

MUNDO MAYA

Mexico's Hottest Opportunity



Mundo Maya – Mexico's Hottest Opportunity

The World of the Maya beckons with ancient history, jungle mystery, colonial charm... and plenty of sugar-sand beaches.

BY MARY ELLEN SCHULTZ

Mundo Maya is a Spanish term for "Maya World" — an area of Central America where one of earth's greatest civilizations once ruled, comprising a stretch of land that begins in Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, and continues into Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. For many years the Mayan route, with its countless archaeological treasures, has been a niche destination. To showcase this five-nation treasure, in place today is an ambitious regional tourism plan ("Mundo Maya") incorporating eco-tourism, regional development and heritage preservation. Mexico's piece of "paradise found" includes the states of Yucatan, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Campeche, and Chiapas. Consider this exciting travel alternative — your clients can explore ancient sites, colonial cities, take in colorful native fiestas, and enjoy a multitude of landscapes and seascapes full of soft- and hard-adventure possibilities, all during one vacation.

Who are the Maya?

The Maya are probably the best known of the classical civilizations of Mesoamerica. Originating in the Yucatan around 2600 B.C., they rose to prominence during their Classic period, 250-900 A.D., when the dynasty went into a mysterious decline until its close by 1200 A.D. Some peripheral centers continued to thrive until the Spanish Conquest in the early sixteenth century. While Europe was still in the Dark Ages, these clever and aggressive people were the first to evolve the only true writing system native to the Americas, develop the mathematical concept of



Iconic view of Mundo Mayan archaeological site of Chichen Itza.

"zero" and calculate the orbit of the planet Venus. Besides being skilled weavers and potters, they were sophisticated foreign traders who navigated the waters of both oceans and built breathtaking monuments, now the eloquent remains of their glorious past. The Spanish Conquistadors eventually intermarried with the Maya, creating a spirited, mixed culture that is very much alive today — a new world of ancient settlements and colonial cities, churches and monasteries reflecting the Conquest's artistic legacy, and vast, 19th-century haciendas that once exported their products to the rest of the world.

Exploring Mundo Maya Today

While paying homage to ancient pyramids and colonial monuments, Mundo Maya also focuses on modern cities, world-class beach resorts and a developed tourism infrastructure. Clients demanding five-star luxury, hot nightspots, megamalls and top-class sports facilities find them in resorts such as Cancun, Cozumel and state or na-

tional capitals throughout the area. Other options? Gracious hotels in the region's colonial cities, converted haciendas and ex-convents, charming guesthouses, and rustic jungle and beachside cottages. Shopping temptations include hammocks, huipiles (hand-embroidered dresses), huaraches (woven leather sandals), jipis (Panama hats), turquoise and jade masks, filigree jewelry, coffee, chocolate, vanilla, and piñatas. Culinary specialties are cochinita pibil and pollo pibil (succulent pork or chicken baked in banana leaves with a tangy sour-orange sauce); camarones al coco (coconut batter-fried shrimp); codzitos (tortillas piled high with hard-boiled eggs and drenched in a fried tomato and pumpkin seed sauce) and delicate almond sweets; beverages include licuados (milk- or water-based, tropical fruit shakes), and ytzabentun (a liqueur made of fermented honey and anise, dating back to the ancient Maya).

Mundo Maya Mexicana

Tabasco: Land of cacao (chocolate lust began in Mexico), and smallest state in Mexico's Mundo Maya, Tabasco is nev-

ertheless jam-packed with attractions. It boasts wetlands and jungles teeming with wildlife (jaguar, alligators, parrots), and important prehispanic heritage. Spanish conquerors called the lush region a Garden of Eden.

The Olmec culture, considered the mother of pre-Columbian civilizations, flourished here from 900 to 400 BC. Centuries later, the ancient Maya followed. The mystery of Maya and Olmec still casts spells in sites such as Comalcalco, Pomona and the open-air archaeological park, La Venta. The state capital of Villahermosa is an ideal base for exploring the area. A jungle museum park in the heart of city, La Venta features colossal stone heads and other strange Olmec sculptures rescued when oil drilling began nearby. Other attractions include the mighty Usumacinta River, Centla nature reserve, El Pajalal Lagoon, and the Gulf Coast beaches near Chiltepec and Frontera. The southern uplands harbor the picturesque towns Tapijulapa and Teapa, the Agua Blanca waterfall and Cocona caves.

Chiapas: Mexico's southernmost state, Chiapas is an intriguing blend of dramatic landscapes, mysterious archeological sites, gracious colonial towns and rich native culture. Highlights include the mist-shrouded El Sumidero Canyon near Tuxtla Gutierrez, Agua Azul and San Cristobal waterfalls, Lagunas de Montebello (Montebello Lakes) and the lush, Lacandon rain forest.

