

Costa Rica's EXPOTUR 2008

Forwardly Focused – Firmly Sustainable – Forever Green

HELEN KITTI SMITH

Costa Rica's intimate capital city of San José extended a warm abrazo (hug) to EXPOTUR 2008, the country's annual - and Central America's largest - professional travel-trade show in mid-



TOURISM MINISTER
CARLOS BENAVIDES

May. ACOPROT, the Costa Rican Association of Tourism Professionals, hosts EXPOTUR, with sponsorship provided from ICT, Costa Rica's Tourism Institute.

The extraordinary product array offered at the Hotel Ramada Plaza Herradura underscored Costa Rica's sustainable tourism focus. From May 13-15, more than 270 vendors - tour operators, wholesalers, hotels, car rental agencies, airlines, tourism institutes and related associations - exhibited. The Central American regional presence included national tourism organizations, hotels, tour / transport companies from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama. Buyers hailed from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Israel, Mexico, Spain, Switzerland, USA and Uruguay.

Costa Rica's Vice President Laura Chinchilla Miranda, Tourism Minister Carlos Benavides, and President of EXPOTUR Carlos Lizama Hernández inaugurated EXPOTUR 2008 at the Hotel Corobici.

“If we want five-star hotels in Costa Rica, then we must insure that quetzales birds, great green macaws, monkeys and even tepezcuintles [a striped Central American rodent] also partake of five-star lodging,” said Vice President Chinchilla Miranda, who attributed that calibrated statement of fundamental intent to its author, Costa Rica's President – the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate – Oscar Arias Sánchez. The President's temporary battle with aggravated laryngitis prevented his inaugurating EXPOTUR 2008. Chinchilla Miranda addressed the vertical industry of tourism that is the unique catalyst for having catapulted tiny Costa Rica into a significant global front-runner in sustainable – read: “environmental” - development. Indeed, at the World Economic Forum in

2008, Costa Rica was ranked within the top five countries on the EPI, the Environmental Performance Index. In order of best performance, those countries are Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Costa Rica.

She noted that in 2007 the country received almost 2 million visitors against a population of 4.5 million. Compared with USA visitors, tourists are more than double the inhabitants per capita. With its rich bio-diversity, Costa Rica has also attracted “the world's best hotel chains to our doorstep: Four Seasons, Hilton, Marriott and Hyatt,” she added.

Costa Rica established itself in a truly laudable act when in 1948 it dismantled its army, the first Latin American nation ever to do so. Those dedicated defense monies were then – as today - ploughed back into funding other social demands. Tourism police are therefore the only ‘army’ that now exists. Given Costa Rica's position on the global tourism radar screen, security has become a necessary issue. The Vice President stated that a 50% funding increase allocation for tourism police is currently in the Legislature.

Tourism Minister Benavides spoke to the overall growth in tourism, and noted that a 28% increase in airline seating was recorded over 15-months, translating to 635 airline seats.

The government has clamped down on rampant development construction that ignores the nationally mandated height restrictions, exceeds density regulations and violates other construction issues as set forth under its sustainability guidelines. The northwestern state of Guanacaste, in particular, has been placed under intense compliance scrutiny.

Minister Benavides proudly stated that Costa Rica is an Executive Committee member of the Sustainable Tourism Development International Task Force. As such, it will host this prestigious global forum's next meeting. Notably, since the entity's creation in 2003, the June 2008 meeting will be the first time ever that participants will not meet in Paris. Further, and of utmost importance, he stated Costa Rica's goal to convert itself into the world's first carbon-neutral country, is slated for fruition by 2021.

EXPO-VERDE, an adjunct ‘mini-exhibit’ sponsored by ICT and ACOPROT, and the Rainforest Alliance, featured some 27 vendors of eco-friendly products. Their selections ranged from sustainable eco-lodges to solar panels, and included organic and biodegradable functional and personal products. The Rainforest Alliance's only international office is in San José, established in 1989.

A vibrant inaugural party followed as guests entered a verdant, rainforest-themed ballroom. Actors and acrobats imitated Costa Rica's indigenous animals who wandered among celebrants across the floor.

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Expotur, www.expotur.com

Belize Vacation Partners: Your One-Stop Shop to Explore the Wonders of Belize

Four magnificent properties work together to ensure your trip to Belize is enjoyable and stress free.

JENNIFER. M. LANE

Belize is a premier ecotourism destination, boasting the largest Barrier Reef in the Western Hemisphere, three of the four pristine atolls in the Atlantic, over 200 sand islands, the only Jaguar Preserve in the world, and over 500 species of exotic birds.

Belize is also home to numerous remains of ancient Mayan cities, majestic Maya Mountains, complex cave systems, the only pine forest in all of Central America, and a unique and colorful cultural mix.

Belize Vacation Partners is a collaborative effort of four magnificent properties to facilitate the planning of a Belize vacation. Their goal is to make the Belize experience easy to organize and fun, with as little or as much adventure as travelers are ready for.

The properties that make up Belize Vacation Partners include SunBreeze Hotel and SunBreeze Suites, located on the premier island of Ambergris Caye; the Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza located in the old capital of Belize City; and Hidden Valley Inn situated in the pristine Mayan Mountains in Western Belize's beautiful Cayo District.

