group's commitment to sophisticated design, technology and comfort will be showcased throughout this spectacular new property. The Ascona Group complements the development team and is a highly experienced and uniquely qualified international advisory and management company.

Sonesta International Hotels Corporation,
800-Sonesta (800-766-3782)

QUINTA REAL HOTELS AND RESORTS OPENS HACIENDA DE SAN ANTONIO DEL PUENTE

Quinta Real Hotels and Resorts has welcomed another outstanding property to its collection of luxury resort accommodations. Hacienda de San Antonio del Puente is located 15 minutes from Cuernavaca, the city of Eterna Primavera (Eternal Spring) and near the historic archaeological area of Xochicalco.

The hotel's 30 suites are detailed in an environment of classic hacienda architecture surrounded by lush private gardens. Quinta Real hospitality is distinguished by personalized service in an atmosphere that blends luxurious comfort, award-winning cuisine, and contemporary conveniences, with traditional colors, textures, and artworks from the local area.

Because of the region's historic ruins, recreational options, and outstanding weather year-round, Cuernavaca is an ideal destination for business travelers, weddings, honeymoons, and family vacations. During-the-week stays are particularly appealing, offering the hotel's full range of services at lower rates.

Generously-sized suites are comfortable for families, and in-room cribs are available. Families can take advantage of the area's many water parks, local lakes, ATV tours, and friendly family atmosphere.

The historic property, the first to be operated by the new brand "Haciendas y Villas Quinta Real," features an extensive menu of dishes with local flavors; a church; a chapel and a private ceremonial altar for weddings; meeting rooms; a classically-designed library equipped with wi-fi; public areas with wi-fi access; and a swimming pool with tile and mosaic deck areas and restored brick arches. Room service is available and in-room wi-fi connections will be available by summer.

Near the hotel, Xochicalco is one of three pyramids that can be explored on walking tours. Known for its historic and religious importance, the ancient site may be home to "mysterious energies," according to some members of the hotel staff.

There are numerous nearby choices for both family-style and elegant dining, and a shopping center is 10 minutes from the property. Quinta Real Hotels and Resorts, 866-621-9288,
www.quintareal.com

LAS VENTANAS NAMES MARK KERWIN DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING



MARK KERWIN

Las Ventanas al Paraíso, A Rosewood Resort, has named Mark Kerwin Director of Sales and Marketing of the internationally heralded five-diamond resort in Los Cabos.

"With nearly two decades of experience in the luxury segment in senior positions with some of the world's finest properties, Mark is uniquely equipped to guide Las Ventanas' sales and marketing efforts," said Managing Director Andres Araya.

"His focus will be on maintaining Las Ventanas' unparalleled occupancy levels, furthering our image as Mexico's – and one of the world's – finest resorts, and continuing to build awareness among key audiences worldwide."

Kerwin comes to Las Ventanas from the five-star Hotel Bel-Air in Los Angeles, where he was Director of Sales and Marketing. Previously, he served as Director of Sales at the five-star Peninsula Beverly Hills and held management positions with Four Seasons Hotels and The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company.

Las Ventanas features 71 spacious suites; a holistic spa; signature Baja-Mediterranean cuisine at The Restaurant; the Tequila & Ceviche Bar featuring Mexico's finest tequilas and most diverse ceviche menu; "Fire Cuisine" at the Sea Grill cooked on wood-burning grills; and an extensive array of ultra-luxury amenities including poolside butlers and a Director of Romance.

Las Ventanas al Paraíso, 888-ROSEWOOD (888-767-3966),
www.rosewoodhotels.com

THE VILLA GROUP'S VILLA DEL ARCO OPENS IN CABO SAN LUCAS

The Villa Group's Villa del Arco Beach Resort and Desert Spa will open July 13 in Cabo San Lucas. Stretching along El Médano Beach, the upscale, family-friendly property lies adjacent to the ultra-luxurious Villa La Estancia and active Villa del Palmar Beach Resort & Spa in a gated, private enclave owned and operated by The Villa Group.

"Villa del Arco is the perfect complement to our Villa La Estancia and Villa del Palmar properties already in the destination," remarked Ricardo Orozco, Corporate Director for The Villa Group in Cabo San Lucas.

This new Villa del Arco offers 231 deluxe oceanfront suites. Each of the one-, two- and three-bedroom suites features contemporary decor with private entryway, marble floors, granite countertops, whirlpool tub, walk-in shower, large walk-in closet and spacious

balcony. Deluxe studio and penthouse suites are also available.

Studios feature a kitchenette equipped with a refrigerator, stove-top, microwave, toaster, blender, coffee maker, dishes, cookware and utensils, while larger suites include a complete kitchen with full-size refrigerator.

Other in-suite amenities include individually-controlled air conditioning, ceiling fans, satellite TV with movie service, direct dial telephone with voicemail, wireless and high speed Internet access (surcharge), electronic safe, clock radio, washer/dryer (two- and three-bedroom suites), wet bar, daily maid service, turndown service (on request) and in-room dining.

Two large outdoor pools feature waterfalls, spa tubs, children's areas, and views of the sea and offshore rock formations. One pool contains a full-sized replica of a Spanish galleon "anchored" for casual snacks, lunch and cocktails. Kayaks, boogie boards, snorkels and motorized personal watercraft are available at the on-site water sports center.

Other diversions include tennis courts and a Kids Club. A complimentary activities program for all ages includes beach and water volleyball, pool games, Spanish lessons and bartending classes.

Opening in conjunction with the new property, the Desert Spa offers guests a vast menu of treatments, from signature facials and body wraps, to relaxing massages and therapeutic services. Among its many attributes are generous hydrotherapy centers for men and women including a spacious Jacuzzi, cold plunge pool, cold pressure showers, body temperature pool, steam room and sauna.

"We are pleased to make available this elegant new facility to our guests at Villa La Estancia, Villa del Arco and Villa del Palmar," noted Orozco. "The Desert Spa has been designed to offer the ultimate experience through its tasteful design, upscale menu of treatments, state-of-the-art services and tranquil atmosphere."

In addition, 17 treatment rooms, two exclusive VIP suites with private Jacuzzi and shower, a full-service beauty salon and extensive menu of exotic treatment services will set the stage for the Desert Spa to be a haven for health, beauty, decompression and rejuvenation.

Within the Desert Spa, a fitness center features seven treadmills, four elliptical bikes, three stationary bikes, 10 strength training stations, a multi-purpose station, four free weight stations, and a Yoga/Pilates studio with classes, lockers and showers.

"Our spa director, Francois Cimon-Kingsley, has given utmost attention to detail at every level to assure that the Desert Spa is among the top facilities in Cabo San Lucas," Orozco added. "We feel that our guests will find the service and atmosphere will exceed their expectations."

The Villa Group, 877-845-5247, www.TheVillaGroup.com

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