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# Cancún Travel Mart: Looking Ahead to 2012 and the Mayan New Dawn

PEGGY HAGEMAN

**C**ancún, Mexico and its home state of Quintana Roo are gearing up for the year 2012, the year of the Mayan New Dawn. This year's 24th annual Cancun Travel Mart, held at the Cancún Convention Center October 12-14th, focused on new opportunities in Cancún in 2012 and well beyond. Travel Mart was attended by 650 delegates from twenty different countries, all coming together to explore what Cancun has to offer, both new and established product. An estimated 3,700 business meetings were held. The event was managed by William H. Coleman, Inc.

The conference opened for the first time with a sit-down dinner at the convention center, where suppliers and buyers could meet and mingle. Filmed advertisements for the new tourism promotion, "2012: A New Beginning" were shown. World attention is focused on the Mayan calendar ending in 2012 after 26,000 years but rather than an ending the campaign focuses on a "New Dawn," and new opportunities as a starting point for the future.

The next morning, the working days began with remarks from numerous important figures in Mexican tourism, from both the government and the private sector. The official opening ceremony was chaired by Eugene Rybicky, from the Mexican Association of Travel Agencies in Quintana Roo; Eduardo Muñoz Urquiza, Fonatur Director; Juan Carlos Hernandez Gonzalez, Secretary of Tourism; Rodrigo de la Peña, President of the Cancun Hotel Association; Roberto Borge Angulo, Governor of Quintana Roo; Eligio Serna, Director of Relations with Partners of the Council for Tourism Promotion of Mexico; Jesús Almaguer Salazar, the General Director of the Cancún Convention and Visitors Bureau and CEO of the Cancún Tourism Board; Paul Michel Carrillo, Deputy President of the Tourism commission. The presence of so many government officials, both state and federal, underscored the importance placed on Cancún tourism. The Cancún region makes up roughly fifty percent of Mexico's tourism income.

The first speaker of the morning was Rodrigo de la Peña, president of the Cancún Hotel Association, one of the main sponsors of the event. He emphasized the Cancún tourism's triple threat: modern, high-quality amenities; natural wonders; and most importantly, the wonderful Mexican people providing the service. Looking ahead to the future, the goal is too maintain quality and raise occupancy.

The Governor of Quintana Roo, Roberto Borge Angulo, remarked later on the great growth Travel Mart has seen and



Jesús Almaguer Salazar, General Director of the Cancún Convention & Visitors Bureau with Erika Mitzunaga Magaña, Public Relations Manager for the US, Canada and Asia.

that it has the government's support. He encouraged wholesalers to "trust us, and trust the Cancun market." The State of Quintana Roo has a good relationship with the Mexico Ministry of Tourism and that will help better position Quintana Roo in both the Caribbean and the world markets.

Raul Marrufo, Undersecretary of Tourism for Quintana Roo, emphasized the government's strong support of the Cancun region and how excited they were for the coming year. The Cancún region offers the best of both Mexico and the Caribbean to travelers. He spoke about important strides in the areas of weddings, spa and golf tourism, as well as new packages and initiatives and improved branding. The Cancún region has been fortunate and has not seen as much of a drop in tourism as has the rest of Mexico and the Caribbean in recent years and Cancún's success is expected to continue.

Jesús Almaguer Salazar, the General Director of the Cancún Convention and Visitors Bureau, echoed his sentiments. US arrivals in the region were only down 2% in 2011 and first quarter reservations for 2012 are already looking to be 9-40% above last year's figures. The target goal for 2012 is to achieve numbers 5-10% above this year.

Cancún is a mature destination, a leader in Latin American tourism, but it is also one that offers new experiences for travelers. Services and infrastructure will be both maintained and increased. Tourist safety is as always a top priority, and he pointed out that there has never been a serious incident involving tourists in the Cancún region.

Cancún's "Treasures of the Caribbean" program focuses on

the nearby islands of Cozumel, Isla Mujeres, Isla Contoy, and Holbox, as well as the seaside town of Puerto Morales.

Everything that tourists look for in a Caribbean vacation is available in Quintana Roo, plus a whole lot more. The Cancún CVB will be reaching out through social media to promote both "Treasures of the Caribbean" and "2012: A New Beginning" to the general public and tool kits for travel agents are on the way.

