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Something New Under the Bahamian Sun

Wedding Aisles Symposium



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Wedding Aisles Symposium: Something New Under the Bahamian Sun

700 islands play host for a host of places to walk, or swim, down the wedding "isle".

D. O. CHRISTIAN RIEGER IV

In the fall of 2006 The Bahamas was the first Caribbean nation to establish the office of Director of Romance. The position is held by Freda Madrisotti who previously had a career in arranging signature weddings.

She is constantly staying current with romance-specific hotel packages throughout The Bahamas, and with vendors offering activities fit for two. Her work ranges from supporting the smaller hotels throughout the islands to supporting wedding programs that provide couples a variety of exclusive packages incorporating non-traditional venues and services. Whether guests are planning proposals, saying "I do," or commemorating years of wedded bliss, Madrisotti is there to ensure that their special moments are unforgettably good.

All this contributes to an assignment to establish The Bahamas as the wedding destination in the Caribbean. In that capacity, she created the first Wedding Aisles Symposium that was held at the Sandals Royal Bahamian Resort in Nassau from May 20th to May 23rd.

One hundred and three travel agents from the United States, Canada and England attended the event which had a two-fold purpose. One was to visit a variety of resort properties that have romantic and unique venues for tying the knot. The other was to listen to several speakers dealing with how travel agents can build additional business by catering to the lucrative wedding market.

The symposium was held simultaneously with the 11th annual Bahamas International Travel Partners Conference (ITPC), the largest yet, with which some of the social functions were combined.

Critical Role

The Honorable Neko C. Grant, the new Minister Tourism & Aviation, gave the initial speech at the opening ceremonies. In it he complemented the attendees when he said,

"The continuous success of the ITPC has underlined for us the wisdom in catering to the niche markets that you represent, and I am happy to report that one of this year's most exciting spin offs from this forum is our first ever Weddings and Honeymoons Symposium. And this ladies and gentlemen is just one of many special interest initiatives planned in the short to medium term in our efforts not only to meet, but to also anticipate your needs."

Tommy Thompson, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Tourism The Bahamas has been through four Bahamian administrations, also spoke to the combined audience. He says that one of the important advantages of getting married in The Bahamas is the choice of 700 island to get married on. They are three distinct markets, he says, and consequently



Speakers at the Weddings Aisles Symposium at Sandals Royal Bahamian Resort. Left to right: Venice Walkine - Director General, Ministry of Tourism; Rebecca Grinnals - Engaging Concepts; Jacqueline Johnson, Conde Nast Bridal Media; Mr. Shane Miller Registrar General, Bahamas; Vinicia Strachan Ministry of Tourism Regional Manager in Canada; Paulette A. Davis - President, Bahamas Bridal Association.

are marketed in three different groups, Nassau & Paradise Island, Grand Bahama and the Out Islands.

For instance, he says, "Couples can take a helicopter to one of the 670 unpopulated islands and get married in very quiet, wind-swept seclusion, have a reception with family and close friends, then honeymoon at the Ritz Carlton on Abaco, as an example. We want to encourage vacationers to visit these very unique out islands of ours."

Island Hopping

One way to do this was to introduce a variety of wedding venues to the symposium participants with a selection of one of six fam trips to different parts of the islands. They departed between 6:00 and 7:00 AM from newly-opened The Cove Atlantis all-suite hotel on Paradise Island.

(Rack rates in this 23 story, 600 suite resort start at \$745, accompanied by top-flight service and food. This is one of those properties that actually offers up the luxury it promises.

All its units overlook the ocean and were designed by acclaimed interior architects Jeffrey Beers and David Rockwell. The main restaurant, Mosaic does not compromise with the word "gourmet." This also applies to Bobby Flay's famed Mesa Grill, the first outside the United States.

There are two pools: one family and one adult. The adult pool is over a knoll so there is no view between the two. This is four feet deep from stem to stern, because adults spend most of the time in the water standing and socializing, not swimming and lolly-gagging.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

WEDDING AISLES FROM PAGE 3

It is bordered by 20 cabanas, each with a pool and ocean view, privacy shutters and a kitchenette. Each comes with a butler. And there is outdoor gaming right at the pool's edge. No sense in getting out of a bathing suit to try your luck.

Weddings are extravagant affairs at the Atlantis and they make no two ways about it that they are intended to be remembered for a lifetime.

The Treasured Wedding package at \$8000 includes all, and more, of the following: one round trip VIP limousine airport transfer, VIP check-in for bridal couple, Atlantis welcome amenity upon arrival, one round-trip limousine to the registrar general office to arrange for legal documents, minister/marriage official arranged, elegantly decorated arch for ceremony site, celebration ritual for the bride at Mandara Spa at Atlantis, one hour photography throughout the ceremony, an elegant two tier wedding cake and one bottle of Moët Chandon champagne, and a day-after breakfast in bed.)

**The Cove Atlantis, 800-722-2449 Ext. 2188,
Sally.Kariuki@kerzner.com, www.atlantis.com**

The Site Inspections

The excursion to Freeport and the West End of Grand Bahama Island included breakfast and brief overview of the island. Agents visited the Wyndham Club Viva Resort, the Westin Our Lucaya Resort Lanai Suites "On the Lawn," and the Pelican Bay Resort, Old Bahama Bay, West End.

Pelican Bay Resort specializes in destination weddings of casual, island elegance for up to 80 guests. It has reasonable room rates which start at \$129 in the off-season and \$349 for suites in high season. Suite guests wake up to a basket of fresh-baked, warm croissants at their door every morning, and each suite is equipped with an espresso machine.

The resort staff is so sure of their resort, they invite couples to spend a night or two with them to see for themselves what they will get. The resort will credit up to two nights room and tax of the final wedding bill for that stay. Their high-end package, Intimate Beach Bliss Wedding, is \$3900.