SunBreeze Hotel

SunBreeze Hotel is a perfect vacation getaway conveniently located within a stroll from the quaint town of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye. It is an optimum location from which to explore the wonders of Belize.

This oceanfront property boasts 42 spacious air conditioned rooms, an onsite oceanfront restaurant and bar, a massage studio, art gallery, conference room, bike rentals, and a freshwater pool.



Surrounded by tropical gardens, SunBreeze Hotel overlooks the Caribbean Sea.

Their on-site Dive Shop, Aqua Dives Belize, offers a full range of PADI courses.

Their professional team can assist with coordinating all activities, including diving the famous Blue Hole, Turneffe, Lighthouse and Glovers Reef; snorkeling shark and sting ray alley; fishing; exploring the Mayan ruins; and cave tubing, to name a few.

They can schedule these activities from their office and also book a Belize Combo package using their sister hotels.

**SunBreeze Hotel, 800-688-0191,
sunbreezehotel@sunbreeze.net, www.sunbreeze.net**

SunBreeze Suites

SunBreeze Suites allows the perfect balance between modern amenities mixed with the charm of a small island overlooking the Caribbean Sea and the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere. Located downtown on the beach, they offer 21 oceanfront suites. They are within walking distance from local restaurants, bars and discos, supermarkets, gift shops, and golf cart rentals.

For scuba diving and snorkeling, they are affiliated with PADI dive operator Aqua Dive Belize. To help fully enjoy your stay on Ambergris Caye, their front desk staff will assist with booking day tours and arranging dive trips. Their most popular trips include the Belize Dolphin Experience, The Lamanai Mayan Ruin Tour, Bacalar Chico Snorkel Trip, and cave tubing and ziplining.

**SunBreeze Suites, 800-820-1631,
resv_suites@sunbreesesuites.com,
www.sunbreesesuites.com**



The uniquely shaped pool at SunBreeze Suites is the perfect place to relax after a day of activities.

Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza

Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza is a full service Caribbean style hotel situated in the quiet and serene residential area of Bella Vista on the northern outskirts of Belize City. This Belize hotel is perfect for meetings and conferences, and is easily accessible on the Mundo Maya route, between Mexico and Guatemala on the Northern Highway. It is three miles from downtown Belize City and seven miles from the Phillip Goldson International Airport. For the vacation traveler, The Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza Hotel is ideally located for day trips to the nearby Maya ruins and sanctuaries where endangered creatures roam freely in the wild. Belize World Heritage sites, such as the Blue Hole and the Barrier Reef, are easily accessible.

Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza, 800-528-1234, sales@belizebiltmore.com, www.belizebiltmore.com

Hidden Valley Inn

Hidden Valley Inn, a luxury hotel with 12 cottages, is located on a 7,200 acre private reserve in the Mountain Pine Ridge area of Belize. This intimate eco resort offers quality accommodation, fine food and attentive service in a natural, unspoiled environment. Guests staying at this small luxury hotel enjoy exclusive access to over 90 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails, as well as many secluded pools and waterfalls set in tropical rainforest. For those seeking romance, one of the waterfalls may be reserved exclusively for the day.

This jungle lodge also serves as a convenient base for visiting the various scenic attractions of the area. Canoe trips are a peaceful way to observe the indigenous fauna and flora. Horseback riding through the jungle with a local Mayan guide is a unique experience. Mystical caves can be explored on foot or by canoe or tube while ancient Mayan cities and modern day rural villages provide a glimpse of past and present cultures.

Hidden Valley Inn, 866-443-3364, reservations@hiddenvalleyinn.com, www.hiddenvalleyinn.com



All rooms at the Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza enjoy a view of the courtyard.

Touring Belize

Touring Belize is an unforgettable experience. As perhaps the most diverse destination in all of Central America and the Caribbean, there is something for everyone to do.

Belize's rivers offer a return to another time as you travel by boat to an ancient Mayan City and pass colonies of howler monkeys, crocodiles, iguanas and hundreds of species of birds and other small game, along with villages that remain much as they were a hundred years ago.

The unique cave system offers hours of exploration, by foot or by the fascinating experience of "cave tubing." Ziplining through the canopy of a beautiful rainforest is an experience not soon forgotten.

Visiting the majestic mountains of Belize offers another experience that is remembered for a lifetime.

Touring Belize is also an opportunity to sample some of the best cooking in the world. From Mexican influences in the north to incredibly fresh seafood along the coasts and on the Cayes, to the wonderful Creole inspired meals of rice and beans, taste some of the best Mayan dishes that have been perfected for over a thousand years.

Belize also creates the most memorable weddings and honeymoons. Choose from beautifully romantic settings such as in the rainforest, on a mountain, on the beach, at the foot of a waterfall, in a church, under the stars, or at sunrise.

Each of the Belize Vacation Partners can help plan and make all of the arrangements for any tour or activity of choice.

To experience the Belize that dreams are made of, they can put together customized itineraries that take visitors as far as they want to go, or as close as a hammock between two palm trees on the beach.

Belize Vacation Partners, info@belizevacationpartners.com, www.belizevacationpartners.com



In 2008 Hidden Valley Inn will celebrate 20 years as one of the luxurious resorts in the Mountain Pine Ridge of Belize.

