



HONDURAS
INFINITY BAY SPA
AND BEACH RESORT

Sets A New Standard of Luxury

Honduras: Infinity Bay Spa and Beach Resort Sets A New Standard of Luxury

Roatan, a diver's paradise off the coast of Honduras, welcomes the "swankiest" new hotel on the island with its upscale beachfront and ocean view villas.

GAIL P. DUBOV

Green and hilly, dotted with small towns and friendly locals, Roatan has been a well-kept secret of dive enthusiasts who are drawn to the island's turquoise waters and the world's second largest barrier reef. Thirty miles off the coast of Honduras, it has a laid back Caribbean beach vibe with open-air restaurants, two-dollar beers and small, no-frills dive accommodations. But thanks to a group of visionary developers from Oregon, a new beachfront resort offers a first class alternative. Along the island's prettiest stretch of white powder sand, Infinity Bay Spa and Beach Resort opened its doors just in time to usher in the new year.



GENE ALBERT

With The Wall Street Journal naming it the "swankiest" accommodation option in Roatan, there is certainly plenty to celebrate.

Well Appointed Units, All with Ocean Views

Located on West Bay beach, Infinity Bay Spa and Beach Resort currently has 55 units of one, two, and three-bedroom fully furnished villas. Built along a graceful lagoon-style infinity pool, each villa is spacious, with ocean views. "Our one bedroom units are 850 sq. ft.," Mike Wendling, Infinity Bay property manager told TravelWorld News, "much



MIKE WENDLING

larger than average hotel rooms." With most hotel rooms measuring 400-600 sq. ft, Infinity Bay's one-bedroom villas are almost twice the size, comfortably accommodating four people with a pull-out sofa bed. The two-bedroom villa is 1400 sq. ft., sleeping six, the three-bedroom, a huge 2500 sq. ft, is perfect for a family of eight--with plenty of room to spare. Each unit has one or two verandas, with an outdoor patio table. Units are airy and open, tastefully furnished with elaborately carved hardwood bedroom sets, quality sheets and towels, a satellite tv, a/c, ceiling fans, state-of-the-art granite-topped fully equipped kitchens (that would rival any client's

home kitchen), tile floors, broadband internet service and phones. "We have the ultimate in luxury villas on the most beautiful beach in the Caribbean at very competitive rates," Wendling added. "Our fully furnished one bedrooms, with full kitchen and amenities, start at just \$175 a night, which is an incredible price compared to any other vacation rental on the island, or the Caribbean for that matter." Promotional rates start at \$240/night for two-bedroom units and \$340/night for three-bedroom units.

At the edge of the infinity pool, a swim up "palapa" bar has just been completed a few feet from the beach. The heart of the resort, it's the place to hang, where cold beers, Monkey La Las (an island specialty) mix well with simple, well prepared island food. Offering good coffee and a hearty breakfast, it's also a favorite morning spot before a plunge into the nearby water.

The piece d' resistance is the reef, fifty feet off shore. Your client can swim right out to this colorful underwater garden that hugs the shoreline. It's a diver's paradise, along with world class sailing, fishing, canoeing, kayaking and wind surfing. Dive boats and water taxis stop at Infinity Bay's private dock to take guests to dive sites or nearby locations like the Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences to swim with dolphins. For active families, there's also rainforest canopy adventures, horseback riding, an iguana farm, and a ride on a glass bottom boat. Infinity Bay can book any tours on the island or mainland Honduras.

The Back Story

It all started just three years ago in Eugene, Oregon. Gene Albert, active in commercial real estate for thirty years, took his brother and father on vacation to Roatan. A hometown couple had left Eugene to work on the island and curiosity sent him to "check things out." The rest is history. Albert bought five lots on the beach, what he calls his "starter project", building vacation homes on the edge of Half Moon Bay in West End. With his brother Vernon and Eugene-based business partners, Albert soon bought seven more acres from Julio Galindo, island native, former mayor, and owner of Anthony's Key Resort, a popular dive resort that has been on the island for 30 years. That was the day after Thanksgiving, 2004. Ground breaking for Infinity Bay came in May 2006. Phase One had begun.

President of Infinity Bay, Albert is soft spoken, focused, with a positive attitude that spreads to everyone on the Infinity Bay team. If there's a motto for the resort, it's "There are no problems, only solutions," an upbeat attitude that seems to echo



A luxury villa at Infinity Bay has a state-of-the-art kitchen that opens to a dining area, living room and outdoor veranda.

through the complex and inspire both staff and guests. In architecture as well as attitude, Albert had a clear vision. "From time spent in Guatemala volunteering on medical missions, I fell in love with the architecture of Antigua, with its Spanish Mediterranean overtones," he explained. Honduran architects designed the complex of 55 villas with large, overhanging verandas and red terracotta roofs on stucco buildings that seem to glow in the late afternoon light. These units complete "Phase One" of a two-phase project (hence their "soft opening" this past December). Committed to quality construction, the resort is a role model for "green design" with an ecologically constructed septic system, reverse osmosis water purification system and solar hot water heaters. "We're from Oregon," added Gene Albert with a laugh, "so we naturally think this way."

There are other pioneering "firsts." The resort is the first on the island to be installing elevators in each building and to have 100% potable water—not just out of the tap, but used in ice machines as well. It's also the only resort with specially coated glass windows to withstand hurricane force winds.

Resort Manager Who Knows the Region

Mike Wendling, Infinity Bay Resort Manager, had been knocking around Central America for years. He helped start the Maruba Resort in Belize and when asked by Francis Ford Coppola to help build Blancaneux, he did. He soon found himself in Honduras managing properties first on the mainland, then on Roatan, arriving at Infinity Bay a year and a half ago. "Setting up a resort has changed so much," Mike explained, "now we order on the Internet and it comes off a ship

to port." Well acquainted with the other tourist destinations in the region, Mike sees the connection they have with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

SUNBREEZE HOTEL & SUNBREEZE SUITES

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The perfect combination offering facilities to suit the needs of most travelers seeking a somewhere off the beaten path. A five minute stroll apart, located in the town of San Pedro, yet out of the hustle and bustle. The SunBreeze Hotel features 43 rooms offering the facilities and services of a resort while the SunBreeze Suites has 20 oceanfront fully equipped suites. A variety of packages are available.

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Roatan. "Belize and Costa Rica," he explained, "are stepping stones to Roatan."

Both countries have set up excellent jungle/beach programs, a future plan for Infinity Bay as well. Wendling is in negotiations with TACA and Continental Airlines to develop air/land packages. "Airlines are now seeing the publicity we're getting," explained Wendling, referring to The Wall Street Journal article and a recent feature in The New York Times including Roatan among the "50 Places to Visit in 2008." It's great publicity that has not gone unnoticed, as he points out. "My e-mail requests went from ten a day to fifty after The Wall Street Journal article came out." Requests turned into paying guests when the resort boasted 65% occupancy in its soft opening at the end of the year.