**Pelican Bay Resort, 800-852-3702,
doug.luciani@dickinsonassoc.com,
www.pelicanbayhotel.com**

The trip on Exuma started with a breakfast wedding reception and a site inspection of Grand Isles Villas Honeymoon Suites, Four Seasons Resort Honeymoon Suites and February Point Resort Honeymoon Suites.

The group had lunch at Stocking Island which is a small barrier island about a mile off shore from Exuma. Its position helps keep the water calm for the shores of Exuma.

The Abaco and Treasure Cay trip began with a private garden-style breakfast by Marisa's Catering. This group inspected the Bahama Beach Club Honeymoon Suites and Treasure Cay Beach Hotel. They transferred by ferry to the three-mile long Green Turtle Cay for sightseeing of New Plymouth and a visit to the Bluff House and the Green Turtle Club where they had lunch.



COURTESY OF PELICAN BAY AT LUCAYA

Tying the knot at Pelican Bay at Lucaya, Grand Bahama, awarded the coveted "Small Treasures of the Bahamas" designation by the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism.

The Green Turtle Club has a casual elegance which characterizes many of the small resorts in the Out Islands of the Bahamas. The resort sits on a picturesque harbor surrounded by spectacular beaches. And the access by water only, keeps this part of the world very quiet.

The Green Turtle Club has been the host for many memorable weddings over the last 35 years. Whether on a beach at sunset or by the scenic harborside, there are a multitude of locations both on the property or the island for the tropical wedding of a couple's dreams.

**The Green Turtle Club, info@greenturtleclub.com,
www.greenturtleclub.com/pages/home.html**

Nassau/New Providence

The other three groups inspected resorts in Nassau/New Providence. These included Sunrise Beach Club & Villas, Comfort Suites, The One & Only, and The Cloisters — all on Paradise Island. They also inspected Orange Hill Beach Inn, A Stones Throw Away, and Compass Point Resort, all on West Bay Street. They also visited British Colonial Hilton in downtown Nassau, along with the Graycliff Hotel & Restaurant and the Mountbatten House, both on West Hill Street. Luncheons were at Luciano's Restaurant at East Bay Street and Graycliff.

Whether a couple's style is traditional or trend-setting, casual or formal, Graycliff sets the tone in its renovated 260 year-old, British Colonial style, grand estate house. It was built in the 1700s by privateer John Howard Graysmith. In 1844 it became Nassau's first inn. In the 1940s, it was the home of the Duke of Windsor. What is good enough for the a former King Of England has got to be good enough for the rest of us.

Its rooms are filled with traditional Caribbean and English antiques and art treasures that create a genuine ambience of another era. Their Ultimate Bahamas Wedding lets the wedding couple customize every aspect of their wedding, reception and honeymoon to reflect their dreams, desires and vision.

Want the best in food and drink? Its restaurant was the first 5-star in the Caribbean and they have the third largest private

wine cellar in the world — in excess of 250,000 bottles. Hard to equal, harder to beat. There is a choice of garden locations hidden away from the world for intimate “I dos” to large receptions in gardens that are a feast to the eyes and meals that are a feast to the pallet.

Graycliff Hotel & Restaurant, 800-476-0446, deanne@graycliff.com, www.graycliff.com

Sandra Kemp

One of the groups was escorted and toured by Sandra Kemp, a member and the founder of the Bahamas Bridal Association. She believes one of the strong points of The Bahamas wedding market is its uniqueness in offering a variety of quiet venues in the Out-Islands.

One of the different ways to get married, she says, in these quiet, remote places is a SCUBA wedding. Underwater nuptials are performed by Matthew Sweeting who goes by the business name of Island Preacha. The celebrants read from a slate as he points to the words, or they can take their vows using a wireless intercom. Family members and friends can participate under water, or listen via a squawk box on the deck of a dive boat.

Half day trips with marriage and total of six passengers is \$720. Charters include tanks, weights, weightbelts. Rental diving equipment is available at the dive shop. Underwater and topside video and photography sessions start at \$350 for

half day and range to \$600 for all day.

Island Preach, islandpreacha@gmail.com, islandpreacha.com/scuba_wedding_packages.html

Symposium at Sandals Royal Bahamian

The agents listened to six speakers at Sandals Royal Bahamian Resort in Nassau. One of the featured speakers was Jacqueline Johnson of Conde Nast Bridal Media. This woman is full of valuable information about brides and weddings. She talked about the “love-jury” market, that market in which people want luxury romance. And why not?

She suggests that more agents should get into the wedding business. One of the main reasons is wedding couples tend to know others about to get married. Handle one successfully, and the recommendations by word of mouth come in.

Here is a woman that fesses up to the fact that people get married more than once these days. Get the first marriage, and you may very well have the others down the road. And then there are the re-commitments for those who stay with it. Marriage-moons, and even conception-moons represent an expanding business opportunity.

As most of us know, when getting married we need all the help we can get to keep from pulling out our hair, and this is where the travel agent can come in. Help make the marriage day stress-free.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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WEDDING AISLES FROM PAGE 5

Although a couple may think they can easily book a wedding directly through a resort's website, they find out there is more to the wedding than that. What about booking flights for themselves, family and friends? How do they arrange transportation at the destination?

This is where the wedding consultants come in. They were represented by the last speaker, Paulette A. Davis, President of the Bahamas Bridal Association. The importance of a wedding consultants cannot be underestimated, she says. They are needed to help the couple find an ideal wedding spot that may be more to their dreams than one at a resort. If so, transportation needs to be arranged, getting all the musicians, bakers and caterers and helping the couple go through the process of getting appropriate legal documents from the government. They know all the venues and all legal short cuts.

One of the special places for a wedding is at Dolphin Encounters Ltd. in which a couple gets married in the water with a pair of dolphins. Dolphin Encounters provides wedding opportunities that are among the most unique in the Caribbean. Each wedding package can be customized to fit individual needs.