CHUKKA CARIBBEAN ADVENTURES PRESENTS "RAIDERS OF THE LOST MAYAN CAVES"

Chukka Caribbean Adventures is looking for adventure-seekers to star in their newest nature production, the "Raiders of the Lost Mayan Caves" excursion at their Bakabush Outpost in Belize.

Chukka Caribbean Adventures transports its daring vacationers into the Belizean jungle where they become the ultimate explorers. Their journey begins with a jungle hike to the "Dragons Mouth" cave entrance leading to Xilbalba, what Mayans called the underworld.

Magnificent formations, geological wonders and relics of Mayan ceremonial history await them in the caves below. Once inside, darkness rules and experienced Chukka guides lead the way, sometimes crawling, through a maze of multi-chambered caves.

After exploring these upper layers, the expedition continues with a challenging 20-foot rappel down a rock face leading to a hidden world of underground waterholes and passages.

The final cave is only accessible via a 300-foot zip-line traverse that flies explorers over the jungle floor from one cave into the mouth of another. To reach the end of the cave labyrinth, guests have to navigate their way through a network of pillars on swinging rope bridges, before propelling

out of the cave mouth on an inclined zip-line traverse. After, there is a short hike back to waiting transportation and a stop at Big Hill Station for a Belizean Bush Barbeque lunch.

Chukka Caribbean Adventures tours are commissionable to travel agents at 10 percent and travel agents who register at www.ChukkaCaribbean.com are eligible to earn cash in addition to commission based on the number of tours booked per month. Agents booking 10-20 tours will earn \$2.00 for every tour; 21-50 tours booked earns \$5.00 apiece; and for bookings of 51 tours or more agents will receive an additional five percent commission – 15 percent, as well as \$5.00 per tour. Chukka Caribbean Adventures offers 38 tours in four destinations: Jamaica, Belize, Grand Turk and the Bahamas, all eligible for Chukka Bucks. The "Raiders of the Lost Mayan Caves" nature adventure tour is \$78 per person, 12 years old and up.

Chukka Caribbean Adventures,
877-4-CHUKKA,
www.chukkacaribbean.com

NEW CHILDREN'S PROGRAM AT THE LODGE AT CHAA CREEK

This summer, family adventure at The Lodge at Chaa Creek will now take an unprecedented new dimension with the introduction of the Mac Morpho Kids Rainforest Adventure: a new fun-packed ed-

ucational program for school children and their families.

The Mac Morpho Kids program is a learning course steeped in active fun and adjusted to match the educational level, physical ability, and curiosity of individual participants between the ages of 6-10 and 11-15.

It introduces children to the tropical forest in western Belize where Mac, an irresistible, bright blue iridescent butterfly, is a prominent resident.

Young visitors to Chaa Creek will join naturalist guides on a journey of discovery. Chaa Creek is home to a Blue Morpho butterfly farm, so children will get up close with these delicate creatures. Children will have the opportunity to undertake a wide-range of activities including a "Nature Rules" treasure hunt along jungle trails. With this activity, kids will learn about tropical animals and plants, about insects and life cycles, and about the importance of conserving and protecting the fragile environments.

As part of the archaeological component of the program, the children will travel to on-site ancient Maya temples. This will also include a guided tour of the ceremonial Mayan temple of Xunantunich.

The children will also experience the cultures and people of Belize after canoeing downstream on the Macal River to meet a family in Cristo Rey village.

Parents can share in their kids' fun and also have some rainforest time of their own with a variety of adventurous options. In addition, they will be able to enjoy to a wide range of specialized treatments offered by Chaa Creek's full-service hilltop Spa.

The Mac Morpho Kids Programs begin every Saturday from June 15 to August 25, 2008. Extensions to Belize's Caribbean Cayes and Coast are available with this package. The four-night/five-day packages include transfers to and from Belize City, accommodations, all meals, activities, and tours.

The Lodge at Chaa Creek,
reservations@chaacreek.com,
www.chaacreek.com



*Escape from the ordinary – experience the extraordinary
Ambergris Caye, Belize*

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www.victoria-house.com



BELIZE VACATION Partners

"Your One-Stop-Shop to explore the wonders of Belize!"



No Shoes! No Shirt! No Problem

SunBreeze Hotel is located in the heart of San Pedro Town on Ambergris Caye just minutes from the San Pedro Airstrip. It's location is one of its best assets, in town yet out of the hustle and bustle of town with easy access to all the town's activities and a dazzling array of wonderful restaurants and bars.

- 21 Deluxe Rooms
- 5 Premier Rooms
- 13 Standard Rooms
- Oceanfront Restaurant & Bar
- Massage Studio & Art Gallery
- Fresh Water Pool
- PADI GOLD PALM Operator
- Bike Rentals
- Conference Room

www.sunbreeze.net | Toll Free: 1-800-688-0191

Your Belizean Mountain Getaway

Hidden Valley Inn is a secluded, luxury resort located on 7200 acres of private reserve in the Maya Mountains of Western Belize. The Inn is a warm and welcoming "home" for the naturalist and hiker. Guests enjoy exclusive access to 90 miles of well-maintained hiking and mountain biking trails.

- 12 Elegant Cottages
- Tour Desk & Gift Shop
- Fresh Water Pool & Hot Tub
- Complimentary Mountain Bike
- Lounge & Bar
- Wireless Internet

www.hiddenvalleyinn.com | Toll Free: 1-866-443-3364



Active Days @ Comfortable Nights

Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza Hotel in Belize City is Situated literally minutes from the Caribbean Sea, is the perfect starting point for exciting day trips to any of Belize's great natural attractions.