A Sleepy Island About to Wake Up

Both Royal Caribbean and Carnival Cruise Lines have big plans on the

drawing board for Roatan. Royal Caribbean is planning a US\$25 million cruise dock in Coxen Hole, while Carnival is spending US\$45 million on a new pier farther east, projected to unload up to 7,000 passengers daily by the end of 2009.

As Gene Albert pointed out, "cruise ships expose people to the island and then they return on flights." More airlines are starting nonstop weekend service directly into Roatan and as of mid-February, Continental has nonstop midweek service from Houston. A golf course--the first on the island--is being discussed.

All signs point to the coming of age of this small, English-speaking Caribbean island.

Phase Two About to Begin

Phase Two, the ambitious second half of this project that completes Infinity Bay Spa and Beach Resort, is about to begin. Projected completion is April '09 for an additional 90 furnished units, a four story building facing the ocean at the far end of the infinity pool, with a state-of-the-art spa/health club, a multi-level 150-seat restaurant, a lobby/reception area and a conference center. Construction has been blocked off from the resort and most will be staged away from the main property so there's little interference with guests.

Getting There

Infinity Bay is twenty minutes from the airport and all airport transfers are included in the villa price. Continental starts Thursday departures from Houston nonstop to Roatan on Feb 14th and flies nonstop from Houston and Newark on Saturdays.

TACA flies nonstop from Houston on Saturdays as well with weekly nonstops from Miami. Delta flies nonstop from Atlanta.

Flights on AA and other airlines connect through San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa and San Salvador. A one hour high speed ferry from La Ceiba on the mainland leaves twice daily.

Industry welcome

Eager to welcome the industry to this premier property, Infinity Bay will comp rooms for any agent/operator interested in a site inspection. E-mail Mike at mwendling@infinitybay.com if interested. The resort gives a 10% commission for any agent bookings. Fam trips are planned for the near future.

Infinity Bay Spa and Beach Resort, 866-369-1977, In Oregon: 541-359-1229, www.infinitybay.com

TABACÓN GRAND SPA NAMED FAVORITE SPA IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Tabacón Grand Spa Thermal Resort, a relative newcomer on Costa Rica's spa scene, has been selected the "Favorite Spa in Central America" and one of the world's "Top 10 Best Mineral Spring Water Spas" by the well-traveled spa-goers who recently weighed in on the 2007 Luxury SpaFinder Readers' Choice Awards.

Resort Managing Director Uwe Wagner and Spa Director Rosa Paulina Perez, will accept the award at The Spa Experience 2007, a global spa showcase in New York City on November 1.

The rainforest-sited resort completed an extensive renovation and enhancement program this past year which included the addition of The Grand Spa.

Wagner noted, "Following several months of thoughtfully considered enhancements aimed at elevating our guests' spa and resort experience, we have achieved our goal to operate what many feel is the finest spa facility in Central America."

Other recent awards and accolades, included being selected as a "Recommended Property" in the prestigious *Condé Nast* Johansens Recommended Hotels, Inns, Resort & Spas collection (one of only four recommended resorts in Costa Rica and the only recommended luxury spa in Central America), and as a "Leading Spa of the World" by Leading Hotels of the World.

Tabacón Grand Spa Thermal Resort, 877-277-8291, www.tabacon.com, www.lhw.com

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TACA PRESENTS DAVID, PANAMA, AS NEW DESTINATION

Starting February 18, TACA will operate a new route between San Jose, Costa Rica and David, Panama. David is an important city in the Republic of Panama, offering connection possibilities to the rest of the country, as well as to North and Central America. The route will be operated with ATR42 aircrafts, with a 48 passenger capacity.

This operation offers several options to connect with TACA's route network for Central and North America. Passengers originating in El Salvador, Guatemala, Los Angeles, Miami, New York and Mexico in the morning flight bank will be able to connect directly towards David. The reverse connection is also available for the return to those destinations.

In addition to the connection between David, Panama and the countries served by TACA in North and Central America, passengers can also take advantage of reaching other tourist and business destinations in Panama through TACA Regional flights with AEROPERLAS. Changuinola, Bocas del Toro and Panama City, will be available through 40 minute flights from David, with fares at approximately \$65.

Claudia Arenas, Corporate Communications Director said: "This new route shows the airline's interest of not only flying to the capital cities of the region, but to serve other destinations with interesting markets and with manifest interest in being better communicated. TACA begins serving David with a solid organizational structure and service patterns oriented to please the clients' needs."

The city of David offers its visitors all the comforts of a great city, such as restaurants, supermarkets, pharmacies, car rentals, hotels, international airport service, national and international banks, hospitals, communication services, and more. Also, the Chiriquí Province offers its visitors an interesting range of ecological tourism including mountains, beaches, rivers, waterfalls, thermal wells, museums and an archaeological heritage of ancient cultures.

TACA, taca.com

HOTEL CASCO ANTIGUO FLOURISHING IN CASCO VIEJO

Casco Viejo has become a hub for new construction, new developments, and new projects in effect. With such an abundance of new names and hotels in the area, it might be confusing as to which projects will come out on top. As one of the premiere destinations on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and complete with all of the necessary elements to be a thriving success, Hotel Casco Antiguo will undoubtedly be topping the roster as the area's most spectacular and flourishing project in the up and coming area. Retaining the history and style of the historic Hotel Colon, Hotel Casco Antiguo will offer modern accommodations with exquisite amenities and five-star services. In addition, Casco Antiguo's Government has applauded the project for their efforts to restore the historic building and maintain its 17th century architecture while offering guests modern amenities.

Hotel Casco Antiguo has announced Destiny Hotels International as the official management group. Boasting more than 75 years of experience in the hospitality industry with four and five-star hotels, the Destiny Hotel brand is now seeking to develop a network of boutique hotels offering the legendary efficiency and amenities that their name is synonymous with. Destiny will create these hotels throughout Latin America and they have immediate plans for five properties in Panama. Hotel Casco Antiguo and Destiny Hotels will guarantee an ideal getaway for those seeking the perfect vacation.

Hotel Casco Antiguo will be developed by leading industry professionals with over 100 years of combined experience. Principle Robert Gibbs has redeveloped several historic sites such as the Seagate Hotel and Beach Club in Del Rey Beach, Florida and the architectural headquarters of Addison Mizner. Lawrence B. Murphy comes to Hotel Casco Antiguo with over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry.

The restoration of the Hotel is scheduled to be completed by 2009.

Hotel Casco Antiguo,
www.hotelcascoantiguo.com

HILTON PAPAGAYO OPENS WITH SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY RATE


Hilton Hotels Corporation has opened the Hilton Papagayo Resort Costa Rica – the first Hilton in Costa Rica. To mark the occasion, the resort is offering an introductory rate of \$499 per night all-inclusive based on double occupancy.