The highlight of the wedding is the presentation of the rings by a dolphin, which is perhaps the epitome of the wedding memories. Dolphin Encounters ensure that memories are captured by providing the couple with a photo album and a video of the wedding. Up to a maximum of eight additional persons can be included in the water for the wedding ceremony along with the bride and the groom. Fun for the dolphins, fun for the people.

**Dolphin Encounters Ltd., 877- 571-7862,
www.dolphinencounters.com**

Wedding Luncheon

Sandals and Beaches resorts have a special partnership with celebrity wedding-planner Preston Bailey and Sylvia Weinstock, known as the "Leonardo da Vinci of Cakes." Individually, they have catered for such celebrities as Donald/Melania Trump, Michael Douglas/Catherine Zeta Jones, Matt Lauer, Donna Karan Mariah Carey, Senator Hilary Clinton, Ben Stiller, Whitney Houston, Robert DeNiro, Donald Trump, Oprah Winfrey.

Now he has designed weddings for the rest of us at Sandals and Beaches Caribbean resorts, which included Sylvia Weinstock designed cakes. Both spoke at the symposium luncheon which was set up like a wedding dinner.

Preston said, "Destination weddings are becoming more and more popular with couples looking to find a unique location for their event. In the past decade, the wedding industry has seen a 200% growth in destination weddings, with the Caribbean being the leading destination. I am thrilled to work with Sandals, the leader in this exciting category, to expand their signature program and introduce these elements for fantasy weddings available only at Sandals that their guests will remember for a lifetime."



COURTESY OF STUART COVE'S DIVING

Couples can get married in The Bahamas under water with "Island Preach" Matthew Sweeting.

There are four packages in his wedding selection — The Floral Elegance Collection (\$1,700), The Water Lily Collection (\$2,600), The Seascape Collection (\$3,600) and The Crystal Collection (\$5,000). All include beautifully designed wedding settings and décor such as fresh contemporary floral screens or a tree filled with orchids, crystals and candlelight. Specialty wedding cakes designed by cake diva Sylvia Weinstock complement the exceptional designs and the beautiful surroundings.

Sandals Resorts developed the WeddingMoons® concept over a decade ago, which is the union of the wedding and honeymoon in one Sandals location.

**Sandals Resorts, 800-Bahamas,
www.sandals.com/general/wedding-pb.cfm**

Attendees

Two of the attendees were Hilary Olney, President of Trips Ahoy, Portage, MI and Leslie Kepplinger, also of Trips Ahoy.

All the Bahamas weddings they have done have been at an all-inclusive resort. "So this has been a fun and good learning experience for us," said Hilary.. She says, "If a wedding is a first trip out of the country for a couple, it can get them to take more, thus expanding agent bookings." In one wedding she booked, guests wanted to stay longer at the wedding resort, and another wedding couple returned a year later

"The all-inclusives do a wonderful job," says Leslie, "but having other options open, with experts to run it all island-side, is a fantastic thing. I was very impressed with the professionals we met from the Bahamas Bridal Association. and would feel most comfortable handing my brides over to them." "They both took the tour of Nassau, but Leslie said she prefers the nothing-ness that the out-islands offer." "The Wedding Aisles Symposium has opened my eyes to more wedding possibilities in The Bahamas." Its greatest asset in the very lucrative and competitive wedding market, may very well be its multitude of quite, out-islands where couples can get away from people who wanna get away from it all.

Information on further symposiums:

**The Island of the Bahamas,
ethompson@bahamas.com, www.bahamas.com**

“EXPLORE BEYOND THE SHORE” WITH NEW SUMMER TRAVEL PACKAGES TO PUERTO RICO



Just in time for the height of summer travel season, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC) is helping visitors to “Explore Beyond the Shore” in Puerto Rico and has launched new summer packages to help visitors see more of the Island of Enchantment.

“Whether you are seeking a romantic escape, family time, or reunite with friends, Puerto Rico is the destination to connect to the people you care for most,” said

Terestella Gonzalez-Denton, Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company.

See a new side of Puerto Rico and stay at one of the Island’s charming Paradores, or Country Inns. Tucked away from San Juan’s hustle and bustle, the Paradores give visitors the chance to discover Puerto Rico’s inner beauty. Some of the island’s most picturesque Paradores are located in the Porta del Sol (west), Porta Caribe (South) and in the mountainous Central region, home to many of the island’s great eco-adventure activities.

Through the end of summer, PRTC is offering a Paradores Package starting at \$319 per couple that includes two-nights/three-days; room and tax; breakfast and dinner; all gratuities; discount on compact rental car from Hertz; and welcome drinks.

While traveling through the Paradores and experiencing the true roots of the Puerto Rican people it is best to also experience the local cuisine. Mesones Gastronomicos across Puerto Rico prepare

genuine Puerto Rican fare in the style of their respective region and offer visitors a taste of the real Puerto Rico. Many of the mesones gastronomicos are offering great specials on their meals.

In addition to the Paradores visitors to Puerto Rico can enjoy a plethora of exciting packages perfectly suited to every taste and price range. Lovers everywhere will have the chance to revel in the rooms at a number of romantic hotels while receiving spa treatments, taking moonlit walks on the beach, and enjoying romantic sunset dinners. Families can also take advantage of a number of package deals available in Puerto Rico. Those visiting will be able to enjoy such perks as free nights of babysitting, the ability to customize their own itinerary, and of course the beaches of Puerto Rico.

The Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC), 800-866-7827, www.gotopuertorico.com, www.gotoparadores.com; Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association, www.puertoricoisfun.com

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CHTIC HONORS PETER DOLARA WITH LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Left to right, Peter J. Odle, CHA President; Peter Dolara, Senior Vice President, American Airlines Miami, the Caribbean and Latin America and CHA Director General and CEO, Alec Sanguinetti.