Some of Mexico's finest archeological sites are here—the bewitching city of Palenque, Lachlan and Bonampak (famous for the brilliant murals adorning the interior of three of its temples); Tonina and Izapa still fascinate, as do the red tile roofs and cobblestone streets of San Cristobal de las Casas, lined with stately colonial churches and elegant Spanish mansions. Shops purvey some of the most striking indigenous folk art of Mexico – blouses, tunics, caps, leather belts and purses, Lacondon bows and arrows. Northwest is the village of San Juan Chamula, the spiritual and administrative center of the Chamula Indians, famous for its white stuccoed church, trimmed in blue and red; inside, fir pines carpet the pewless floor, upon which Indians sit chanting as they burn candles, drink Coca-Cola, and may have a live chicken or eggs with them for healing the sick (these absorb the illness).

Campeche: Situated on the Yucatan Peninsula's southwestern side and bypassed by most tourists to the region, this little-known state boasts two World Heritage Sites: the Yucatan's largest colonial and Mexico's only walled city of Campeche, and the vast ancient Mayan ceremonial center of Calakmul, located within the country's newest and largest biosphere reserve. Campeche City was founded in 1540 by Spanish explorer Francisco de Montejo in the former Maya city of Ah Kin Pech ("Place of the Sun" or "Priest of the Tick," depending on who you ask), and became one of America's most important ports (and stomping ground of some of the Caribbean's most infamous pirates – Frances Drake, Peg-Leg



MEXICO TOURISM BOARD

Lake Bacalar, also known as "the Lake of Seven Colors", due to the many-hued purity of its water, located in state of Quintana Roo.

the Pirate, and Henry Morgan). The ramparts (built in 1686 to deter further pillaging) enclose nearly 1,600 pastel-colored buildings, adorned with wrought-iron gratings and lanterns. Outside Campeche City, the small towns of Hecelchakan and Champoton, Calkini, and Becal, the center of the Panama hat artisanry, are all worth a visit. Edzna in the north (considered a Mayan masterpiece) and Chicanna, Becan and Xpuhil in the south are other major reminders of the civilization's flourishing past. Then, there's the Gulf Coast's gorgeous coastline dotted with fishing villages, green lagoons, jungle, and the famed, easygoing Campechano hospitality.

Yucatan: The "land of the deer and the pheasant" is where the Chaac, the god of rain, was revered. Today, Yucatan occupies first place in tourist arrivals visiting archaeological sites. Besides its pre-Hispanic riches, the flat landscape boasts colonial cities, monuments, haciendas (many converted into luxury hotels), pristine beaches and nature reserves teeming with colorful bird life. The jewel in Yucatan's archaeological crown is the mighty Chichen Itza. Its Pyramid of Kukulcan towers above a flat plain in the north of the state, silent testimony to an important religious cult honoring the feathered serpent god. Nearby Uxmal's exquisitely carved facades are no less impressive, by day and during nighttime's sound and light shows. The "Puuc" route (named for this particular area's ancestors) leads to other sites – Kabah, Sayil, Labna and Xlapak.

The Spanish mark on the peninsula can be felt in the "white city" of Merida. The capital's 19th-century success from the local henequen (sisal) industry may be seen in the elegant mansions lining the boulevards and horse-drawn carriages along the Paseo Montejo, legacy of this glittering period. Ecclesiastically, Franciscan monks erected countless churches and monasteries like the one in nearby Izamal. Built on the base of a pyramid, its ochre-colored atrium is Latin America's largest. Valladolid, and other villages on the colonial, "Convent Route" are also worth a visit. The Yucatecan

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coast boasts deserted beaches, tranquil fishing villages and the nature reserves of Celestun and Rio Lagartos, home to a flock of thousands of pink flamingos.

Quintana Roo: Countless visitors to Mexico's youngest state (1974) know Cancun, the country's best-known megaresort combination of fine beaches, world-class hotels and impressive infrastructure. (Many may have savored colonial charm and danced to the tropical beat of marimba bands in Chetumal, the Caribbean-flavored capital.) But, suggest that clients seeking something new look a bit south of Cancun International Airport. Still relatively unknown in the U.S., situated along Yucatan's Caribbean coastline is the seventy-five mile stretch called Riviera Maya – uncrowded beaches, underground rivers, over 100 cenotes (sacred pools of clear, calm water), eco-adventure sports, including scuba-diving, snorkeling, kayaking, mountain biking, bird watching, deep sea fishing, and proximity to many significant Mayan archeological sites and a number of eco-archeological parks, the starting point of which is Playa del Secreto, a 370-acre, tropical jungle eco-park.