Formerly the Premier Fiesta Resort & Spa, the 202-room all-inclusive resort has undergone a multi-million dollar renovation. Influenced by its natural surroundings, the resort welcomes guests with a brand new open air lobby, as well as upgrades to guest rooms, gardens and public areas, meeting facilities, restaurants, swimming pool area, and a brand new world-class spa.

A new Kidz Paradise club features activities for children of all ages.

Hilton Papagayo Resort offers over 1,300 sq. ft. of meetings space, including three new meeting rooms and an auditorium for up to 300 people.

Hilton Papagayo Resort, www.hilton.com



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- Trip Advisor Member, June 2007

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BIRDING PACKAGE OFFERED AT THE LODGE AT CHAA CREEK



Located between the rainforested foothills of the Maya Mountains in the Macal River Valley, Chaa Creek is the perfect destination for fun filled adventures.

Their private 365-acre reserve is always abuzz with the reverberating sounds of a tropical forest concerto.

A fly-past of squadrons of brilliantly colored parrots, the distant hoot of a Blue-crowned Mot-Mot and the fragrance of frangipani blossoms welcomes guests to a new world steeped in Mayan history, and surrounded by nature's bounty.

During the nesting months of April and May, avian activity heats up, as more than 300 species of raucous birds compete for space with the new blooms of multihued flora to begin the fascinating task of building their nests within the reserve.

This lively time of the year offers both the expert and casual bird watcher an exciting opportunity to view toucans, trogons, hum-

mingbirds, parrots and numerous other baby fledglings as they hatch from their eggs to become the newest residents of the Belizean rainforests.

During the nesting months, Chaa Creek will be offering a five-night/six-day Birding Expedition Package.

The guided expedition consists of five nights accommodation at the award winning Lodge at Chaa Creek, airport transfers, and all meals and on-site activities, as well as an early morning birdwatching expedition to Laguna Aguacate, full day birding excursion to the Mountain Pine Ridge, full day birding and archaeological tours of the ancient Maya temple cities of Caracol and Tikal, birding tour of the ancient Maya agricultural center of El Pillar, and a birding canoe trip on the Macal River.

This five-night/six-day expedition is \$1,880 per person (minimum of two persons). The expedition will be offered from April 1–May 31, 2008. All taxes, fees and service charges are included in the rates.

Snorkeling and diving extension tours to the islands and Caribbean coast, with or without a birdwatching component, are also available.

The Lodge at Chaa Creek, 877-709-8708, reservations@chaacreek.com, www.chaacreek.com

WYNDHAM GARDEN OPENS OUTPOST IN COSTA RICA HOT SPOT

For many years Jaco Beach, Costa Rica, has been an ideal destination for those seeking contact with nature, breathtaking

beaches, and a surfer's paradise, all while enjoying an exciting "city life."

Yet, until now, options to own a luxury beachfront property in this "urban oasis" have been limited.

Creating a new model for luxury Jaco Beach living and vacationing is Wyndham Garden at Jaco Beach, a beach front condo-hotel located in Jacó, Puntarenas.

Jacó, the closest beach to the Juan Santamaria International Airport, offers the widest array of retail outposts, restaurants, and entertainment, and provides the perfect location for this family-friendly getaway.

With Wyndham Worldwide as a partner, guests and owners can look forward to excellent services and superb amenities.

Wyndham Garden Costa Rica, made up of two contemporary, conjoined buildings, will be equipped with a spacious lobby, a glass bridge connector, 24 hour security, four state-of-the-art elevators, and high speed internet and cable in every unit. The common areas will be comprised of several pools, a Jacuzzi, an event room, day care, and a luxury Spa with an ultra-modern gymnasium.

The 136 condo-hotel units will have top of the line quality finishes and European kitchens with imported appliances.

One of the most attractive and exciting aspects to the property will be a chic Rooftop bar, the first of its kind in the beaches of Costa Rica, as well as a beachfront restaurant with international cuisine.

Jaco Beach's excellent nightlife has made it a "must" for many travelers with its casual and fun atmosphere and friendly people. A variety of activities can attract a wide audience including surfing lovers, fishing enthusiasts, and beach lovers worldwide. Additionally, an 18-hole golf course located less than five minutes from the property, as well as a public marina offer further entertainment.

A perfect destination for second home buyers, couples, and families, Wyndham Gardens Jaco Beach will fill a much needed hole in the marketplace.

Wyndham Garden at Jaco Beach, www.wyndhamgardenjacobeach.com

HILTON ANNOUNCES JOSE MUÑOZ AS GM OF NEW COSTA RICA PROPERTY



JOSE MUNOZ

Hilton Hotels Corporation has announced the appointment of Jose Muñoz as General Manager of the new Doubletree Cariari by Hilton San Jose in Costa Rica.

Jose most recently served as General Manager of the Hilton Caracas in Venezuela. A 34-year Hilton veteran, Jose began his career as an assistant controller at the Marbella Hilton in Spain. Since then, he held several management positions within the organization at Hilton hotels in Trinidad and throughout Venezuela.

He holds an accounting degree from Remington School in Morocco, and a Hospitality Management Diploma from the AH&L Educational Institute.

Hilton rang in 2008 with two new properties in Costa Rica. Both the Doubletree Cariari by Hilton San Jose and Doubletree Resort by Hilton Puntarenas opened as the first full-service Hilton family hotels in the country.

Ricardo Rodriguez will remain General Manager of the Doubletree Resort by Hilton Puntarenas. Ricardo started at the former Fiesta Puntarenas in 1998. A third Costa Rica hotel, the Hilton Papagayo Resort, is scheduled to open on January 15.

Hilton Hotels Corporation,
www.hilton.com

NICARAGUA TOURISM BOARD ANNOUNCES MARIO SALINAS AS NEW MINISTER OF TOURISM



MARIO SALINAS

Successful Nicaraguan businessman and developer Mario Salinas, has been appointed President of the Nicaragua Tourism Board (INTUR), marking his second term as Tourism

Minister.

Salinas' appointment follows several significant achievements during his past term as Minister, which proved instrumental in expanding the country's tourism product. Salinas played an influential role in introducing several new flights from the U.S. to Managua on Spirit Airlines. His close ties with the private sector were fundamental in instilling confidence in Nicaragua as a viable investment opportunity.

Salinas acknowledges the importance of U.S. tourism to Nicaragua's economy and the impact it has on the country's development. "Nicaragua is ready now more than ever to welcome tourists," says Salinas. "We have already started significant infrastructure improvements to provide more and even better access to travelers seeking to experience the many incredible tourism attractions that Nicaragua offers."

Salinas' strong business background and past experience as a successful developer promises a positive future for Nicaragua's tourism growth.