**Cancún and Cancún Travel Mart,**  
[www.cancun.travel.en](http://www.cancun.travel.en),  
[www.cancuntravelmart.com](http://www.cancuntravelmart.com)

## AGENTS CAN EARN \$23,000 SELLING FAMILY PACKAGE AT LIGHTHOUSE BAY

Travel agents looking to "wow" their clients searching for the ultimate private vacation escape for family and friends—and earn up to a \$23,000 commission—can offer the getaway of a lifetime at Lighthouse Bay Resort in Barbuda with the seven-day/six-night "Friends and Family Reunion" package. Agents are offered a 20% commission on this package (priced at \$114,999 for up to 20 people), which translates into significant earnings for booking a group of people on their own private island.

Privacy is paramount with only nine suites allowing groups of up to 20 people to virtually "own" a private island for a week with luxurious accommodations, superior service and 17 miles of pristine pink sand beach.

The seven-day/six-night "Friends and Family Reunion" package includes the entire island buyout of Lighthouse Bay Resort which features nine suites, all meals and drinks, and use of a private fresh water pool. Each room's amenities and technology allow guests to feel "plugged in" despite their remote location with flat screen satellite televisions, iPod alarm clock CD players, personal laptops and iPads for guests' use while on property, and Wi-Fi Internet connection. Unlimited international telephone calls are at no additional cost and complimentary laundry service is available for all guests.

Other highlights of this package include the following for all members of the group (except where noted): day charter complete with lunch, snorkel and sail gear; one hour of horseback riding; group cooking class with Chef Lennox; beach BBQ and bonfire; and a personal photographer and commemorative album with photos.

The "Friends and Family Reunion" package is available through December 17, 2011, with all-inclusive package rates starting at \$114,999 for up to 20 people. Transfers to the resort can be arranged for an additional cost to the package.

Privacy is guaranteed, as the property is only accessible via S.V.G. (St. Vincent and The Grenadines) Airlines or helicopter. Guests who want to venture off-property can visit the world's largest frigate bird sanctuary or enjoy sailing, fishing, horseback riding and other active pursuits arranged by the hotel staff.

Lighthouse Bay, 888-214-8552, [info@lighthousebarbuda.com](mailto:info@lighthousebarbuda.com),  
[www.lighthousebayresort.com](http://www.lighthousebayresort.com)

## SHARING A SUITE AT THE SANDS AT GRACE BAY GETS HIGH-SEASON RATES AS LOW AS \$93

The Sands at Grace Bay can offer families and friends a surprisingly affordable Turks & Caicos retreat during Caribbean's high season in 2012. Situated alongside the world-famous Grace Bay Beach, families or friends can reduce vacation costs during this popular Turks & Caicos travel season by simply sharing one of the resort's spacious and luxurious suites.

This luxurious family-friendly resort offers one-, two- and three-bedroom suite options that can comfortably sleep four, six and up to eight people—designed to feel like a tropical 'home away from home.'

This is the perfect excuse for travelers looking to escape the chill of winter and take a week's vacation in paradise with their family members and friends. Resort suites feature full kitchens with modern appliances, spacious bedrooms and full bathrooms, a living/dining room area complete with a big-screen plasma TV and comfy couches and a private screened balcony.

In addition to enjoying the resort's breathtaking location, guests enjoy three free-form swimming pools and complimentary access to watersports equipment—including kayaks and windsurfing equipment to snorkel gear and Hobie Cats—plus free bicycle rentals for island exploration.

The Sands at Grace Bay, 877-777-2637, [www.thesandstc.com](http://www.thesandstc.com)

## NATIONAL HANGOVER WEEK SAVINGS AT BOLONGO BAY BEACH RESORT

After all the celebrating, overeating and too many social gatherings to count, the overriding desire can be to just get away. Bolongo Bay Beach Resort has the perfect recipe for recovery—National Hangover Week savings on a beach vacation to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Between January 1 and 15, 2012, staying five nights at Bolongo Bay on this 'recovery plan' comes with 20% off room-only rates for two guests in an Oceanview room; free lodging for friends, as the third and fourth adult over 18 years of age in the room stays free; Welcome Rum Punch; a bottle of Cruzan Rum per room; and a complimentary Sunset Cocktail Cruise for the two to four guests in the room (a \$110 value per person).