- 75 Spacious A/C Rooms
- Victorian Room Restaurant
- Palm Court Pool Bar
- Tour Desk Service
- Business Centre & Wireless Internet
- Conference Facility for up to 500
- Fitness Centre
- El Papagayo Gift Shop
- Pool & Lush Tropical Gardens

www.belizebiltmore.com | Toll Free: 1-800-528-1234

Oceanfront Suites

SunBreeze Suites, is situated on the Caribbean Island of Ambergris Caye, conveniently located in town, on the beach with oceanfront and ocean view units.

- 20 Fully Equipped Suites
- Mojito's and Tapas Bar
- Quaint Fresh Water Pool
- Tour Desk
- Dive Shop Service
- Sun Deck

www.sunbreesesuites.com | Toll Free: 1-800-820-1631



BELIZE VACATION PARTNERS
E-mail: info@belizevacationpartners.com
www.belizevacationpartners.com

FOURTH NIGHT FREE AT CHAN CHICH LODGE

Chan Chich Lodge is Belize's premier jungle lodge with full service amenities located on a 130,000 acre private nature reserve in northwestern Belize at the heart of "La Selva Maya." Chan Chich Lodge is a unique destination for serious eco-tourists and novices alike. From now through November 1, 2008 they are offering the fourth night free. In addition, if a guest books three nights they will receive the fifth night free (room only).

Carefully situated in the plaza of an ancient Maya city and surrounded by pristine forest, the lodge consists of 12 individual thatched-roof cabanas and one beautifully appointed two-bedroom Villa. With a screened-in pool and Jacuzzi, fully stocked bar and excellent cuisine, every desire will be fulfilled by the exceptional facilities and outstanding service provided.

Retrace the footsteps of the Maya, wander the extensive trail system and discover the unforgettable flora, fauna and Maya his-

tory unique to this tropical paradise. With an unparalleled abundance of wildlife (and the best chance to see the elusive jaguar in its natural habitat) Chan Chich is an extraordinary destination for naturalists, birders and for those seeking an authentic retreat to the jungle.

Chan Chich Lodge, 800-343-8009, information@chanchich.com, chanchichlodge@verizon.net, www.chanchich.com

VIAVENTURE PRESENTS THE ULTIMATE DIVING IN BELIZE

The diving in Belize is breathtaking with numerous and varied dive sites to explore. Belize boasts the longest barrier reef in the western hemisphere, along with three major atolls including the famous Blue Hole dive site in the Lighthouse reef atoll.

Divers in Belize will encounter marine life in all sizes and shapes including 70 types of hard corals and nearly 500 species of fish.

Viaventure is offering five and seven-night dive packages with prices ranging from \$1,236 to \$3,346.

Their seven-night Turneffe Island Lodge – Cabanas package includes accommodation; all meals; transfer from/to Belize City; daily scheduled dives; weight belt/weights; tanks; night dive; check out dive; and daytrip to Lighthouse Reef Atoll / Blue Hole and Booby Bird Sanctuary, priced from \$3,346.

Their seven-night Hamanasi – Beachfront Room dive package includes accommodation; continental breakfast, lunch and dinner; roundtrip air transfers from Belize International airport to Dangriga; roundtrip ground transfers from Dangriga to Hamanasi; welcome drink upon arrival; and tanks, weights and belts.

Adventure activities are included such as two tank Barrier Reef diving every day and Barrier Reef snorkeling every day (weather permitting). Price is from \$2,299.

Their Belizean Shores - Beach Level Suite package priced from \$1,236 includes accommodation; three days two-tank diving; airport transfers; tanks, weights, weight belts and dive tax; and all diving transfers to/from the hotel.

Their five night Kanantik – Cabana dive package includes transfers from and to Kanantik's private airstrip; welcome tropical Belizean rum cocktail; accommodation; full meal plan; coffee, teas, soft drinks and fresh squeezed juices daily; three special days of diving on the Southern Barrier reef; two dives a day; all equipment except diving computers; room service; unlimited use of sea kayaks and Hobie Cats; oceanfront outdoor swimming pool and whirlpool; Internet access in main lodge; laundry service; and parks entrance fees. Price is from \$2,074.

Rates are ppdo and include all local taxes. Room upgrades and customized itineraries are available. Rates are RACK rates with 10 percent of commission for travel agents.

Prices are applicable from January 3 to December 19, 2008, except Easter Week, Thanksgiving and Christmas/New Years. Viaventure, www.viaventure.com




THE BELIZE JUNGLE LODGE FOR ADVENTURE TRAVEL, BIRDING, HORSE RIDING, CAVING, MAYAN RUINS...




Experience Belize's most amazing eco retreat! Join us and... make sure you stay long enough!




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phone: 501-824-3101
email: info@duplooy.com
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BELIZE



Secluded Inn offering personal service, twelve luxury cottages with fireplaces, pool and hot tub. Situated on 7200 acres of private reserve in the Maya Mountains. Ten waterfalls, idyllic pools set in tropical jungle, 90 miles of trail, hiking, biking, wildlife, birding on property. Tours to ruins, caves, canoeing, horse riding.