Nicaragua, www.visit-nicaragua.com


VIAVENTURE WINS GREEN DEAL CERTIFICATION AND TOP AWARD

Viaventure, a full-service tour operator and destination management company based in La Antigua, has received Green Deal certification through the Rainforest Alliance's Guatemalan certification program, reflecting its commitment to environmentally sensitive, sustainable tourism practices. Not only did Viaventure's program receive a top rating of five, the company won first prize with a score of 96 out of 100 and won \$2,000.


Viaventure has improved energy efficiency in its La Antigua office, and on tours it operates to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The company has also purchased fuel-efficient vehicles and has re-designed its tours to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases produced, measured in units of carbon dioxide.

Viaventure tours also strive to incorporate locally produced products and to hire and train staff and guides from local communities.

Viaventure, www.viaventure.com




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Buenos Aires: The New High-Design Boutique Hotels

When it comes to hipness and cool, the Southern Hemisphere has as much to teach the Northern Hemisphere as the other way 'round.

MARK ZUSSMAN

Nothing against the Alvear Palace, the Palacio Duhau Park Hyatt, the Caesar Park, the Four Seasons, the Plaza Marriott and all the other distinguished traditional lodgings in the Argentine capital of Buenos Aires, mind you. Nothing against the big splashy new ones — such as the Faena in Puerto Madero. They are great hotels, all of them. But there is a major change afoot on the Buenos Aires lodging scene. The supply side is in the process of adjusting to a demand-

side shift from pure business accommodations to pure leisure accommodations, and the result is a sudden mushrooming of extremely impressive high-design boutique hotels and B&Bs.

This is a development that is not taking place in the so-called City Center, in the Retiro, or in Recoleta, where the majority of the well-known traditional business hotels and the hotels serving travelers on package tours have been located. Real estate is too expensive in those traditional lodging zones, and there just aren't that many seedy old warehouses or commercial buildings left to convert. The development is taking place rather in slightly off-center neighborhoods such as San Telmo and Palermo with yet more outposts in farther-off-the-beaten path neighborhoods such as Monserrat, the Abasto and Las Cañitas.

My wife and I recently spent a week in BsAs. We did not lodge in any of the new design hotels, we lodged in fact in a friend's apartment, which kept us free of bias and indebtedness, but we visited a dozen of the new establishments in question.

Some we went to see because we had found them on the Internet or they came to our attention by word of mouth. Others we simply happened on as we walked the streets.



A loft style room at the Moreno Hotel.

We started at the seven-room — that's right, seven-room — Gurda Winery and Tango Boutique Hotel on Lezama Park, catty-corner to the onion-domed Russian Orthodox church that, I suppose primarily because of its improbability, is often featured in photos in the city's promotional literature. The Gurda was an old mansion. Despite landmark status, it was on the verge of being torn down. This is theme number 1 of all the establishments in question: Recycling. The rooms are on the small side. They do not have ocean views — the ocean is in fact a mighty distance off — or, for that matter, even street views. They look out rather onto courtyards; they look out onto mere corridors, however broad. But the rooms are all different. Each has been designed individually and distinctively, and the accouterments (in particular the fabrics) are simultaneously luxurious, hip, homey. Beyond this, words fail. Best, if you're curious, to go to the Gurda's Web site and see all of it for yourself. But a word of warning: Like many of the other establishments in the category, the Gurda has a Web site that is arguably overelaborate. The music — tango, needless to say — is gorgeous. But who doesn't get a touch impatient while all this stylishness loads? And then, if you want to get beyond page one, you have to figure out how to override

your browser's pop-up blocker. The Gurda has been open for business since June. Gracious staff.

Gurda Tango & Winery Hotel,
info@gurdahotel.com,
www.gurdahotel.com

If less space is given to other properties, it is not that they are any less inviting. It is simply that the general outline of things has already been established. The second design property we looked in at was the Ribera Sur, also in the San Telmo neighborhood, but now on the rather busier and noisier Paseo Colón. Not, once through the door, that you would know it. Inside there is a hush — as if everything were of marshmallow, which it's not. Must have been quite a soundproofing job. Here the rooms number 16, the restaurant seats 40. How would a person choose between the Ribera Sur and the Gurda, to name just the first of the places we investigated? Let's see, the Ribera Sur leans, let us say, to the more starkly minimalist and techy of the contemporary versions of cool. It's a little closer to dead center of San Telmo, a little closer to Puerto Madero. Basically, it's a toss-up. One person is going to prefer one; another is going to prefer the other. The Ribera Sur has been open since July. Another gracious staff.

Ribera Sur Hotel,
info@riberasurhotel.com.ar,
www.riberasurhotel.com.ar

The Moreno, several blocks closer to the Plaza de Mayo, turned out to be something else again (though still within category). The plaque outside is so discreet you might not even notice it, and you enter via what seems like — for the good reason that it is — the entrance to an old commercial building. (The Moreno occupies what was formerly an important BsAs publishing house that went under during what everyone in Argentina refers to as the crisis; that's the crisis of 1999-2002.) Get into an old-fashioned elevator, the kind that has a gate that has to be opened and shut manually. The lobby, a floor or two up, has that seductively decadent draped look (amazing there isn't someone to

peel grapes for you), and there are tapestry chairs to sit in while you register.

The two guest accommodations that we looked at were seriously stunning, one of them with charcoal gray walls, a floor-to-ceiling mirror in a gilt frame, a sitting area like a corner of a New York loft apartment and a bed kind of floating out in the middle of the oversize space with a desk attached to the other side of the headboard. The hotel's promotional literature speaks credibly of "daredevil design." Ágata Pedrós, the sales manager, said, "We know the entrance looks a little scary." True enough. But, around the time this magazine comes out, it will be less so. There will be a 24-hour restaurant at the street level. There will be a theater one flight below street level.

Moreno Hotel,
info@morenobuenosaires.com,
www.morenobuenosaires.com

Ms. Pedrós was insistent — and, as it turned out, rightly so — that as long as we were in the neighborhood we also go see the Axel, which opened only days earlier (at the beginning of November) but so landmark a place is it that, between our visit and my writing this, it has figured in a fairly lengthy feature article in the New York Times international-news pages. Admittedly, the Times story was not merely about a 48-room hotel, however strewn with Eames chairs and other nice design touches. It was a trend piece. Argentina per the Times is macho. BsAs is a town of "strapping meat-eaters." This may no longer still be the case, actually. In the week my wife and I spent in the land of

cow, we didn't eat meat even once. BsAs nowadays has been as sushi-ized as the next place, and the Italian restaurants serve all kinds of tasty green pastas without even trace elements of animal protein in them. You can also live a lifetime in BsAs on margarita pizzas alone. But, hey, no straw man, no article. The point is that the Axel, in a downtown location in no way inconspicuous, styles itself a heterofriendly hotel, and what that means of course is that it primarily seeks a gay clientele. The Axel is the first venture of its kind outside of Barcelona, Spain, where Axel number one has been functioning since 2003. A gay hotel is a good thing, particularly one as graciously designed as the Axel. The promotional literature, however, borders on the pornographic, so heteros who mistake the heterofriendly for a warmer invitation than is really meant may be in for some embarrassment.