Playa del Carmen combines the flavor of a small fishing village with a cosmopolitan atmosphere, with many all-inclusive resorts and over 100 archeological sites, Xaman-Ha Aviary's 200-plus bird species, and stalactite/stalagmite-filled Cavernas Sacbe. The only Mayan archeological site built on a cliff overlooking the Caribbean, Tulum dazzles with over 60 well-preserved structures. Inland, Coba's 138 ft. Nohuch Mul pyramid is the peninsula's highest. In the extreme south is Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, an almost untouched wilderness of mangroves, jungle, and ancient Mayan canals.

Something for Everyone

San Jose, CA's Classic Vacations creates high-end, individual vacations throughout Mundo Maya. Explorations of Merida and the Maya Interior; e.g. eight-days/7 nights including air, transfers, Hyatt Regency, Aventura Spa Palace in Tulum and Yucatan Luxury Haciendas in Uayamon, Temozon, Santa Rosa, car and guided excursions; a weeklong adventure to Cancun and the Riviera Maya at the Hilton Cancun, Paraiso de la Bonita Resort & Thalasso Spa, or the rustic-luxury eco-resort Xpu-Ha Palace (complete with zoo and crocodile pond) all range between \$2,500-\$4,000 ppdo tailored to client's smallest requests.

Classic Vacations, 800-635-1333, www.classicvacations.com

New Orleans-based Nature Tours, Inc. customizes soft, eco- and cultural adventures throughout Mundo Maya; in Mexico specializing in Caribbean coast/Riviera Maya; land-only packages range from 3-day/4-night including Merida/Cancun airport transfer and hotel from approximately \$400, to 9-day/8-night, \$3,000 pp/do; air/land pack-



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Enjoying the view at the archaeological site of Tulum, the only seaside temple complex ever built by the Mayans.

ages now also available.

Nature Tours, Inc., 800-444-3990, www.naturetoursinc.com

American-owned, Oaxaca-based Maya Tour specializes in enlightening eco-adventures, including their 9-day/8-night Yucatan Peninsula tour, arriving /departing Cancun, exploring Dzitnup (an underground wonder of the Yucatan's natural hydraulic system) and the Mayan legacy of Chichen Itza, then on to Uxmal, Kabah, the indigenous community of Hopelchen, the colorful walled city of Campeche, the archaeological treasures Edzna, Calakmul, Chicanna, Becan and Xpuji, and on to 2 days on the beach at Playa del Carmen, cost \$1,995 pp/do; \$2,375 single; the 12-day /11-night Mexico Grande arriving Mexico City/departing Cancun through the colonial cities of Puebla and Oaxaca to Chiapas and the Yucatan, visiting the ancient stone palaces of Monte Alban, Chiapa's capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez, majestic Sumidero Canyon, the colonial mountain town of San Cristobal de las Casas, Agua Azul waterfalls, Campeche, Uxmal and Merida, Chichen Itza and on to glittering Cancun and its coral sand beaches. Land-only cost \$1,691 ppdo; \$1,946 single.

Mayatour, 800-690-2072, www.mayatour.com

Chicago-based Caravan Tours' Latin American offerings include their Mexico's Ancient & Colonia Cities, an 8-day/7-night exploration of the country's multilayered history, starting in Mexico City and heading through the awe-inspiring pre-Aztec site of Teotihuacan, on to colonial Puebla (a UNESCO World-Heritage site), to the port city of Veracruz, ancient crossroads of the Americans, flavored with the rich blend of Caribbean, European, African and Mexican cultures. Then, on to Palenque's magical, mystical Mayan ruins set against a magical jungle backdrop; and continues to Uxmal, Merida, Chichen Itza and on to Cancun for return flight. Land-only cost is \$895 ppdo; single rate is \$1,225.

Caravan Tours, 800-CARAVAN, www.caravantours.com

Mexican Tourism Board, 800-44-MEXICO, www.visitmexico.com

WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRAVEL INITIATIVE TO REDUCE MEXICO'S TOURISM REVENUES BY 2.2 %

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), which now requires air travelers returning to the United States from Mexico to show a valid passport, is expected to reduce Mexico's international tourism revenues by only 2.2 percent this year, Tourism Secretary Rodolfo Elizondo said.

Elizondo took his calculations from estimates released by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Office of Homeland Security, which projected that 318,000 American travelers would cancel or fail to book trips to Mexico as a result of the passport requirement. Given that some 5.3 million of the 21.3 million international tourists visiting Mexico in 2006 were Americans traveling by air, spending an average of \$798 per stay, the resulting \$254 million in lost revenue will amount to only 2.2 percent of the \$11.6 billion in international tourism revenues his country expected to post for the year, he explained.