Tel: 00-501-822-3320
Toll Free: 1-866-443-3364
www.hiddenvalleyinn.com
reservations@hiddenvalleyinn.com

CREATE YOUR OWN BELIZE VACATION AND TAKE PART IN A HEALER'S WORKSHOP AT DUPLOOY'S JUNGLE LODGE

Besides becoming a haven for birds and animals, duPlooy's Jungle Lodge has become a haven for people seeking time away from the stress of a busy life.

Rates at duPlooy's now include continental breakfast, entrance to Belize Botanic Gardens, and use of canoes and innertubes in the area. duPlooy's Tikal trips now include entrance to the park, guide and lunch. If traveling with duPlooy's, the only extra charge is the Belize Border fee (\$18.75/each).

Cost per person a la carte is \$175, which is included with duPlooy's "Create Your Own Vacation" packages.

With their "Create Your Own Belize Vacation" program, guests get to choose their tours and activities after they arrive. Many exciting options are available, including one full day or two half day options per non-transfer day.

Included in the "Create Your Own Vacation Package" are transfers, accommodations, all meals at duPlooy's (or picnic lunches ordered the previous day), activities and tours on non-transfer days, and an optional stop at the Belize Zoo. duPlooy's "Create Your Own Vacation" packages are easy to book because tours can be chosen after arrival and commission is earned on the entire package except for the 10 percent tax/gratuuity charge. Private tours can be arranged.

duPlooy's has started offering a Traditional Healer's Workshop which has been very well-received. This is an excellent opportunity to take part in traditional activities while learning more about Mayan culture. Guests can take a healer's walk in Belize Botanic Gardens' Plants of the Maya area where they will learn about medicinal plants, then head off to the Maya house to take part in making lunch of tamales, a traditional Maya corn or rice drink, or tortillas on the fire. While this is cooking, guests can choose to make a consumable item such as cohune oil, or recardo, among others, or a craft item such as a basket, broom, or beaded piece of jewelry to take home.

The Maya host will share stories including history, mythology, what is going on in today's Maya world, and more. This workshop can be booked by individuals (\$40/each) or groups of up to 15 (\$25/each). Basket making or broom making workshops can also be arranged for four or more people for \$25 per person.

duPlooy's Jungle Lodge,
www.duplooy.com

ONE FREE NIGHT AT VICTORIA HOUSE

Victoria House is offering one free night when five or more nights are reserved in either a Casita or Plantation Room. The special is valid for the dates of July 8 to November 20, 2008.

Victoria House is rated as one of the top 10 hotels in Belize. The resort features 42 rooms including luxury suites, two, three

and five bedroom villas. The hotel grounds include both a beachfront pool and a 70' infinity pool and two of the beachfront villas have their own private pool. The hotel also has an elegant restaurant, Palmilla, with a top chef Jose Luis Ortega, who brings a Mayan flare to the cuisine. The Admiral Nelson's Bar is always inviting to relax on the wraparound verandah, tell fish stories or share cocktails.

The sights and sounds of Belize are all within easy reach of Victoria House. Observe the stunning species of migrant bird life, canoe a jungle river lined with wild orchids, discover the echoes of ancient cities locked in Mayan ruins, fish the reef while the chef waits to prepare the catch, dive and snorkel along the barrier reef, or relax and do nothing. All excursions can be arranged through the hotel's activities desk and dive shop.

Victoria House, 800-247-5159,
info@victoria-house,
www.victoria-house.com



The Lodge at Chaa Creek
Wildly Civilized™
Belize

"I fell in love with the place the second we drove up, the grounds are gorgeous and relaxed. Service was incredible our entire stay, the food at the resort was the best of our trip...And our early morning bird hike, the butterfly house and the night hike were all awesome."
- Trip Advisor Member, June 2007

Adventure Centre and Spa



Email: reservations@chaacreek.com Call Belize (501) 824-2037
www.chaacreek.com

PACKAGES TO BELIZE FROM ROATAN CHARTER INC

Roatan Charter Inc is offering an Island/Jungle Lodge combination package at Ramon's Village and Jaguar Paw Jungle Lodge.

This package includes three nights seaside double accommodations with private balcony at Ramon's Village on Ambergris Caye, which features a restaurant and bar, pool, beach, pier, and repelling; daily breakfast and dinner; taxes; round trip flight Belize City – San Pedro; round trip transfers Belize City to Jaguar Paw Jungle Lodge, which features a restaurant and bar, pool, river, trail, butterfly farm, and aviary; four nights double occupancy accommodations at Jaguar Paw; half day cave tubing tour; canopy zip line tour; and taxes. Price is \$949 per person, gratuities not included. Travel must be completed by December 15.

In addition, Roatan Charter Inc is offering the following seven-night packages to Belize:



BELIZE LEGACY BEACH RESORT
Ambergris Caye, Belize

Escape to a tranquil, luxurious, and romantic destination at the Belize Legacy Resort located just 10 minutes North of San Pedro Town. This truly exotic tropical resort offers one and two bedroom suites, with spacious kitchens and living areas, each with a private verandah overlooking the pristine Caribbean Sea.