Axel Hotel,
buenosaires@axelhotels.com,
www.axelhotels.com;

Another day we looked in at the Casa Alfaro B&B on a street that is part residential, part commercial in the Palermo neighborhood (or, as it is called now, Palermo Soho), and we had a talk with General Manager Mariana Alfaro. That is, we talked with her when she wasn't on her feet to help one guest get a heavy piece of luggage down the stairs or another to find particular breakfast ingredients in the kitchen.

The property that houses the B&B, Ms. Alfaro explained, has been in the family for several decades — ever since her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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mother, new to the big city, balked at living in a small apartment, however proper the neighborhood it was in. Mom didn't care what the neighborhood she lived in was like, and at the time this one wasn't reassuring. She wasn't going to give up the space she was accustomed to in the provinces. Mariana Alfaro converted the family home to a B&B in 1998. At the time, the neighborhood was still dubious. But now the neighborhood has either caught up with the Casa Alfaro or maybe even outrun it.

The house is sprawling. But it also maintains a rustic feel. But for the absence of cows and horses out the windows, you could as easily be out on an estancia. Come here, or send clients here, for warmth, therefore, and for a human experience, not for wide-screen plasma TVs. There are in fact no TVs in the Alfaro guest rooms at all and only a small one here and there in public areas. Ms. Alfaro says she used to work at one of the big commercial hotels. She saw the way business-people on their own would shut themselves up in their rooms at night and stare at the tube in preference to having contact with other human beings and she was skeptical. She means the absence of television screens to promote human contact, and at the Casa Alfaro it seemingly does.

Casa Alfaro B&B, info@bandb.com.ar, www.casaalfaro.com.ar

Ms. Alfaro, in addition to running the B&B, is the organizer of a Web site called Rural y Urbano. She said that guests used to ask her what she would recommend of a similar kind in Mendoza or Salta or Mar del Plata. She didn't know. She did the research. She created an organization of kindred properties in BsAs and in the provinces alike. She estimates that, in the capital, there may now be as many as 120 boutique hotels and B&Bs. But she warns that perhaps only a quarter of them are properly licensed, and she strongly suggests that there are advantages to be had in dealing only with the licensed ones.

Well, we can obviously not review every last one of these attractive and distinctive lodgings. Ms. Alfaro sent us to see the 1555 Malabia House, the undisputed forerunner of all the Palermo B&Bs. More sophisticated (take that ambiguous word any way you like) than the Casa Alfaro. They may call themselves a B&B; to me they're a high-design mini-hotel. We liked the Soho AllSuites, admittedly something more than the others like a conventional hotel. We liked Hotel Home, also in Palermo. Scandinavian modern decor, the kind that everyone had in the '50s, then threw out — now it's unaffordable!

We liked the BoBo, the name being shorthand for bourgeois bohemian. Beautiful old mansion. (The Malabia House is in a former convent.) We liked the CarlosVia, which we simply happened into across from what used to be BsAs's central market, now a shopping center. Marvelous cartoon-inspired painting on the walls. The basement, where bananas were ripened back in central market days, is now a kitchen for the use of guests.

How would one find the right one of these properties for any particular client and bearing in mind that many, if not most, clients would just as soon stay in a more familiar kind of lodging anyway?

Not necessarily easy. Following is contact information for the more properties specifically mentioned in this review and, at the bottom, for Mariana Alfaro's Rural y Urbano association and also for a second association of boutique properties. Please, though, do not mistake this list for exhaustive.

Malabia House, info@malabiahouse.com.ar, www.malabiahouse.com.ar;

Soho AllSuites, info@sohoallsuites.com, www.sohoallsuites.com;

Hotel Home, info@homebuenosaires.com, www.homebuenosaires.com;

BoBo Hotel, contacto@bobohotel.com, www.bobohotel.com;

CarlosVia, carlosvia@fibertel.com.ar, www.carlosvia.com;

Rural y Urbano, info@ruralyurbano.com.ar, www.ruralyurbano.com.ar;

Boutique Hotels of Argentina, info@boutiquehotelsargentina.com, www.boutiquehotelsargentina.com

FALKLAND ISLANDS: THE NEW GALAPAGOS

Just an hour's flight from southern Chile, the Falkland Islands are fast becoming known as one of the world's best kept wildlife secrets.

The archipelago, consisting of two main islands and over 770 smaller islands, boasts more than 227 species of bird and 14 species of regularly occurring marine mammal. Offering unadulterated access to tame wildlife, visitors are afforded with incredible photography opportunities and wildlife encounters.

During peak season, running from late October to early April, visitors can encounter up to five species of penguin (king, gentoo, rockhopper, Magellanic, macaroni), and in some cases all co-existing at one site.

Twitchers enjoy sightings of the endemic Cobb's wren and Falklands flightless steamer duck, while mammal enthusiasts are treated to seaside displays by Commerson's and Peale's dolphins.

Large harems of southern elephant seals and sea lions litter pristine coastlines, and pods of orca patrol just meters from the shore waiting for the weaners to take their first swim.

The Islands are also home to 64 percent of the world's black-browed albatross population. These magnificent animals, with a wingspan of eight feet, nest along the rugged coastal cliffs and are readily accessible to visitors.

LAN Chile flies to the Falklands from Santiago via Punta Arenas every Saturday.

Falkland Islands Tourist Board, www.visitorfalklands.com

NEW OCEANFRONT VILLA WITH PRIVATE YACHT IN THE GALAPAGOS FROM COX & KINGS USA

Cox & Kings USA brings luxury and flexibility to the Galapagos Islands experience with a new oceanfront villa with private yacht.

Scalesia Villa is the most luxurious property in the Galapagos, located on the main island of Santa Cruz.

The Villa's private yacht is available for day trips, along with a professional naturalist guide. This makes it easy to visit a choice of islands, stopping for snorkeling or swimming with a school of dolphins.

The villa features include air-conditioning, indoor and outdoor sitting areas, rooftop dining terrace, pool and pool-side bar, sun deck with seaside seating, whirlpool, and Turkish bath.

All meals are included, as well as laptop with wireless internet access, two cell phones (phone calls additional), DVD library, snorkeling equipment, and wetsuits.

The main villa features one master bedroom with king bed, two bedrooms with two double beds, and three bathrooms. There is a kitchen, living room and dining room on the main floor, with a sitting area on the second floor.

The garden guest house features two double beds, two twin beds, a desk and bathroom.

The Villa and private yacht are perfect for visitors that want to avoid the rigid schedules of the ship only-based adventures.

It is also ideal for those traveling May–September, when Galapagos' waters are rougher and ship overnights may be uncomfortable.