The organizers and delegates of the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Investment Conference held in Curaçao honored American Airline's Senior Vice President – Miami, Caribbean and Latin America, Mr. Peter Dolara, with the 2007 Lifetime Achievement Award. The conference, hosted by the Curaçao Hospitality & Tourism Association alongside the Curaçao Tourist Board, was presented by the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA), in conjunction with the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), and Burba Hotel Network (BHN). The Lifetime Achievement Award was established in 2004 to honor the outstanding contribution of individuals to the development of Caribbean tourism. "Peter's relationship with the Caribbean began in 1960; under his guidance American Airlines has developed and maintained the most comprehensive flight schedule between North America and the Caribbean. American Airlines now serves 34 Caribbean destinations with 151 daily flights - and continues to build on its current schedule," said Barbadian hotelier and President of CHA, Peter J. Odle.

As Senior Vice President of the Miami, Caribbean and Latin American region for American Airlines, Peter Dolara oversees all aspects of American's operations in the Caribbean and Latin American, including operations, sales, sales activities, customer service, cargo sales and services, route-selection and scheduling activities. Upon accepting the award, Mr. Dolara announced a new service route between Antigua and Tortola, British Virgin Islands,

starting June 1, 2007, as well as the inauguration of a nonstop service between New York's JFK and St. Kitts and St. Lucia, beginning November 2007. "We will continue to be bullish on the Caribbean, having proposed to expand service from Santo Domingo to Samaná (Dominican Republic) and Aruba."

Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA),
www.caribbeanhotelassociation.com

WEDDING PACKAGES & ROOM DISCOUNTS AT THE ALEXANDRA

The Alexandra in the Turks and Caicos Islands is offering Dream Wedding packages which make planning the special day simple, easy and exciting. Choices include "Barefoot on the Beach," "Wedding in Paradise," or a fully-customized ceremony and reception. The resort's wedding packages provide, at minimum, a choice of beach, garden or gazebo setting, personalized wedding coordination, a minister or justice of the peace, documentation processing fee, an official wedding certificate, mailing of documents, set up and decoration of a registration table, the bride's bouquet and groom's boutonniere, and a champagne toast or wedding cake.

Among the extra features offered by The Alexandra are: photography and videography, a customized wedding cake, upgraded and additional bouquets and flowers, wedding arches, chuppas and conch shell-lined aisles and tiki torches, hors d'oeuvres and fully catered dinner receptions, live music or a DJ, hairstyling and make up. Additional charges will apply to add these extra features.

Extra special features can also include drop off on a deserted beach, a catamaran rehearsal dinner, beachfront one-bedroom suite for the honeymoon or a pre- or post-wedding cruise.

A popular wedding package such as "Barefoot on the Beach" is a perfect intimate ceremony for the wedding couple and their two witnesses and starts at \$995. An equally popular package is the "Wedding in Paradise" which accommodates up to eight people and starts at \$1,195. In addition, wedding parties booking five rooms or more at the resort receive a discount of up to 25 percent on luxury and deluxe accommodations, with rates for a three-night minimum stay ranging from \$405 to \$2,810 depending on season and type of accommodation. For superior accommodations, guests stand to receive a 10 percent discount.

The Alexandra, 800-284-0699, www.AlexandraResort.com

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US AIRWAYS VACATIONS	800-455-0123	407-857-8533	Fax: 407-857-9764

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PETER HILARY MODESTE NAMED NEW DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AT JOLLY BEACH RESORT



PETER H. MODESTE

Peter Hilary Modeste has been appointed Director of Marketing at Jolly Beach Resort, Antigua. A veteran of the tourism industry, Mr. Modeste has held top positions in the public and

private sectors of the tourism business in St. Lucia. After serving as Executive Vice President of the St. Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association, he went on to take up responsibilities as the country's Director of Tourism, a post that he held for nearly a decade. During his tenure as Director of Tourism of the St. Lucia Tourist Board, the nation's tourism plant developed and successfully implemented marketing strategies bringing in new business and attracting fresh airlift to the island.

Reporting directly to John V. Arrindell, Jolly Beach Resort's Managing Director, Modeste is primarily responsible for the development and execution of targeted sales and marketing strategies for the resort. "For us, at Jolly Beach, the appointment of Hilary Modeste to this newly created post, is an important step in the on-going process of evaluating and improving our total marketing management." says Arrindell. Jolly Beach Resort, 866-905-6559, www.jollybeachresort.com

MAXIM BUNGALOWS TO LAUNCH IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Elliott, a leader in resort hospitality and real estate in the Dominican Republic, has announced an exclusive partnership with Dennis Publishing, the parent company of the Maxim Lifestyle brand, to launch 'Maxim Bungalows' in two locations in the Dominican Republic. The two locations are Cofresi Beach on the country's north coast in the Puerto Plata region and Juan Dolio on the south coast, close to the capital city Santo Domingo.

Opening in October 2007, Maxim Bungalows at Cofresi Beach will feature 108 studio, one and two bedroom luxury bungalow accommodations. Guests staying at Maxim Bungalows will enjoy unparalleled luxury service. Each guest will be greeted at the airport and driven to the resort by a luxury SUV and given VIP access on and off property at all the top restaurants, bars and golf courses.

Each bungalow will be appointed with five star amenities geared to sophisticated travelers including resort-wide WI-FI, iHome audio capabilities, plasma screen TVs, and superior personal care products. Maxim Bungalow guests will also be able to enjoy preferential access to The Spa and fitness center that offers a range of premier quality products and services.

The 54 foot Maxim yacht, 'Independence,' will be available exclusively for Maxim guests to charter for day trips and evening soirees. For surfing and kite boarding enthusiasts, Maxim Bungalows at Cofresi Beach are a short distance from the nearby village of Cabarete. Guests will also enjoy active vacation adventures in the Puerto Plata region with scuba diving, sailing, white water rafting, hiking, golf and other local excursions.