Toll Free 1-866-210-2267
Ph: 011-501-226-4600
Email: reservations@belizelegacy.com
www.belizelegacy.com



PORTOFINO

On a private beach on Ambergris Caye enjoy beachfront cabana accommodations, welcome cocktail, daily continental breakfast, welcome dinner at Le Bistro restaurant, complimentary bottle of wine, Sunset Sail, Mexico Rocks snorkel trip, pool, non-motorized water toys, wi-fi, and daily boat shuttle to San Pedro. Price is \$1,779 per person.

SUNBREEZE

The "UnBelizeable Dive Special! SunBreeze" is a favorite among scuba divers. Package includes four days local two tank boat dives, one tank night dive, and a snorkel stop at Shark Ray Alley. Save \$100 beginning September 1. Last departure is October 25. Price is \$1,519 per diver.

HAMANASI

Enjoy five-star service with Hamanasi's Reef and Rainforest package, including continental breakfast, lunch and dinner, welcome drink, and service charge. Choose a daily adventure such as two tank reef diving, reef snorkeling, Mayflower waterfall hike, Jaguar preserve, birding, kayaking or canoeing, or a Mayan history tour. Price is \$2,219.

CHAA CREEK

Enjoy a Family Adventure Special in Belize's Cayo District, which includes cottage accommodations, dinner and break-

fast, canoe trip, horseback or mountain bike ride, two nature walks or half day jungle walk, Natural History Center and Butterfly Farm, and sunset canoe trip. Prices are \$2,339 per person, rates for a child in the same room start at \$766.

RAMON'S & JAGUAR PAW

This island and jungle combination features three nights at Ramon's Village with seaside cabana, daily breakfast and dinner, and four nights at Jaguar Paw with pool, river, trails, butterfly farm, aviary, half day cave tubing tour, and canopy zip-line tour. Price is \$1,679 per person.

RAMON'S & GREAT HOUSE

Spend four nights in Ramon's Seaside Cabana on Ambergris Caye with daily breakfast and dinner, coupled with three nights at the famous Great House in Belize City, with full day tour of New River and the Lamanai Mayan ruins. Last departure is October 25. Price is \$1,649 per person.

These seven night packages include all airfare, airport transfers and taxes. Last date to book is August 8 for departures May 30 – November 15. Packages are agent commissionable. Prices are ppdo and include round trip Delta airfare from Hartford, Cleveland, Newark, New York or Pittsburgh. Other cities are available. Roatan Charter Inc, 800-282-8932, bze@roatan.com, www.roatan.com

GHL HOTELES ANNOUNCE A FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON IN COLON, PANAMA



General Manager Victor Gómez (right), and Raul Arjona Marketing and Sales Director (left).

GHL (Grupo de Hoteles Limitada) is a Colombia based company that develops and operates hotels under the Sheraton, Four Points by Sheraton, Howard Johnson and Sonesta brands, as well as under two brands of its own. They have announced that Four Points By Sheraton will be opening its doors at the Free Zone of Colon in the Republic of Panama, located in the most important commercial area of this region. FPS Colon will boast on-site amenities such as an outdoor pool, fitness center and wireless Internet access throughout the 238 rooms and hotel public areas. The hotel will also feature meeting space with a capacity for up to 500 guests. The GHL Sales Team will soon launch the new brand hotel among the main travel agencies located worldwide.

GHL Hoteles, www.ghl.com.co

ACTION PACKED SKIING THIS SUMMER IN ARGENTINA

While the snow melts in North America during the spring, Argentina offers some of the best skiing in the Southern Hemisphere. The most famous of the several options available are Las Leñas, Chapelco, Cerro Catedral and Cerro Castor. There is adventure everywhere from snowboarding, to heli-skiing and superb runs. The snow covers the resorts located in the Andes Mountains from Mendoza to Tierra del Fuego from mid-June through October. The fabulous tracks, lifts and state of the art infrastructure allow skiers of all levels and ages to enjoy the snow.

It is a great opportunity for a family vacation and the overall cost of skiing means great value for the money. Nature, snow and high quality ski centers are complemented by world class hotels for every budget.

LAS LEÑAS

Located near the wine region of Mendoza, Las Leñas offers more than 560 acres and 24 ski runs for all levels of experience. The immense mountains covered with the region's best snow provide the perfect background for your stay.

CHAPELCO

The perfect resort for families, Chapelco offers ski slopes for skill level and amazing views of Lake Lacar and the Lanin volcano. Guests can stay at various lodging options in the charming town of San Martin de los Andes.

CERRO BAYO

Located five miles from Villa La Angostura, in the province of Neuquén, this is one of the most beautiful places in southern Argentina. Surrounded by a natural forest, Cerro Bayo offers 28 European style trails on the shore of Lake Nahuel Huapi.

CATEDRAL

One of the most important ski centers in the southern hemisphere and the first ski resort in Argentina, Catedral offers 47 tracks with more than 43 miles of snow over almost 1,000 acres of terrain. There is a variety of ski trails for each style and level. Also try alpine skiing, snowboarding, sledging, trekking and mountain biking.

CERRO CASTOR

The newest ski center in Argentina, Cerro Castor offers long ski runs, quality services and beautiful landscapes. It is situated about 15 miles away from Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world. There are also excellent and various off-track runs ideal for those looking for virgin snow and extreme snowboarding.