This Galapagos Villa/Yacht experience is priced from \$5,290 per person (based on a minimum of four nights, six people). The trip may be customized from four to 10 days, and easily added to Cox & Kings' Private Travel Journeys to Ecuador or Peru.

Cox & Kings USA,
www.coxandkingsusa.com



EARN A TRIP TO THE GALAPAGOS WITH ADVENTURES INCORPORATED

ADVENTURES Incorporated, the exclusive adventure division of leading tour operator Goway Travel, has announced the opportunity for agents to earn a free trip to the Galapagos Islands.

Agents interested in selling one of the most popular and lucrative destinations in the world are encouraged to think of ADVENTURES Incorporated when they think of the Galapagos Islands.

"The Galapagos Islands are without doubt, one of the most popular destinations in Latin America and for travelers around the world," stated Don Forster, Product and Marketing Manager for ADVENTURES Incorporated.

"The Galapagos Islands are unique, and offer travelers a truly memorable trip. This, combined with the many other often forgotten jewels of Ecuador, makes a trip to this region a truly special choice.

For agents wishing to expand their

destination horizons, a Galapagos trip offers great commissions and with options such as the Amazon, high Andes and the amazing coast line, make Galapagos bookings extremely lucrative," continued Forster.

ADVENTURES Incorporated is offering agents a chance to be involved in this destination with the offer of a free trip to the Galapagos Islands when selling ADVENTURES Incorporated Galapagos vessels. Book 20 passengers on the Cachalote or Beluga, or 15 passengers on the Coral I, Coral II, Legend and Angelito in 2008 and agents will get to visit the Galapagos Islands for free.

"Don't let your clients miss out on one of the most pristine and magical places in the world on some of the best vessels cruising the Islands. And of course don't miss the opportunity for you to see, fist hand, this amazing destination," concluded Forster.

ADVENTURES Incorporated,
800-387-8850,
info@adventuresincorporated.com,
ADVENTURES Incorporated.com

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MEXICO BOUTIQUE HOTELS ANNOUNCES ITS TOP SELLERS FOR 2007



Mexico Boutique Hotels, an eclectic collection of upscale boutique properties, have put together a list of their Top 10 Best Sellers for 2007, based on the number of bookings made by their very satisfied guests.

Majahuitas, Puerto Vallarta begins the

list at number 10, followed by Quinta Las Acacias, Guanajuato. This French-style mansion harks back to the 19th century and entices guests with a blend of European luxury and Mexican beauty.

At Xaloc, Isla Holbox (number 8), swim with the whale sharks in the morning, fish in the afternoon and enjoy your catch deliciously prepared in the evening.

At El Tamarindo, Costalegre (number 7), imagine camping in the middle of a lush jungle, in a private villa, with a plunge pool, hammock and outdoor living area. No modern amenity is overlooked here.

Perched above the city of Puerto Vallarta, the beautifully restored villas that make up Hacienda San Angel are a tour de force of fine antiques and a tribute to the owner's good taste. It comes in at number 6 on the list.

At number 5, La Casona, Mexico City is a few blocks from the Paseo de la Reforma. The concierge can organize a variety of unforgettable tours.

Villa Ganz, Guadalajara, a wonderfully restored mansion in Mexico's second-largest city, is a favorite of celebrities and makes the list at number 4. Las Alamandas, Costalegre (number 3) is also popular with the A-listers for its great discretion and even greater privacy. Guests can enjoy gourmet picnics on paparazzi-free beaches, surrounded by nature at its best.

At number 2, Meson Sacristia de la Compañía, Puebla, heavy wooden doors open up onto a courtyard filled with beautifully preserved antiques and fine rustic furnishings. Guests take home antiques, memories and the indelible experience of learning how to cook the perfect mole.

Finally, topping the list at number 1 is Casa de Mita, Punta de Mita. The all-inclusive option is truly exquisite and this tiny jewel on a secluded beach offers truly impeccable service.

Mexico Boutique Hotels, 800-728-9098, www.mexicoboutiquehotels.com

THE VILLA GROUP'S DESERT SPA OFFERS 2008 PACKAGES

The Villa Group's Desert Spa has introduced a series of packages for 2008. The 31,000 sq. ft. facility is the newest addition

to The Villa Group's roster of world-class amenities at its private enclave of suite-style resorts in Cabo.

"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," noted Ricardo Orozco, Corporate Director for The Villa Group in Cabo San Lucas.

Showcasing Baja's largest wet area, the spa's hydrotherapy centers include a Jacuzzi, cold plunge pool, cold pressure showers, body temperature pool, steam room and sauna.

In addition there are 17 treatment rooms, two exclusive VIP suites with private Jacuzzi and shower, a beauty salon and an extensive menu of exotic treatments.

The Desert Spa Discovery Package features three nights in a deluxe one-bedroom oceanview suite at Villa del Arco, two 50-minute aromatherapy massages, a men's facial therapy, a lemon lime facial for her, and unlimited access to the fitness center and spa for the entire stay.

Discovery Package rates are from \$1,015 plus tax per couple and are offered through December 8, 2008. This European Plan package (meals not included) is subject to availability.

The Desert Spa Adventure Package covers three nights in a deluxe one-bedroom oceanview suite at Villa del Arco, his-and-hers experience in a spa suite for two, a men's facial therapy, a lemon lime facial for her, a personal training session for two, unlimited access to the fitness center and spa for the entire stay, and a light spa cuisine lunch.

Adventure Package rates are from \$1,143 plus tax per couple and are offered through December 8, 2008. This European Plan package (meals not included) is subject to availability.

For non-guests, The Spa One Day Experience offers a one day-pass to the fitness center and spa, one 50-minute massage and a light spa cuisine lunch for \$109 per person plus tax through December 8, 2008, subject to availability.

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

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SOL MELIA HOTELS & RESORTS APPOINTS KEN D. DITTRICH NEW AREA VICE PRESIDENT



KEN D. DITTRICH

Guy Hensley, Senior Vice President of premium brands for Sol Meliá Hotels & Resorts, has announced the appointment of Ken D. Dittrich as the new area Vice President of Gran Meliá Hotels and Resorts in the Americas and Caribbean for Sol Meliá Hotels and Resorts.

Dittrich, who will be based in Puerto Rico, is responsible for directing, supporting, and overseeing all aspects of the Gran Meliá hotel portfolio in the Caribbean and the Americas, as well as assisting with and overseeing openings and conversions.

Executive and operational matters for Gran Meliá Puerto Rico Golf Resort & Villas will remain under Dittrich's jurisdiction.

"I am very excited about this opportunity, which opens up a new chapter for the company on a positive, global scale," said Dittrich. "Our main objective is to define the value of the brand and its attributes while increasing its presence and profitability in the Americas and Caribbean."

Prior to his appointment, Dittrich was the Managing Director of Paradisus Puerto Rico, which was re-flagged into Sol Meliá's most luxurious EP brand, Gran Meliá Puerto Rico Golf Resort & Villas in May 2007. He was also the Managing Director of Paradisus Rivera Cancun in Mexico.