Mexico's Tourism Secretary added that the number of Americans who traveled to Mexico by air and did not have passports dropped to merely six percent by January 2007, in part due to an informational campaign launched in October 2006 by the Mexico Tourism Board with the support of tour operators, travel agents and other travel industry representatives.

The initiatives implemented or planned by Mexico to educate consumers about the United States' new passport requirement have included news releases, micromedia flashes, information packets, consumer contests and events, and promotional materials, such as passport holders. The MTB also added the slogan "We want you back in Mexico . Please get a passport" to its advertising in an attempt to entice U.S. citizens to obtain their passports.

"Our campaign will reach virtually every American visitor vacationing in Cancun for the next three months," said Artemio Santos, Chief Executive Officer for the Cancun CVB. "We are providing tourism

businesses like hotels, restaurants, shops, and attractions with the necessary information and tools to reach visitors to Cancun several times during an individual vacationer's stay. This is a destination-wide undertaking," said Santos.

Tour operators and travel agents are also strategizing to educate their customers on the new law. Funjet, one of the top U.S. tour operators for Mexico, has created an online program to inform travel agents on the new requirements and how to reach out to their customers proactively regarding passports. The program includes guidelines for organizing "passport parties" for consumers, designed to facilitate passport processing for people who have traveled to Mexico in the past with other forms of identification. Additionally, Apple Vacations has initiated a promotion for a free passport with the slogan, "You fly, we buy."The WHTI will not go into effect until 2008 for cruise passengers and 2009 for road travelers.

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

FRONTIER AIRLINES CONNECTS DALLAS TO MAZATLÁN

Travelers now have a quick, comfortable and affordable way to travel between Dallas/Ft. Worth (DFW) and Mazatlán, Mexico (MZT) with the Department of Transportation's (DOT) final approval of a new Frontier route. Customers can now purchase tickets between the two cities on FrontierAirlines.com. The new service, which will be aboard Frontier's new fleet of Airbus A319 starts June 7, 2007. Frontier is also offering special introductory fares between the cities from \$178 roundtrip. Fares must be purchased by March 28, 2007 for travel between June 7, 2007 and August 14, 2007.

Dallas will become the 11th Frontier market offering non-stop flights to Mexico, joining Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose and Sacramento, Calif.; Denver; Indianapolis; Kansas City, Mo; St. Louis, Nashville, Tenn. and Salt Lake City. And with the addition of Denver's first low cost service to Guadalajara, which began

December 22, 2006, Frontier now flies to eight Mexican destinations: Acapulco , Cabo San Lucas, Cancún, Cozumel, Guadalajara, Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo, Mazatlán and Puerto Vallarta .

"This new destination from DFW adds to our already robust service to Mexico and gives our passengers an incredible new place to vacation on the Pacific Coast," said Joe Lopano, Executive Vice President of Marketing and Terminal Management at DFW. "DFW's international travel continues to grow and we're delighted that Frontier is expanding at our airport."

"Mazatlán, one of our first Mexican resort destinations, has also been one of our most popular since we began serving it from Denver in 2002," said John Happ, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Planning for Frontier Airlines. "While the pristine beaches and rich heritage of Mazatlán are enough to sell most Dallas passengers looking for a relaxing vacation at a top international resort."

Frontier Airlines, www.frontierairlines.com

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SUNBREEZE HOTEL SHOWCASES BELIZE



SunBreeze Hotel is located in the heart of Belize's Ambergris Caye and showcases all that this island has to offer. Through its location and layout, SunBreeze uniquely provides its guests with easy access to heart of the town while simultaneously offering a personal haven for relaxation.

In the last five years, the SunBreeze Hotel has evolved from a two star property to a premier four star resort, having upgraded all its rooms and exteriors. They employ a team of well trained, professional and friendly staff that provides superior service coordination from their full service tour desk, from wedding consultants to babysitting, and concierge services.

Their on-site full-range PADI RESORT dive shop, Aqua Dives Belize, offers daily morning and afternoon dives to many of Belize's top spots including Blue Hole, Turneffe, Lighthouse and Glovers Reef. PADI certification courses, including resort certification, snorkeling trips and equipment are available.

SunBreeze's oceanfront Blue Water Grill and Bar is among San Pedro's favorite restaurants. Blue Water serves an eclectic menu that features everything from wood fired pizza to island inspired cuisine.

SunBreeze Hotel's 43 air conditioned rooms provide guests with modern comforts including cable television, direct dial telephones, hairdryers and daily maid service.

Additional amenities such as safety deposit boxes, refrigerator rental and 24 hour front desk service are available. Five premier rooms offer prominent ocean views, Jacuzzi bath, and mini refrigerators en-suite.