The second location selected for the Maxim Bungalows experience is scheduled to open in early 2008. Located on the south coast of the Dominican Republic the new

beach resort is 25 minutes east of the Santo Domingo Las Americas International Airport. Situated between the city of Santo Domingo and the resort town of La Romana, Maxim Bungalows will cater to people looking for a more urban experience found in places such as South Beach, Florida. The 240 rooms will range from studio bungalows to Grand Presidential suites. Like the Maxim Bungalows at Cofresi Beach, each bungalow will be appointed with luxury amenities. The resort features world class dining at three restaurants, a spectacular beachfront and an extensive pool surrounded by cabanas and a lounge.

Maxim Bungalows are minutes away from some of the greatest golf courses in the Caribbean, such as the Gary Player signature Guavaberry Golf Course and La Romana, where guests can enjoy the famous Teeth of the Dog and Dye Fore in the exclusive community of Casa de Campo. Guests can also spend time in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic.

"With the Dominican Republic becoming the newest hot spot in the Caribbean, it was finally time to build an ultra luxury resort for the new generation of traveler." said Derek Elliott, President and Chief Executive Officer of Elliott.

Maxim Bungalows, reservations@maximbungalows.com, www.maximbungalows.com



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BOLONGO BAY BEACH RESORT IN ST. THOMAS OFFERS FIFTH NIGHT FREE

Guests can save this summer at Bolongo Bay Beach Resort in St. Thomas through their value-added Fifth Night Free promotion valid on new bookings made now through August 15, 2007 for travel August 1 – October 31, 2007.

The Fifth Night Free promotion is available to those who purchase Bolongo's European Plan (EP) for a minimum of four nights in an ocean view room (a savings up to \$214 per room).

To take advantage of the Fifth Night Free offer, reservations must be made through Bolongo's on-island reservations department. This promotion is not combinable with any other offer.

Bolongo's EP vacation includes accommodations in an ocean view room; a "discover scuba diving" in-pool lesson; complimentary use of non-motorized watersports (snorkel gear, paddle boats, sunfish sailboats, windsurfing equipment, kayaks and more); and use of volleyball and tennis courts, plus equipment.

Nightly rates for Bolongo's EP option are \$214 for an ocean view room, valid through August 31, 2007 and \$195 per room valid September 1 – October 31, 2007.

Rates quoted are per room, per night, based on double occupancy and do not include 15 percent tax and service charges and \$2 per day energy surcharges.

Bolongo features 65 beach front rooms curved around crescent-shaped, palm-lined Bolongo Bay. Each room has a private balcony as well as a mini-refrigerator, coffeemaker, ceiling fan, air-conditioning, color cable television, hair dryer, radio alarm clock, iron

and ironing board, safe and telephone.

Bolongo now offers new WIFI access hotspots around its pool and lounge areas, all of which can be accessed via a guest's wireless laptop. For those who don't want to travel with their personal computer, guests can purchase phone cards in Bolongo's gift shop to be used in conjunction with the resort's Internet kiosk located in the lounge.

**Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, 800-524-4746,
reservations@bolongobay.com, www.bolongobay.com**

SUMMER SPECIALS IN GRENADA

Known as the "Spice Island of the Caribbean," Grenada boasts some of the Caribbean's most beautiful beaches, delectable cuisine and spices, a tropical rainforest, and a wide range of fun-filled activities such as world-class diving, snorkeling, hiking, fishing and sailing.

With the summer fast approaching, several of the finest resorts throughout the island are offering a variety of summer specials.

Bel Air Plantation in St. David's Harbour located on 18 acres of tropical vegetation and gardens, is offering two specials that run from June 1 until September 30. If travelers book a seven-night stay, they will only pay for six. If they book a 14-night stay, they only pay for 12. Both specials come with a complimentary breakfast.

Bel Air Plantation, 473-444-6305, www.belairplantation.com

Known for its tropical setting and world-class fine dining, **Blue Horizons Garden Resort** is offering a value-added seventh night free promotion on all bookings in the deluxe suite room category for the months of June, September, and October 2007.

The seventh night free offer is valid on new bookings only and is not retroactive to existing reservations. Rates for a deluxe suite start at \$155 per room, per night, double, May 1 – December 15, 2007.

**Blue Horizons Garden Resort, 473-444-4316,
www.grenadabluehorizons.com**

Located at the end of Grand Anse Beach, **Flamboyant Hotel and Villas** is offering 10 percent off all stays until December 15, 2007 with the seventh night free.

**Flamboyant Hotel and Villas, 473-444-4247,
www.flamboyant.com**

The Grenadian, a 212-room resort with views of the Caribbean, is offering 35 percent off for a minimum three-night stay. Visitors can book now until December 22, 2007.

The Grenadian, 473-444-3333

Laluna Resort, an exclusive, Italian-owned, romantic hideaway in Morne Rogue, is offering a complimentary candlelit dinner for two on the beach for any guests staying a minimum of seven nights. They are also offering a "Stay Seven Nights and Only Pay for Six," package and a "Stay 14 Nights and Only Pay for 12" package, which includes two complimentary massages on each room's private veranda.

Laluna Resort, 866-4-LALUNA, www.laluna.com
Grenada Board of Tourism, 800-927-9554,
www.grenadagrenadines.com

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FRANKLYN D. RESORT & SPA RECEIVES AWARD FOR 'BEST FAMILIES LATIN AMERICA/CARIBBEAN'

The Franklyn D. Resort & Spa was awarded the 2006 TripAdvisor Traveler's Choice Award for Best Families Latin America/Caribbean. The Resort was selected for the award by travelers from around the world.

"We are thrilled to have received this award, as the reviews and opinions from our guests are tremendously important to us. The Management and Staff at the Resort strive always to pamper and cater to our guests with the warmth and hospitality that Jamaica is known for, and they are humbled to have received such a reward for something that comes naturally to them," states Franklyn D. Rance, the Chairman of FDR Resorts.