Argentina National Institute for Tourism Promotion (Inprotur), gvila@argentina.travel , www.argentina.travel

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DREAMS PUERTO VALLARTA RESORT & SPA REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO PROTECT ENDANGERED MARINE TURTLES

With the 2008 turtle nesting season about to begin, Dreams Puerto Vallarta Resort & Spa is gearing up to continue its efforts to preserve the Olive Ridley marine sea turtle through its "Dreaming of Freedom" conservation program. The program is designed to protect this endangered species of turtle by educating resort guests and the surrounding community. Located on Mexico's Pacific coast, Dreams Puerto Vallarta's beaches are home to the Olive Ridley sea turtle during its reproductive season. Every year, from June to September, hotel guests and employees have the opportunity to learn about the plight of this sea turtle and the importance of its preservation.

To support the hotel's program, guests and their families are encouraged to adopt their very own turtle through voluntary donations. Proceeds of the donations are invested in improving the on-site turtle nursery. The dollars also ensure the continued education of the resort's staff Marine Specialist. Dreams Puerto Vallarta hopes to garner enough donations and resources to build a permanent Conservation Center at the resort and further support environmental programs taught in the local public schools. In addition, part of the proceeds from the turtle adoptions are donated to Pasitos de Luz, a local non-profit institution, which supports severely disabled children whose families have limited economic resources.

Following the program's success and impact on this endangered turtle species, two other Dreams Resorts & Spas have recently joined the effort to preserve marine sea turtles during the upcoming nesting season. Dreams Los Cabos Suites Golf Resort & Spa and Dreams Cancun Resort & Spa have launched "Dreaming of Freedom" programs to protect their local turtles while educating resort guests and the surrounding community.

Located on the coast of the Pacific, on one of the largest bays in the world, Dreams Puerto Vallarta is surrounded by the green mountains of the Sierra Madre mountain range.

Dreams Resorts & Spas, 866-2 DREAMS,
www.dreamsresorts.com

SUMMER DISCOUNTS AT HILTON'S NEW ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORTS IN COSTA RICA

This summer, the Hilton Papagayo Resort Costa Rica in Guanacaste and Doubletree Resort by Hilton Puntarenas invite families to take an all-inclusive break. Both resorts opened in January and provide the ideal setting for a memorable family vacation.

At Hilton Papagayo Resort Costa Rica, the kids club has three separate rooms: one for arts and crafts, one for relaxation and storytelling, and another for movies and Wii video games. Outdoors, children can play basketball, build sand castles, go on eco-trail walks, or slide down the club's very own "volcano."

At Doubletree Resort by Hilton Puntarenas, the kids club has two separate rooms: one for children four to six years old and another for children ages seven to 12. Children can also have fun in the club's inflatable water slide.

Both resorts offer poolside aerobics, beach volleyball, dance lessons, karaoke, live music, watersports, and theater entertainment. Parents looking for some alone time can take advantage of the resorts' baby-sitting service.

Rates at Hilton Papagayo Resort Costa Rica start at \$239 per room per night double occupancy. Single occupancy rates start at \$119 per person per night.

For stays until October 31, 2008, Hilton Papagayo Resort Costa Rica is an all-inclusive resort and there is a charge of \$75 per night, per child from four to 12 years old when staying in the same room as their parents. Children over the age of 13 are charged the adult rate. As of November 1, 2008, the resort will no longer operate as an all-inclusive resort.

Rates at Doubletree Resort by Hilton Puntarenas start at \$159 per room per night double occupancy. Single occupancy rates start at \$99 per person per night.

There is a charge of \$45 per night, per child four to 12 years old when staying in the same room as their parents. Children over 13 are charged the adult rate.

Hilton Papagayo Resort Costa Rica, www.hilton.com;

Doubletree Resort by Hilton Puntarenas, www.doubletree.com

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WORLD CLASS TRAVEL PRESENTS ARGENTINA PATAGONIA TRIP

World Class Travel's itineraries give travelers the best of Argentina and Patagonia from its natural splendors to its vibrant cosmopolitan cities.

In Buenos Aires, visit Recoleta, a thriving upscale area with cafes and restaurants and explore "la Caminto" in the historic and brightly colored district of Boca.

In Ushuaia, the southern most city in the world, accommodations are at a small and intimate bed and breakfast, the Tierra de Leyendas. Here, enjoy a boat cruise to the Beagle Channel to see the Magellan Penguins, sea lions, seals and Cormorants.

For a morning trip, visit the Martial Glacier and in the afternoon the Tierra del Fuego National Park. Other more adventurous options include a 4X4 full day tour to lakes Escondido and Fagnano, or guided trekking and canoeing in Tierra del Fuego Park.

Traveling by air to El Calafate, view an arid of landscape bordered by glaciers and mountains covered with snow. From nearby Puerto Bandaras, a day cruise will bring guests to see three glaciers up close. In Puerto Moreno, visit Perito Moreno Glacier, the oldest and most stable of the glaciers.

Drive to El Chalten along the Patagonian pampas and you may see guanacos along the way. The pueblo of El Chalten is only 23 years old and has 2,000 residents that stay year round. It has a bohemian atmosphere with artisans and cafes. After exploring the streets head to "El Chorrillo" waterfall. Along the route you will see wild horses and spectacular views of Mount Fitzroy.

Finally, from the El Calafate airport, take a morning flight to Buenos Aires. Upon arrival visit Palermo Viejo neighborhood, a historical district famous for its Sunday market but worth a visit any day of the week with its upscale boutiques and sidewalk cafes.