Guests can grab an ice-cold cocktail, find a beachfront hammock and relax as the holidays become a far distant memory. Then, they'll have fun in the sun with complimentary Discover Scuba Diving in-pool lesson and non-motorized water sports including Hobie Cats, windsurfers, kayaks, snorkel gear, paddleboards and more.

This five-night package, including all taxes and service charges, is \$1,733.20 for up to four people—less than \$100 per person, per day for four. The offer is subject to availability.

Family owned since 1974, Bolongo Bay Beach Resort on St. Thomas is one of Frommer's "World's 10 Best Beachfront Hotels," with a flip-flop casual atmosphere and 62 true beachfront rooms. Located in the U.S. Virgin Islands, American citizens do not need a passport to visit.

Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, 800-524-4746, [www.bolongobay.com](http://www.bolongobay.com)

# Cancún: 2012 and Beyond

PEGGY HAGEMAN

**C**ancún. The name alone conjures up images of sandy, white beaches, frosty margaritas and dancing till dawn. But Cancún and the surrounding areas are far more than just a party town. A few days of exploring all that the region has to offer might just make that time on the beach even more enjoyable. Well-established nearby tourist destinations such as Chichen Itza and Cozumel are still a great day out, but there are some great new options and hidden gems just waiting to be discovered.

And 2012 is just the right time to visit Cancún. The Mayan calendar ends and everyone's wondering about what it means. A new publicity campaign ties in to these Mayan myths surrounding next year and is titled 2012, A New Beginning. Mexico is looking to 2012 as a rebirth. The eyes of the world will be on the Mayans next year and Cancún is hoping that people will want to experience 2012 right in the heart of Maya country. Many events are planned, including the first annual Cancun-Riviera Maya Wine & Food Festival, March 15th – 18th. A full schedule of events has yet to be announced but there are many events currently being planned.

Updates will be available on the Cancun Convention and Visitors Center website.

## Island Wonders

Isla Contoy is a little slice of nature just 45 minutes from the hotel strip. The tiny undeveloped island is a bird sanctuary with no full-time human inhabitants. There's a winding trail that takes you through the sea grapes and natural beauty, the short way across the island. You can also go up inside a man-made tower for a better view of the frigate bird nesting areas. There's a small museum with more information about the flora and fauna found on the island. After exploring, you can find a strip of beach and swim and watch the birds circle and swoop overhead. The number of visitors to the island is tightly controlled and only a few tour companies are allowed



Isla Contoy, unspoiled beauty just 15 miles off the coast of Cancun.

access. One is Kolumbus Tours, which offers passage on replica historical wooden ships, with lunch included.

Isla Mujeres, or Island of the Women, is a quick (and beautiful) 30-minute boat ride from Cancún. The island is roughly four and a half miles long. While walkable, mopeds and golf carts are available for rent. On the southern tip of the island there is a former Mayan temple, now occupied by a sculpture garden as well as a government-sponsored sea turtle farm. Further north is the village of Dolores, full of small shops and local restaurants. Aquaworld, operating out of Albatros Marina, offers a full day trip including buffet lunch and unlimited drinks, plus a snorkeling excursion to the Underwater Museum.

## Museo Subacuatico de Arte/ Underwater Art Museum

Just north of Isla Mujeres is Cancún's latest and possibly most interesting attraction: the Underwater Museum. Hundreds of life-size human sculptures have been placed in strategic locations along the sea floor. As sea life grows in and around the statues, new protective barrier reefs are formed. Coral is constantly growing, causing the sculptures to change and evolve, creating an amazing habitat in which to snorkel

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



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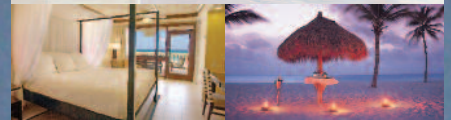


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or dive. It also encourages divers and snorkelers to spread out from the traditional dive sites and so helps protect the existing, fragile coral reef. There are currently 415 sculptures and more are being placed all the time. The eventual goal is to have almost 1500, creating an undersea world unrivalled in the Caribbean. In 2012 there will also be the addition of two new visitors centers with more information for tourists. A \$4 million publicity campaign is in the works, in co-operation with the Mexican government.