The Franklyn D. Resort & Spa is Jamaica's first all-suite, all-inclusive resort for families that allows guests to vacation in a private setting similar to that of an elegant Jamaican home. This all-inclusive holiday features all meals, open bar, wine, live entertainment, tennis, basketball, scuba diving, windsurfing, kayaking, sunfish sailing, games room, interactive pre-teens and teen's activities and a Mini Club for children. Children under six are free while a third adult sharing in a one bedroom suite receives a 30 percent discount. Single parents are accommodated in summer at no extra charge.

There are 77 suites featuring king size bedrooms, living rooms, kitchen, patio or terrace complete with satellite television, refrigerators and computer access.

The most unique aspect of this resort is its Vacation Nanny Concept whereby each family is appointed a trained member of staff who is like the family's assistant, from check-in to check-out. The Vacation Nanny takes care of the orientation, the kids, the room, the tours, the meals and more. From participating with the family in activities, to ensuring that the kids are fed and bathed, she is with the family as much or as little as the parents would like, ensuring that the family has an interactive and fun vacation.

The Franklyn D. Resort & Spa, 888-FDR-KIDS, fdr@fdrholidays.com, www.fdrfamily.com

ALMOND RESORTS ANNOUNCES NEW BRIDAL PROMOTION

Through the International Star Registry, couples who get married at an Almond Resort, either in Barbados or St. Lucia Almond Resorts, will have a star in the firmament named after them to mark the start of their life together. After their wedding at an Almond Resort, newlyweds will receive a deluxe certificate indicating the constellation and the exact location of their special star within it. This offer is open until December 20, 2008.

The bride and groom can choose to celebrate their wedding with family and friends in a garden, on the beach, or on a romantic terrace. And now they can get married at one Almond Resort and honeymoon at another, all for the same package price. They can even island hop on a 30 minute flight between Barbados and St. Lucia (airfare cost is additional).

Customized wedding packages are available at all hotels in the

resort chain: Almond Beach Village, Almond Beach Club & Spa, Almond Morgan Bay, Almond Smugglers Cove and soon, at Almond Casuarina Beach Resort.

As a special bonus, Almond Resorts are now offering wedding arrangements free of cost for couples who book a stay of a week or more. The Wedding In Paradise package (a \$500 value), is available free for couples staying a minimum of seven nights and everything, from the required government fees to the cake and champagne, is included. For 10-night stays, Almond's luxurious Wedding in Heaven package comes free of cost (a \$1,000 value), including a beauty treatment and breakfast in bed.

Honeymooners also get the V.I.P. treatment at Almond Resorts. They can relax and enjoy each other for a week and the royal treatment will be a treasured memory. The Almond Resorts Weddings team is also adept at setting up a romantic event for couples who would like to renew their vows and the special arrangements (a \$500 or more value) are complimentary for couples who stay for a minimum of 10 nights.

The Free Weddings and Honeymoons offers are available at all Almond Resorts until December 20, 2007. These offers may be combined with other special sales, but are not combinable with complimentary stays and award certificates. Couples getting married must ensure that they have proper documentation in order to fulfill the requirements of the country (Barbados or St. Lucia) in which the ceremony is to take place.

Almond Resorts, 800-4ALMOND, www.almondresorts.com



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ANGUILLA TOURIST BOARD PRESENTS ANGUILLA 40 AWARDS; 'SELL ANGUILLA AND WIN' PROMOTION OFFERED TO AGENTS

Anguilla 40 Awards

As part of an ongoing celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the island's secession from St. Kitt's, the Anguilla Tourist Board honored key travel industry partners with the Anguilla 40 Awards.

"The transformation of our island, which began in the late 70's and accelerated during the 80's and 90's, has been nothing short of remarkable," said Anguilla Director of Tourism Amelia Vanterpool-Kubisch. "We enjoy one of the highest standards of living and per-capita incomes in the Caribbean, we have full employment, and most importantly, through it all, we have retained the unique and distinctive character of our island."

The first award of the evening, the Anguilla 40 Travel Agent Award, went to Priscilla Alexander, President and founder of Protravel International. Over the past 23 years, Ms. Alexander has built her company into one of the world's largest retail travel agencies, with 500 agents in over 20 locations and multiple home site offices

across the nation. The Anguilla 40 Tour Operator Award went to Michelle Kassner, President of GOGO Worldwide Vacations. Ms. Kassner leads GOGO's more than 20,000 travel agents at 50 offices across America. "For more than half a century," Ms. Banks said, "GOGO Worldwide Vacations has understood the value Americans place on travel agents to build and deliver extraordinary travel experiences, which, of course, is what Anguilla is all about."

The Anguilla 40 Travel Writer Award was presented to renowned journalist Ian Keown, whose work in the world of high-end travel media is regularly found in leading publications including Conde Nast Traveler, Departures, The New York Times and many others. "Ian's sophisticated eye for the best of the best has legions of devoted readers following his every adventure," Ms. Banks said, "and in many cases, following close on his heels for their own journeys. His brilliant descriptions of our understated chic, endless beaches and luxurious resorts' experiences helped to define for the whole world what the Anguilla experience is all about." The evening's final award honored American Eagle. Now celebrating its 20th year of flights to the island, American Eagle was recognized for its role as one of Anguilla's most valued travel partners. "We truly cannot say enough about what our partnership with American Eagle has meant and continues to mean to our tourism efforts. We look forward to many more years together as we work to bring the whole world to our world," concluded The Honorable Victor F. Banks, Minister of Tourism.

Sell Anguilla and Win

Selling the island of Anguilla has long been a winning proposition for travel agents and now the Anguilla Tourist Board and American Eagle are raising the stakes to celebrate the airline's 20 years of service to the island with a \$30,000 Travel Agent Sweepstakes that will give agents several chances to win cash prizes leading up to a Grand Prize drawing for a week's stay at one of the island's most spectacular villas.