Pricing for 10-days is \$2,199 ppdo including accommodations, hotel taxes, breakfast daily, transfers mentioned in the itinerary, and deluxe cruise tours. Price does not include flights, car rentals, airport taxes, and meals except for breakfast.

World Class Travel, 800-771-3100, Bob@GoWithClass.com, www.worldclasstvl.com

STUNNING LATIN AMERICA AND BOOMING BRAZIL FROM SOUTH STAR

South Star Tours, the Los Angeles based tour operator for travel to Central and South America, is celebrating its 18th Anniversary by organizing exciting tours for individual travelers and groups.

Brazil is home to some of the world's most golden beaches, many remaining as virgin as they were on days of the Europeans arrival to its coast.

Brazil is also home to some of the world's most cosmopolitan and sophisticated cities, Rio and São Paulo; and to some of the world's most exotic cities, Salvador and Recife. Its culture, both intellectual and popular, is so rich and so particular that it makes Brazil a very diverse and unique destination to all visitors.

As a scoop of great values in packages to Brazil, passengers can enjoy a five-day/four-night Rio Escape program from \$1,199 ppdo including airfare from Miami, hotels, transfers, tours, breakfast and more.


Learn about the African heritage by joining their group departure and celebrate the Festival Tour in Salvador, seven-days/ six-nights Boa Morte Festival August 12- 20, 2008 or their African Heritage in Brazil (nine-days/ seven-nights) October 26-November 4, 2008, both priced at \$1,755 ppdo (land only). Travelers can opt to experience Brazil's cultural and arty side on their Art & Culture Delights of Brazil (nine-days/ seven-nights) from \$2,799 ppdo including airfare from Miami.

Central and South America offers extraordinary destinations. Passengers can take advantage of an easy interest-free monthly payment that may be arranged upon request and at time of booking; while travel agents can enjoy at least 11 percent commission guaranteed.

Travel agents and a companion are welcome to participate on any of their fixed departures to Central and South America programs with 20 percent off the retail price.

(Special events and Christmas holidays are not available. Other restrictions may apply).

South Star Tours, 800-654-4468, info@southstartours.com



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InkaNatura Travel
www.inkanatura.com

MEXICO REIMBURSES FOREIGN TOURISTS FOR SALES TAX EXPENDITURES



Sales tax rebates will be paid to foreign visitors beginning in June to enhance the experience of traveling to Mexico and make the country a destination of choice for international tourists.

"With this action, Mexico is joining the world's tourism powerhouses in striving to give a value-added incentive to tourists who are seeking to discover our diverse attractions beyond their borders," said Oscar Fitch Gomez, CEO of the MTB.

The Value Added Tax (VAT) will be returned to foreign tourists who can prove they have spent a minimum approximately \$160 dollars on Mexican territory and who are returning home by sea or air.

Following the model established in other parts of the world, sales tax paid for the purchase of services, such as lodging and food, will not be refunded.

The refunds are applicable for purchases made with debit or credit cards, but only for cash transactions in which the cost of the item was less than 3,000 pesos. The purchases can be made in stores and establishments that are affiliated with a TAS -authorized service operator.

Tourists will have the right to receive up to 50 percent of the net rebate – an amount not to exceed 10,000 pesos – in the form of cash; the remaining 50 percent will be refunded via electronic funds transfer within a period of 40 days.

The procedure will be implemented gradually across the country. The first phase will be launched this summer at air terminals in Mexico City, Cancun, Guadalajara, Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta, all of which are cities with a sizable flow of international visitors.

The following phase, scheduled to go into effect six months after the initial launch, will include the airports in Monterrey, Cozumel, El Bajio, Mazatlan and Morelia; the system will later be set up at the country's remaining airports, as well as at sea ports such as Acapulco, La Paz, Puerto Vallarta, Mazatlan and Huatulco.

The Mexico Tourism Board (MTB), www.visitmexico.com

GRUPO POSADAS ANNOUNCES NEW SPRING-SUMMER PROMOTION

Grupo Posadas, Mexico and Latin America's leading hotel operator has announced its newest promotion, just in time for spring and summer travel. Guests at Posadas' elite resorts, including AQUA Cancun and the Fiesta Americana Grand and Fiesta Americana properties, can enjoy 25 percent off their nightly rate, all dining and beverages, and spa services.

Select hotels include AQUA Cancun: 25 percent off nightly rate, dining, beverages, and spa services; Fiesta Americana Grand Coral Beach Cancun: 25 percent off nightly rate, dining, beverages, and spa services; Fiesta Americana Grand Los Cabos: 25 percent off nightly rate, dining, beverages, and spa services; Fiesta Americana Condesa Cancun: 25 percent off nightly rate, dining, beverages, and spa services; Fiesta Americana Cozumel Dive Resort: 25 percent off nightly rate, dining and beverages; and Fiesta Americana Villas Acapulco: 25 percent off nightly rate, dining and beverages.

This promotion is based on single or double occupancy for travel now through September 15, 2008, and is subject to availability at time of booking. This offer does not include taxes, does not apply for group reservations and is not applicable with any other promotional or discounted rate. Travel reservations must be booked on or before August 31, 2008.

Grupo Posadas, 800-Fiesta-1,
www.fiestamericana.com/springsummer, www.posadas.com

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