### Where to Stay

Starwood has expanded the Westin brand in Cancún with its latest hotel, the Westin Lagunamar. (Westin is already represented in Cancún with the Westin Resort & Spa, which just received the MLT Vacations 2011 Quality Assurance Award.) At the Westin Lagunamar there are only suites (studios and one bedrooms with connecting rooms available) all of which have ocean views. Their "Sunsational Savings" deal offers 4th night free, a \$200 credit on food and beverage, and upgrade when available.

The Fiesta Americana Grand Coral Beach Cancún Resort & Spa is one of the hotel jewels of Cancún. Movie stars and presidents stay here when in Cancún. It has won the prestigious Five Diamond Award more times than any other luxury resort in Cancún and garnered accolades from *Travel + Leisure* and *Condé Nast Traveler* as one of Mexico's best resorts. It boasts a 40,000 sq. ft. spa, six restaurants and, of course, the beautiful beach. Destination weddings are their specialty.

Le Meridien Cancun Beach Resort & Spa is another great option. It's been designed with "residential" in mind, so guests feel at home. It's also one of the few hotels that allows dogs to stay. The hotel has had some upgrades over the past year including new dining options and newly renovated lobby. There is a three-tiered cascading infinity pool with luxurious new cabanas and its Spa del Mar was named as one of the top spas in "North America, Caribbean and at Sea" by *Condé Nast Traveler*. There's even a Penguin Club for kids with fun and educational things to do. The hotel is also a member of the Starwood Preferred Guest® program and a kids' all-inclusive dining package is available.

The Ritz-Carlton Cancún: The brand Ritz-Carlton has always been synonymous with elegance and luxury, and their Cancún property is no exception. They've received all the major awards the hospitality industry and consumer organizations can bestow. The Ritz-Carlton Cancún offers many spa and resort options including a tennis center, two award winning Restaurants, Fantino and The Club Grill, and of course not the least of which is the breath-taking view of the Caribbean from each room's private balcony. They're also more affordable than your clients might think, especially with the stay-four-nights-pay-for-only-three promotion that runs

through December 21st, 2011. Multiple packages are available, including spa and tequila tastings, with room starting at \$379 USD per night.

The Ritz Cancún also maintains a Culinary Center, designed by Viking® Range and run by chef Rory Dunaway. It offers cooking classes as well as a "Dine with the Chef" night when up to twelve guests can enjoy a delicious four-course meal with wine pairings prepared by Chef Dunaway tailored to the occasion. They might even get to help out a little too.

### 2012 and Beyond

As the Mayan calendar draws to a close, the whole world is watching and talking about what's to come in 2012. Is it the end of the world, some ask? Absolutely not, says Cancún, it's the start of a new beginning for the North American traveler and the Cancún region.

**Cancún Convention and Visitors Bureau,**  
[www.cancun.travel/en/2012-a-new-dawn](http://www.cancun.travel/en/2012-a-new-dawn);  
**Isla Mujeres, [www.isla-mujeres.net/home.htm](http://www.isla-mujeres.net/home.htm)**

### HOTEL VILLA TAINA IS PERFECT FOR FULLY ENJOYING DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S CABARETE

For those "into" any kind of surfing, Cabarete on the north shore of the Dominican Republic is the place to be. Whether seeking a number of hot breaks or some world-renown kite and windsurfing, this is the place to visit.

Five minutes from the center of town is Playa Encuentro with five separate breaks and a host of surf shops that provide equipment and lessons, if needed. On any given day, one can find surfers from all over the globe here. The entire north coast has a number of hot spots ranging from beach breaks to reefs with top-to-bottom barrels.

In the afternoon as the wind comes up, Cabarete Bay is filled with kite and windsurfers. People return here year after year for the wind and ideal conditions. There are also a number of other local activities like horseback riding on the beach or in the mountains, kayaking, canyoning, radical zip lines, and more.