"Sell Anguilla and Win!" provides a



From left to right: Sylvia Delvaille-Jones, president of Villas and Apartments Abroad; Priscilla Alexander, President, Pro Travel and recipient of the Anguilla 40 Travel Agent Award and John Benjamin, Chairman, Anguilla Tourist Board.

chance for agents who book a minimum of eight American Eagle Anguilla trips per month to be eligible for monthly cash drawings of \$2,000. Qualifying agents are then entered into the Grand Prize drawing for a five-day trip to the Bird of Paradise Villa for a party of five, complete with airline tickets and car rental.

"We wanted to work with our friends at American Eagle to properly celebrate this milestone in our partnership," said Marie Walker, Regional Director of the Anguilla Tourist Board. "'Sell Anguilla and Win!' is the perfect way for travel agents to enjoy a true win-win situation by satisfying their clients with a trip to one of the world's premier island escapes and then having the chance to win cash prizes and a dream getaway." Under the rules of the sweepstakes, once they have qualified with the initial eight bookings, travel agents earn another chance with every two additional bookings. "The strategy is simple," Walker said. "The more you book, the better your odds!"

The "Sell Anguilla and Win!" sweepstakes promotion runs until November 20, 2007. All ticketing must be completed by that day at noon, and the Bird of Paradise Villa Grand Prize drawing will take place that evening. The sweepstakes is open to U.S. travel agents (21 years or older). To register or submit entries, sign up online at www.anguillaepals.com/sweepstakes.

Anguilla Tourist Board,
877-4 ANGUILLA,
www.anguilla-vacation.com



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ST. MAARTEN/ST. MARTIN OFFERS FABULOUS SUMMER PACKAGES



This year, couples and families can enjoy an affordable vacation in St. Maarten/St. Martin with a host of "Summer Specials" and packages to suit every visitor's needs.

Located among the coves of Dawn Beach, **Oyster Bay Beach Resort** features 178 suites all with private balconies and views of the ocean, beach, or marina and tropical gardens. Oyster Bay Beach Resort features an oceanfront infinity pool, direct access to Dawn Beach, access to free snorkeling gear to explore the nearby reef, a newly renovated state-of-the-art fitness center, oceanfront meals at the resort's gourmet restaurants and nightly entertainment. Between now and December 19, Oyster Bay Beach Resort is offering a seven-night "Island Hopping" package that includes accommodation, round trip airport transportation, daily American breakfast, day trip to St. Barth's, day trip to Anguilla to swim with dolphins, three island snorkeling trip, sunset cruise, three days car rental, manager's cocktail party, beach towels and chaise lounges. Rates range from \$1,700 - \$2,315.

Oyster Bay Beach Resort, St. Maarten, 866-978-0212, oyster@sintmaarten.net, www.oysterbaybeachresort.com

Princess Heights Resort, located in the Oyster Pond area of St. Maarten, features luxurious one or two bedroom accommodations. With a host of lavish appointments, each room is home large living and dining areas, spacious bedrooms, fully equipped kitchens and bathrooms complete with whirlpool tubs. Guests that book between now and October 15 can enjoy the resort's "Romantic Hideaway" package that includes an oceanview one-bedroom suite, choice of a fresh tropical floral arrangement, a sensuous gift basket with massage oils, scented candles, bubble bath, scented bath salts and incense, or a gourmet gift basket complete with a bottle of French champagne, daily continental breakfast delivered each morning, two half-hour massages in the privacy of the suite, a complementary car rental for entire stay and beach bag upon arrival. All rates are based per person, per night and range from \$225 - \$275.

Princess Heights Resort, 800-441-7227, info@princessheights.com, www.princessheights.com

Captain Oliver's Resort is a bungalow-style resort located on a secluded lagoon that is shared by both the French and the Dutch, and is the only property in the world that is partially situated on French soil as well as over Dutch waters. Captain Oliver's Resort offers classical Caribbean ambience and is home to 50 spacious waterfront suites that are equipped with air conditioning, satellite television, a mini-bar, direct-dial telephone, and a private balcony.

Guests that book between now and December 14 can enjoy the resort's "Discovery Package" that includes ocean view accommodations with king-size bed, daily American buffet style breakfast, round trip airport transportation, the "Captain's Welcome" cocktail, flowers in the room, dinner for two at Captain Oliver's restaurant, a one day cruise to Saint-Barthélemy and one day car rental. All rates are based per couple and range from \$639 - \$1,139, depending on length of stay.

Captain Oliver's Resort, capthotel@wanadoo.fr, www.captainolivers.com

Located in the heart of Orient Bay, **Cap Caraibes Hotel** features 35 fully-equipped suites, complete with either a king size bed or two double beds, and a complete kitchen. The resort also provides direct access to Orient Beach. Guests that book for four nights of longer, between now and December 22, will receive the fifth and seventh nights free. Additionally, children under 12 are free when sharing with adults. Rates range between \$200 - \$290 per person, per night and a three night deposit is required to confirm reservation. Guests receive complimentary champagne in room, beach chairs at La Playa and Waikiki beaches, access to day trips and island activities, watersports, volleyball and tennis courts, children's playground and Le Village, an authentic and picturesque Creole village that features boutiques, restaurants and is located within walking distance of the resort.

Cap Caraibes Hotel, capcaraibes@wanadoo.fr, www.cap-caraibes.com

St. Maarten/St. Martin, www.st-maarten.com, www.st-martin.org

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QUINTANA ROO RECEIVES SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT FROM AAA



Left to right: Javier Aranda, Director of the Riviera Maya Promotion Board; Roberto Carlos Gonzalez, Director of the Grand Costa Maya Promotion Board; Martin Ruiz, Deputy Secretary of Promotion of the State of Quintana Roo; Gabriela Rodriguez, Secretary of Tourism of the State of Quintana Roo; Raul Marrufo, Director of the Cozumel Promotion Board and Arturo Escaip, Director of the Cancun CVB.