Twenty one deluxe rooms boast partial ocean and garden view and mini refrigerators en-suite. Thirteen standard rooms offer more garden view. Several large and adjoining rooms are ideal for families, and ramps throughout the property allow for handicap access. Every room offers outdoor seating. There is also a fully air conditioned conference room for meetings and incentive groups of up to 70 persons and an Aromatherapy massage studio 'Art of Touch.'

SunBreeze Hotel offers a variety of packages for agents looking for a one stop shop, with packages such as Honeymoon, Scuba Diving, Best of Best with their sister hotel on the mainland, and Adventure Packages, as well as the booking service for the local air line carrier Maya Island Air. All their

room rates and packages are commissionable to travel agents.

SunBreeze Hotel, 800-688-0191, sunbreeze@btl.net, www.Sunbreeze.net

CARIBE ISLAND RESORT NOW OFFERS FREE WIRELESS INTERNET

Caribe Island Resort on the island of Ambergris Caye in Belize, has announced that a free wireless Internet access point has been installed. The system, which was implemented by NLG Consulting of Belize City, Belize, will cover the entire complex of the resort and will be accessible to all guests of Caribe Island Resort.

"Regardless of whether a guest is in their room or on the beach the guests of Caribe Island will be able to access their email and favorite web sites," said NLG-consulting's technology consultant Niall Gillett.

The installation of the free Internet access makes Caribe Island Resort one of the few establishments in all of Belize to offer Internet access for free to its patrons. "We have always offered free Internet access to our guest at our front desk," said Caribe Island Resort's Managing Partner Doug Hitchens.

"Installing a wireless network that guests may use in their rooms was the next step in our goal to make Caribe Island Resort a true five star facility. Offering this service for free puts us one step ahead of the competition," continued Mr. Hitchens.

Caribe Island Resort in Belize is a small complex of condominiums north of San Pedro on the island of Ambergris Caye. All of the condominiums are individually owned.

The Caribe Island condos feature luxury air conditioned suites, fully equipped kitchens, private verandas, cable TV, and now free wireless Internet. All vacationers that stay at Caribe Island Resort receive complimentary airport transfers, dinner shuttle, and usage of the resort bicycles. Guests also enjoy daily maid service, a freshwater swimming pool, a 300 foot fishing dock, and an onsite beach bar and grill. Caribe Island Resort, 866-578-6378, www.caribeisland.com

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NEWS FROM THE HOTEL PUNTA ISLITA IN COSTA RICA



Hotel Punta Islita is off to a great start in 2007, having been featured in both Condé Nast Traveler's Gold List and Travel + Leisure's Best 500 Hotels in the World. This confirms Hotel Punta Islita's steady rise as a world-class destination.

Their par 3, executive 9-hole golf course is now open for play. The official inauguration took place on December 31 with the first edition of the Islita Golf tournament, raising funds for the Hotel's Responsible Tourism program and the local communities it supports. With a natural backdrop, the course design and maintenance incorporates environmentally aware practices, including irrigation with recycled water. After a round (or two), guests can lounge at the new Hoyo en Uno (Hole in One) club house, offering a relaxed environment for light fare, snacks, and socializing.

Hotel Punta Islita's Casa Spa is featured in the first edition of Organic Spa Magazine.

Founded by former key executives of American Spa Magazine, the magazine is poised to become a favorite of the luxury-wellness, "conscience consumers."

According to Forbes Magazine, the "supremely well traveled" consumer is seeking a new kind of wildlife experience, one that's more likely to include bullet ants and sea turtles rather than lions and tigers. The article names Costa Rica as one of the top luxury eco-destinations for this emerging trend among the sophisticate trekker and notes an overall surge of interest in responsible travel options.

Hotel Punta Islita, 506-231-6122,
reservas@hotelpuntaislita.com,
www.hotelpuntaislita.com

DAZZLING VIEWS OF COSTA RICA AT HOTEL LA MARIPOSA

Set in one of the most magnificent settings in the world, Hotel La Mariposa stands atop the highest point in Manuel Antonio in Costa Rica and is best known for its award-winning 360 degree view overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Quepos, and Manuel Antonio National Park. 62 well-appointed rooms and tropical gardens with walkways and meticulously landscaped trails reflect the natural beauty of Costa Rica's abundant plant and wildlife.

With over 30 years experience, their personalized service and unforgettable views have made Manuel Antonio hotel La Mariposa a top choice for the most discriminating travelers, who relish both its intimacy and magnificence.

The hotel features fine dining at their restaurant, Le Papillon; the Sunset Bar and Lounge; three swimming pools; private, secure parking with 24-hour security; free shuttle service to and from Manuel Antonio National Park; "La Mariposita" gift shop featuring handcrafts, jewelry and quality souvenirs; and available transportation to/from the Quepos airport.