In the middle of Cabarete Bay sits the four-star Villa Taina. The hotel itself is adorned with images and objects from the original island inhabitants, the Taino Indians. Accommodations are available for all individual needs ranging from a standard garden room to an ocean-view penthouse room.

Villa Taina's beachfront restaurant and bar Serenade offers a breakfast buffet plus international cuisine such as a Mongolian barbeque and Argentinian-style dinners, resplendent with live music. After a wild day in the water, Happy Hour at the bar is a great way to end the day before getting ready for Cabarete's nightlife on the beach.

Hotel Villa Taina's motto is "Life has its moments. Make them special." And the beach here is the perfect place to experience those moments of fun, action and memories.

**Hotel Villa Taina, [www.villataina.com](http://www.villataina.com)**



## DOMINICA TOURISM TURNS OUT FOR ZIP LINE DEBUT



Dominica Minister of Tourism, the Honorable Ian Douglas, speaks at the Rain Forest Adventures Dominica Gorge Zip Challenge opening event at the Fort Young Hotel in Roseau.

Rain Forest Adventures Dominica welcomed Dominica Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Ian Douglas, President of the Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association Simon Walsh (who served as emcee), the Discover Dominica Authority, and the Invest Dominica Authority to the opening ceremony of the park's Gorge Zip Challenge September 30 at the Fort Young Hotel in Roseau. The eco-tourism park's new zip line now reigns as the Southern Caribbean's highest zip line, with an 840-foot long line suspended over the 350-ft drop of Breakfast River Gorge.

The six-platform Gorge Zip Challenge serves as Dominica's largest sustainable tourism attraction launch in recent years. Three adrenaline-pumping lines navigate through the rainforest canopy, accessible by Rain Forest Adventures' signature Aerial Tram or Chatannier Nature Trail. Admission begins at \$50 for island visitors. Children must fit in a harness to ride, with some restrictions. Rain Forest Adventures Dominica, 866-759-8726, [www.rainforestadventure.com](http://www.rainforestadventure.com)

## GRAND CASE BEACH CLUB PROJECTS EXCELLENT WINTER SEASON

Strong advance reservations indicate that Grand Case Beach Club should see another record-breaking winter season, according to Ron Muzii, president of Muzii & Associates, Inc., the oceanfront resort's North American marketing representative. "While there is still space available, I urge anyone planning a vacation this winter at the Grand Case Beach Club to book their reservations as soon as possible to secure preferred dates."

A variety of upgrades culminate a more-than-\$2-million program that began nearly two years ago. Besides major renovations to bathrooms, subtle touches include new in-room fabrics, curtains and most outdoor furniture. The resort was recently presented with its fifth consecutive "Golden Apple" award from Apple Vacations, which cited its outstanding service and hospitality. Over 40% of the resort's guests are repeat visitors.

The Apple Vacations' award is one in a long list, which includes

being featured on Expedia's Insiders Select List for four consecutive years. Orbitz presented the resort with its "Best In Stay" award and TripAdvisor consistently rate it "excellent." Caribbean Travel & Life has named it one of the best medium-size resorts in the Caribbean.

Offered again this winter is the popular "Honeymoon Magic" package available for either three or seven nights. Designed for honeymooners, second honeymooners or incurable romantics, the package includes accommodations with either private balcony or terrace; a bottle of red or white wine on arrival; welcome cocktail; continental breakfast daily; floral bouquet; picnic basket for two one day; Grand Case beach bag and use of all non-motorized water sports equipment. From December 18, 2011, to April 14, 2012, rates for the three-night package begin at \$1,070 per couple (\$2,410 for seven nights).

Grand Case's amenities include two beaches, swimming pool, water sports and fitness centers; tennis court; and the Boardwalk that wraps around the hill overlooking the ocean and connects to the Sunset Cafe, which offers breakfast, lunch, dinner and Happy Hour seven days a week. All units have a full kitchen and a flat-screen satellite TV.

Those in the travel industry can access the resort through the following GDS codes: Amadeus: IPSFG122; Apollo: IP29999; Sabre: IP11637; and Worldspan: IP8194.

Grand Case Beach Club, 800-340-3016, [info@gcbc.com](mailto:info@gcbc.com), [www.grandcasebeachclub.com](http://www.grandcasebeachclub.com)