Dittrich's 28 years of international hotel experience includes the position of opening General Manager of the 320-room Blue Tree Park Hotel in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Managing Director of Gran Meliá Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Prior, he held the position of Vice President of Operations for Regent International based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He also managed the 450-room Westin Caesar Park Hotel in Panama City, Panama after working with Westin and Intercontinental Hotels and Resorts in several top management positions.

Dittrich graduated in Hotel Management from the Hotel and Catering School in Germany.

He obtained a hotel business administration degree at the Frankfurt and Heidelberg Hotel School in Germany. He is a member of the Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association.

Sol Meliá Hotels & Resorts, visit www.solmelia.com



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PUERTO VALLARTA'S WHALE WATCHING SEASON IN FULL SWING



It is the time of year again when Puerto Vallarta provides visitors with front row seats to a beautiful spectacle of nature – the play of the humpback whales. Every year, between December and April, Humpback Whales migrate to the calm waters of Banderas Bay to mate and give birth. Numerous hotels and tour operators in Puerto Vallarta offer special whale watching packages and tours, giving visitors the opportunity to get up close to these gentle giants.

The Humpback whale is the species that breaches most frequently, up to once every 40 seconds for several minutes making them easier to spot. As many as 300 whales have been sighted in Banderas Bay during one season alone. According to marine biologists, the leaps may be for courtship, a challenge, or a display of strength. The whales start leaving the bay towards the end of March to make their way up to their northern home for the winter months. The recently impregnated females leave first followed by the young and more mature adults. The mothers with their newborn calves, conceived the year before, are the last to leave, as the calves need to spend some extra time in warm waters to develop a thick layer of insulating fat before they head up north.

According to oceanographers, there are about 1,000 Humpback whales left in the Pacific Ocean.

Puerto Vallarta, www.visitpuertovallarta.com

WESTJET TO BEGIN FLIGHT SERVICE TO MAZATLAN

The Mazatlan Hotel Association has announced that WestJet, the leading Canadian-based low-cost carrier, will begin flight service, December 22, 2007, from Calgary and Edmonton to Mazatlan on Mexico's Northern Pacific Coast. The nonstop service will be aboard Boeings 737-800 airplanes, each with capacity for 136 passengers. Weekly flights depart Saturdays through April with the following schedule: from Calgary, Flight WS1174 departs 1:00 p.m., arrives 5:23 p.m.; from Mazatlan, Flight WS1175 departs 6:15 p.m., arrives 10:57 p.m.; from Edmonton, Flight WS118 departs 11:05 a.m., arrives 3:39 p.m.; and from Mazatlan, Flight WS1183 departs 4:30 p.m., arrives 9:37 p.m.

"The new service from Edmonton and Calgary, along with existing charter service from other major Canadian markets is in keep-

ing with the aggressive goals we set forth this year," says Carlos Berdegue, Vice President of the Mazatlan Hotel Association. Mazatlan is experiencing dramatic growth in our tourism service infrastructure. Our main focus is to provide travelers with a unique experience that enables them to experience the real Mexico. On the one hand, visitors here enjoy the best of a modern city, with outstanding hotels, restaurants and nightclubs. On the other hand, they experience the distinctive culture and history of Mazatlan through our Historic District and rural villages, some of which date back to the XVI century. The Mazatlan Hotel Association's willingness to support our tourism partners and the great attitude we have towards any project we put our hands on is a pattern that has proven successful and makes us a very reliable partner," he concludes.

"Our excellent reputation as a hotel association is paying off tremendously. We look forward to increasing air service from other Canadian gateways in the near future, but we must take one step at a time. We're very of the outstanding business relationships we enjoy with our tourism partners."

Mazatlán, www.gomazatlán.com;

WestJet, www.westjet.com

LOS CABOS CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU ANNOUNCES 2008 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Los Cabos Convention & Visitors Bureau has announced the results of its 2008 elections and committee appointments.

Gonzalo Franyutti De La Parra has been elected President of the Los Cabos Convention & Visitors Bureau for 2008. Franyutti is also the General Manager of Chileno Bay Club.

"Los Cabos has a well-earned reputation for being one of the most desirable destinations in Latin America," said Franyutti. "In my first term as President of the Convention & Visitors Bureau, I look forward to creating growth strategies that provide sophisticated travelers with superior amenities and the first-class hospitality they have come to expect when visiting Los Cabos."

Also elected were Ella Messerli, General Manager of Marquis Los Cabos and former Los Cabos Convention & Visitors Bureau Vice President of Operations, who will serve as the Vice President of Marketing for 2008. Arturo Nasser Farias, General Manager of Villa La Paloma, was elected Vice President of Administration; Miguel Torres Inzunza, General Manager of Dreams Los Cabos Suites Golf Resort & Spa, was elected Vice President of Special Events and Local Activities; and Maria Gregoria Osako Cruz, General Manager of Pueblo Bonito Rose, will be 2008's Vice President of Operations.

The Los Cabos Convention & Visitors Bureau is a membership-based organization comprised of 48 owners and managers of the destination's leading hotels. The organization sponsors and oversees master planning, marketing and promotional events and tourist activities throughout the destination. The Los Cabos Convention & Visitors Board of Directors is elected annually by its members.

Los Cabos, 866-LOS-CABOS, www.visitloscabos.travel

VICTOR GOMEZ NAMED GM OF CASA DORADA LOS CABOS, RESORT & SPA



VICTOR GOMEZ

Victor Gomez has been named General Manager of Casa Dorada Los Cabos, Resort & Spa, the newest luxury resort in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. In his position, Gomez will be responsible for

all the day to day operations of the 186-room resort. With more than 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Gomez will apply his diverse background in project management, process improvement and total quality, rooms management, food and beverage, and guest relations to his role at Casa Dorada.

Prior to joining Casa Dorada, Gomez was Regional Director of Six Sigma, Black Belt, Resorts Mexico for Starwood Hotels & Resorts, where he applied a project management methodology to measurably improve overall guest satisfaction at the resorts in Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta, Cancun, Costa Alegre and the Yucatan Peninsula. Other resort experience includes positions with The Westin Resort & Spa in Puerto Vallarta, Hotel Las Brisas in Acapulco and the Sheraton Huatulco Resort in Huatulco, Mexico.

A Mexico City native, Gomez attended Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City before launching his career in the hospitality industry.

Casa Dorada Los Cabos, Resort & Spa,
victor.gomez@casadorada.com,
www.casadoradaloscabos.com

PALACE RESORTS VOTED "BEST RESORT/HOTEL CHAIN – MEXICO"

Palace Resorts, the company that set the standard in five-star, all-inclusive resort accommodations, has received recent honors from the travel agent community, courtesy of *Travel Weekly Magazine* in the "Fifth Annual Readers' Choice Awards." As a result of a recent poll, readers of the publication voted Palace Resorts the "Best

Resort/Hotel Chain – Mexico."