The accommodations at Hotel La Mariposa in Manuel Antonio were designed to take maximum advantage of the views. The newly completed Penthouse and Premier Suites are their finest work yet.

Brand new in 2004, the Premier Suites are spacious and feature either a king or a queen bed with an additional futon, a modern bathroom, and a private balcony. Some also feature a kitchenette and are handicap accessible. Situated at the highest point in Manuel Antonio, the Premier Suites boast incredible panoramic views. These lavish suites also offer high-speed Internet access. Rates from November 16 - April 15, 2007 (High Season) are \$295 and from April 16-November 15, 2007 (Green Season) are \$230.

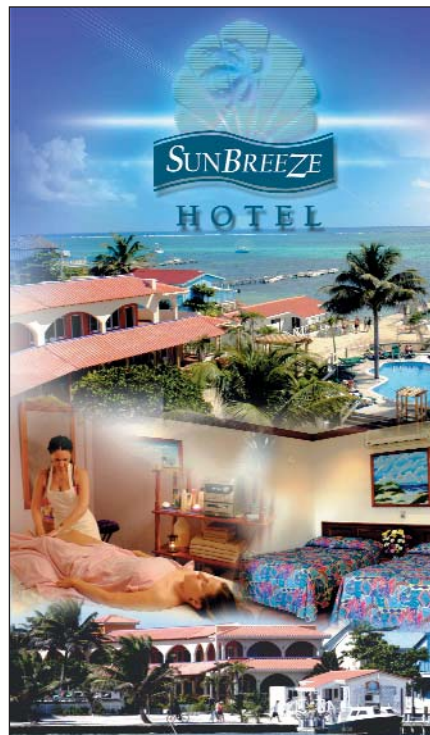
The Penthouse Suite is perfect for a romantic getaway or honeymoon. Bright and spacious, this roof top suite was completed in 2004 and is set at a strategic point on the property to feature unrivaled area views.

The distinct style of the penthouse features floor to ceiling glass walls and lavish amenities. There is an oversized Jacuzzi tub on the private garden terrace and even the shower offers a spectacular outlook of the ocean, jungle and national park. Rates for High Season November 16 - April 15, 2007 are \$440 and during Green Season April 16-November 15, 2007 rates are \$315.

A great variety of adventure tours and family activities are offered in the area, including canopy tours, whitewater rafting, horseback riding tours, sport and fly fishing and more.

From now until November 2007, stay a minimum of three nights in Costa Rica at Hotel La Mariposa and receive a 10 percent discount, free buffet breakfast, free daily shuttle service to the beach and National Park, and free internet access in the rooms. For longer stays, other discount may apply

La Mariposa Hotel, 800-572-6440,
info@hotelmariposa.com,
www.hotelmariposa.com



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

KA'ANA BOUTIQUE RESORT & SPA TO DEBUT IN BELIZE IN MARCH

Ka'ana Boutique Resort & Spa, located in a valley nestled among the Maya Mountains of Belize's Cayo District and surrounded by lush tropical gardens, will make its debut on March 17, 2007.

A setting in the heart of the Cayo District allows the Ka'ana Boutique Resort & Spa to emerge as an ideal option for visitors seeking a comfortable home base to explore the nearby rivers, rainforests, waterfalls, caverns, ancient Mayan ruins and pine ridge forest.

Active travelers can take advantage of options provided by Ka'ana's activity desk, including hiking, canoeing, bird watching, horseback riding, mountain biking and cultural excursions, even Tikal in Guatemala, among others. With so many options, the resort is poised to become the premier choice for adventure seekers.

Ka'ana Boutique Resort & Spa is an intimate property featuring world class dining, a spa and 15 rooms, each complete with a sitting area, private bath, air conditioning, ceiling fan, veranda, LCD TV's, mini-bars and internet facilities.

In the kitchen, Chef Manolo Castillo has developed a menu that will offer some of the best cuisine in the region. The dishes will feature fresh, local and regional fare complemented by an extensive selection of fine wine.

Guests will enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner and upon request, the restaurant will prepare picnic lunches for full day excursions. Or, lounge around the infinity pool while enjoying coffee, tea, wine, or fresh tropical juices. At the end of day Ka'ana's lively bar will offer entertainment to guests and local residents alike.

At Ka'ana's tranquil spa, the exclusive treatments will provide a perfect way for guests to balance the time spent exploring ruins or taking adventure tours with complete relaxation and renewal. Therapists will use a variety of calming and revitalizing ingredients in Ka'ana's massages, body and hair treatments.

Ka'ana Boutique Resort & Spa,
www.kaanabelize.com

10-DAYS IN EXOTIC NICARAGUA WITH EXPLORE NICARAGUA TOURS

Explore Nicaragua Tours is offering a guided 10-day tour of Nicaragua, visiting Colonial cities, beaches, volcanoes, Indian Markets, islands and rainforests.