Governor Felix Gonzalez received a special acknowledgment granted by the American Automobile Association (AAA) to the State of Quintana Roo, for being the tourist destination region that gathers the largest percentage of hotels that have been awarded with four and five diamonds, the highest recognition that AAA offers to excellent quality hotels and restaurants.

During the event, held at Le Meridien Hotel in Cancun, the Quintana Roo State Governor, accompanied by Francisco Alor, Cancun City Mayor, Gabriela Rodriguez, State Tourism Secretary and the Presidents of the Hotel Associations of Cancun, Cozumel, Riviera Maya and the Grand Costa Maya, listened while Mr. Tony Perrone, AAA representative for Mexico, emphasized the importance of this distinction, stating that out of the total of hotels and restaurants rated in Quintana Roo for 2007, 20 percent reached the standards that deserved the four and five diamond awards. "This is quite uncommon", Mr. Perrone said, "Usually the percentage is not above three percent of all rated establishments." Tony Perrone also said that for the over 50 million members of the AAA, Cancun is the sixth most popular destination.

The document presented by AAA, states that Quintana Roo can proudly boast of being one of the most upscale and popular tourist destinations in North America and that it is clear that the Mexican Caribbean will continue to be the leader in quality, satisfaction and exceptional service in the hospitality and tourism industry for 2007 and beyond. Upon receiving this honorary award on behalf of the people of Quintana Roo, Governor Felix Gonzalez said that he is certain that in the next few years, the Mexican Caribbean tourist destinations will reach a higher percentage of premier quality hotels and restaurants. "The work of our people, those who are be-

hind every hotel room and restaurant table, those who make sure the tourist receives the best service, makes it possible for the Government on one side, and the private investors on the other, to come together forming a great team that provides visitors with the best possible tourist experience." he said.

Caribe Mexicano, www.caribemex.com;
Mexico Tourism Board, www.visitmexico.com

ÉLAN RESORT & SPA CANCUN OFFERS BONUS COMMISSION TO AGENTS

The all-inclusive Élan Resort & Spa in Cancun recently opened and is offering agents a special bonus commission of \$50 per room per night for bookings between now and November 1.

Designed in traditional Mexican colonial style, Élan Resort & Spa – Cancun is an intimate and private enclave. Within its monumental gates and whitewashed walls are 95 rooms and 51 one-, two- and three-bedroom villa suites, seven restaurants serving Mexican, Mediterranean, Asian and American cuisine, three bars, two private beach areas, two swimming pools, two tennis courts, a fitness center, steam rooms, saunas, a Temazcal (an authentic Mayan sauna) and a Cyber Cafe. The Elements Spa showcases the resort's signature Mayan and Ayurvedic treatments. Unlimited classes in yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi are offered and sail boats, windsurfers, kayaks and canoes are provided.

"After spending \$15 million to renovate and refurbish, we opened in mid season and now we want to get the word out," said Esther Cohen of Smarts Inc, which handles the sales and marketing for Élan Resorts & Spas. "Travel agents are very important to us and we want them to share in our grand opening celebration."

When guests stay at the all-inclusive Élan, all expenses are covered: all meals and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, roundtrip airport transfers, nightly entertainment, use of recreational facilities, water sports equipment, the fitness center and the sauna and steam rooms, tennis courts and equipment, beach and pool lounges and towels, exercise classes and a half-hour "Élan massage," and all hotel taxes and service charges.

Through December 20, the rate for a tower room with garden view is \$250 per night and for the tower room with water view, \$300. A one-bedroom villa unit on the garden side is \$400 and on the water side, is \$450 per night. A two-bedroom villa unit accommodating up to four persons ranges from \$650 to \$700 and a three-bedroom villa unit accommodating up to six persons is \$850 to \$1,000. Children 14 and over are welcomed as adults in appropriate suites when sharing with adults. The special bonus commission of \$50 per room per night is not combinable with other promotions and travel must end by November 1.

Élan Resort & Spa, 888-400-ELAN (3526), www.elanresort.com

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KIDS STAY FREE WITH PALACE RESORTS' SUMMER KIDS' SPECIAL

This year, families can take a Mexican vacation and visit fun and exotic Palace Resort's locations in Cancun, Cozumel, the Riviera Maya, or Nuevo Vallarta, located on Mexico's Pacific coastline. There has never been a better time for an affordable family escape, as Palace Resorts offers their Summer Kids' Special. Valid from June 1 through August 31, 2007, the Palace Resorts' Summer Kids' Promotion welcomes children ages 12 and under to eat, play, and stay for free when sharing a room with an adult.

This offer is good for stays at the Moon Palace Golf & Spa Resort, Cancun Palace, Xpu-Ha Palace, Playacar Palace, Cozumel Palace and Vallarta Palace under the all-inclusive program.

This program includes accommodations, all meals and snacks, beverages, taxes, gratuities, non-motorized water sports, and daily entertainment. Rates are \$150 - \$191 per person, per night based on double occupancy.

Each Palace Resort offers an oceanfront location, swimming

pools, delicious restaurants, tours to area attractions, and a wealth of unique activities that the whole family can enjoy. Additionally, through the Palace Passport Program, families will also receive a selection of scheduled tours to some of Mexico's most famous attractions.

"Palace Resorts is the perfect place for the active family; there is something here for everyone," said Maira Briceno, Director of Marketing for Palace Resorts. "We encourage

families to take advantage of all the activities and amenities that we have to offer and promise that they'll have a vacation to remember."

When it's time for some alone time, parents can spend the afternoon being pampered at each resort's luxury spa, following a relaxing day at the pool. The kids can enjoy one of the Palace Resorts' "Kids Clubs" that includes special, kids-only activities such as sports, board games, contests, crafts, movies, and video games.

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

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