"This is a great honor to be recognized by such a distinguished pool of industry professionals," said Maira Briceno, Director of Marketing for Palace Resorts. "This award is significant because travel agents play a critical role in the counseling and selling of our product. Through this honor, they have recognized our commitment to excellence, which is a huge compliment."

The Readers' Choice Award highlights the "best of the best of the travel industry," as chosen by the readers of *Travel Weekly*. These distinctive and widely recognized awards are presented annually to the industry's suppliers who "led the way in product and service during the past year."

"This is the industry insiders' award," said Arnie Weissmann, Vice President and Editor in Chief. "*Travel Weekly's* readership understands what it takes to 'wow' a traveler. Not only are the travel professionals who vote avid travelers themselves, but they also hear first-hand the unvarnished truth – the compliments and complaints – from thousands of American consumers.

To be voted a winner in any category is confirmation that you've won the hearts of American travel agents and their customers."

Palace Resorts, 800-635-1836,
www.palaceresorts.com

ESPERANZA UNVEILS RENOVATED HOTEL

Esperanza, Auberge Resorts' award-winning property in Cabo San Lucas, has unveiled new guestrooms and suites, following a five-month renovation. Showcasing a new, sophisticated look, the hotel features new interiors, enhanced suites and an expanded spa.

"Esperanza is dedicated to offering the best of Baja and our fresh new look showcases that and more," said Severino Gomez, Regional Vice President of Auberge Resorts and General Manager of Esperanza. "New and returning guests will see that no detail has been overlooked."

Sought after by celebrities, entertainment industry executives and avid travelers for its extraordinary service and privacy, the 57-room resort now offers 10 new luxury suites. The new one-bedroom penthouse,

accessed by private elevator, features a spacious living room and two outdoor terraces, complete with private hot tub and oversized chaise for discreet sunbathing. Amenities include Pratesi Italian linens, a spacious bathroom with an oversized soaking tub and a state-of-the-art entertainment system with large plasma televisions. A collection of paintings, sculptures, and pottery from the country's leading artists are showcased throughout the suite. All suites include 24-hour butler service.

Every casita has spacious bathrooms, pocket doors that transform interiors into dramatic indoor-outdoor living space; flat-screen televisions, complimentary high-speed wireless internet access, deep soaking tubs and showers built for two, Italian linens; and iPod docking stations. Esperanza also creates signature in-room bath amenities made with natural essential oils, organic vegetable oils and pure fruit ingredients.

Recently named *Travel + Leisure's* #1 Spa in Latin America, The Spa at Esperanza, renowned for its coastal desert environment and treatments prepared with indigenous botanicals, has doubled in size. The expansion includes seven new treatment rooms including a private couples suite. An expanded treatment menu includes Esperanza's signature Baja Lime-based treatments and a new Passion de la Noche program that allows couples to relax and reconnect in the spa after hours.

Esperanza, 866-311-2226,
www.esperanzaresort.com

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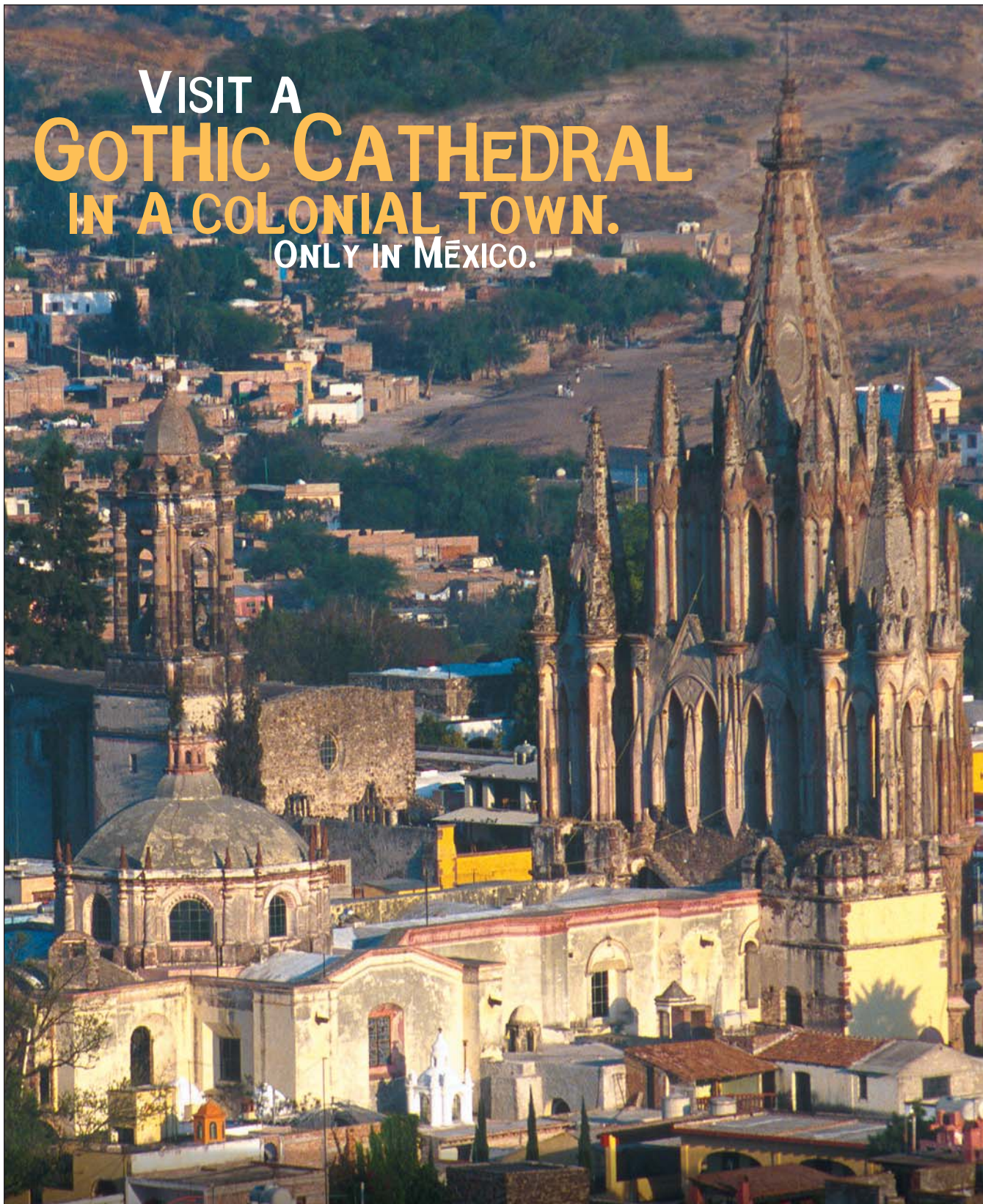
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