Nicaragua is an exotic land of rare natural beauty.

Guests will feel like they are stepping back in time to the 1800's, with cobblestone streets and horse-drawn taxis. Nicaragua is a poor country, but the people are friendly, warm hearted and generous. Nicaragua is considered the safest country in all of Latin America, with the lowest crime rate in all of Central America.

2007 departure dates and prices (per person) are: March 31, June 23, July 7, July 21, August 4, November 3, December 29: \$995; November 10: \$895; and December

22: \$1,095, plus taxes and fees of \$89. Single travelers pay \$250 for single room supplement (single room supplement is \$350 for March 31, Easter Week, and December 22, Christmas Week).

Included on this tour is a ride in a horse carriage taxi; hotel accommodations; roundtrip airport transfers; 19 meals; air conditioned private bus transportation; complete sightseeing in Nicaragua; all admission fees to parks and museums; services of English speaking tour director; Managua city tour, Leon and Granada city tours; visit to Leon Viejo; visit to Masaya Volcano and Mombacho Volcano; boat ride in Granada Isletas; visit to Masaya Marketplace; visit to White towns: San Juan del Oriente, Caterina; and a visit to an elementary school and fire station.

The Nicaragua tour begins in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua. Highlights of the tour include Masaya Volcano, the Old Cathedral in Managua, Masaya Volcano National Park,

the National Palace of Culture in Managua and the Ancient Footprints of Acahualinca, the ruins of Leon Viejo and the National University of Nicaragua. Visit the Gurdin-Ortiz art museum and the Ruben Dario museum, the former home of Nicaragua's most beloved poet. Also visit a local elementary school, meet the teachers and students, and enjoy a short poetry competition by the students.

Travel on to the beachside resort town of San Juan del Sur for swimming on the beach, surfing, and fishing. There is an optional excursion to Ometepe Island. There is also a thrilling visit to Mombacho Volcano National Park and its extinct volcano cloudforest. In the nearby historical city of Granada, visit the Casa de Tres Mundos, the Granada Cathedral, San Francisco convent, City Hall and historical monuments.

At the Masya Marketplace, buy local handicrafts such as leather goods, artistic weavings and colorful traditional clothing. Then visit San Juan del Oriente and see a pottery making demonstration.

Explore Nicaragua Tours, 800-800-1132\

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**"APOCALYPTO" SPURS
ADDED INTEREST IN BELIZE**



Regardless of the varying opinions of how Mel Gibson's movie "Apocalypto" has portrayed a portion of the ancient Maya people during the collapse of its once mighty empire, the movie has generated a buzz and renewed interest in this ancient civilization. Adventure seekers and discerning travelers alike are flocking to Belize to visit and explore a number of noteworthy Maya archeological sites.

Traces of Maya civilization, at its height around 600 AD, can still readily be appreciated and visited in the forms of ancient pyramids throughout Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize.

Kanantik Reef & Jungle Resort, on the southern coast of Belize near Dangriga, is one of the top all-inclusive Belize vacation spots in Central America. Kanantik features within its all-inclusive package a guided day trip to the magnificent Maya ruins of Xunantunich ("Maiden Rock").

Guests of Kanantik can choose to take an all day guided excursion from Kanantik Resort for a two and half hour drive heading west on the scenic Hummingbird highway, passing through the citrus valley, the forest at the foot of the Maya Mountains,

and the capital of Belize, Belmopan. Close to the border with Guatemala, a small hand-operated ferry takes guests across the Mopan River where the Maya Ruins of Xunantunich (The Maiden Rock) await.

Overlooking the Mopal River, the core of Xunantunich occupies about one square mile and consists of a series of plazas surrounded by more than 25 temples and palaces, including "El Castillo" (The Castle). The historic ceremonial pyramid known as "El Castillo" is the second tallest structure in Belize and is located on a natural limestone ridge, rising 135-feet, providing a panoramic view of the Cayo District.

Back on the eastern beaches of Belize, overlooking the Caribbean sea is Kanantik Reef & Jungle Resort.

It is the only all-inclusive eco-sensitive resort in Belize. Each day at Kanantik brings an adventure by exploring towering rainforests, canoeing down wild jungle rivers, or snorkeling / scuba diving in the Caribbean Sea. All vacation packages at Kanantik also include round-trip air transportation between Belize City and Kanantik's private airstrip, all taxes, and gratuities.

**Kanantik Reef & Jungle Resort,
877-759-8834, www.kanantik.com**

**VIAVENTURE BELIZE
ADVENTURE TOUR DATES
ANNOUNCED FOR 2007**

Viaventure's multi-sport itinerary takes travelers off the beaten path to explore Belize.

The tour ventures into the Belizean jungle and white sand islands to stay in unique lodges and explore lost Maya archaeology sites, river cave systems, and rainforest scenery on foot, by bike, in canoes and on inner tubes.

Explore the rainforest and the largest reef in the western hemisphere, as well as many famous sites.

Highlights include exploring the most famous and adventurous cave in Belize, Atun Tunich Macnal Cave; visiting the impressive Maya site of Xunatunich, "Stone Maiden,,"; a canoe adventure on either on Moan or

Macao River; the Mayan site of Cahal Pech; the famous cave tubing tour at Jaguar Paw; a visit to Belize Zoo; Ambergris Caye Island; and Shark Ray Alley and Hol Chan Marine Park Snorkel Trip where guests will see a variety of marine life including stingrays and harmless sharks.

Dates for 2007 are March 25 – 31; April 8 – 14; May 13 - 19 (singles only); June 17 – 23; July 1 – 7; November 18 – 24; and December 2 – 8. Prices are \$2,192 ppdo (May - October), \$312 single supplement and \$2,328 ppdo (November- April), \$384 single supplement. Commissions payable to travel agents, wholesalers and tour operators.

Viaventure, www.viaventure.com

**THE LODGE AT CHAA CREEK
IN BELIZE OFFERS
CHOCOLATISSIMO: A
CHOCOLATE RAINFOREST
SPA EXPERIENCE**

Chocolate, the food of the god, during the golden age of the Maya civilization in Belize, was a treat reserved for the society's elite in 500 B.C. The Maya, once the world's most advanced horticulturists cultivated Cacao beans that were used throughout Mesoamerica as money.

Chaa Creek's Chocolatissimo Package offers five choco-lovers spa treatments including the exhilarating Cocoa Massage and indulgent Chocolate Fondue Wrap.

Along with enchanting accommodations, candlelight dinners, hearty breakfasts and cocoa inspired cocktails and desserts, guests will also enjoy a host of guided onsite activities such as horseback riding to an ancient Maya site, mountain biking through a cacao grove, nature treks through jungle trails and canoeing at sunset on the Macal River.

Price for three-nights/four-days is \$1,200. Price for four-nights/five-days is \$1,435. Price is ppdo and includes transfers and taxes. Island combinations and villa upgrades are available.

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

ECO- AND ADVENTURE TOURS IN BRAZIL WITH OPEN DOOR

Rio de Janeiro is one of the most beautiful cities in the world and Open Door offers more than just the traditional transfers, accommodations and historical/cultural sightseeing. They also receive bookings from many individuals and groups interested in hiking tours and adventure tours such as hang gliding, climbing, scuba diving, ocean kayaking, river rafting, cycling, surfing, trekking, horseback-riding and rappelling.

An ideal combination for visitors is the hiking and adventure tours in Rio de Janeiro and then a visit to the Pantanal and Bonito for more adventure.

Exploring the Pantanal by foot, horse, boat, or safari-vehicle is like being in the world's largest zoo. As many as 242 species of fishes, 650 species of birds, 110 different mammals and 50 species of reptiles have already been identified, in addition to the 1,500 plant species. It is the biggest concentration of wildlife in the Americas.

The city of Bonito and its neighbor Bodoquena with its National Park are fascinating natural areas and are the number one destination for ecotourism in Brazil. Hundreds of waterfalls, lakes and rivers of pristine waters, over 80 caves (dry and flooded), and endless species of fish and other wild animals are some of the attractions. The main activity is diving into the lakes. Snorkeling, scuba diving, light rafting, abseiling, horseback riding, caving, mountain biking and trekking are other activities to enjoy.

Open Door now also offers community tours in Rio de Janeiro for those who seek a different and authentic perspective of Rio.

Travelers to Rio de Janeiro are experiencing a whole new side of the city. Community Tours bring tourists deep into some of the city's poorest neighborhoods to see children perform some amazing theatre and circus acts. This project shows tourists that the social problems in Brazil also have active solutions. Guests will visit some of the development projects located within the communities that offer creative and dynamic solutions to a better life and environment. A majority of the net income is donated to the host projects, directly increasing their effectiveness, and offering immediate and real support to the initiatives and their community.

Open Door, with Dutch management and a professional, experienced international staff, is a renowned incoming tour operator for travel arrangements and eco-friendly tours to Brazil. They have their own network of reliable and professional representatives in most Brazilian destinations to guarantee a safe and unforgettable trip.

Open Door, info@opendoortur.com.br, www.opendoortur.com.br

CONTINENTAL JOURNEYS INTRODUCES PERU CULINARY & SHOPPING TOUR

Continental Journeys has introduced an eight-day culinary and shopping tour of Peru by private car combining Lima, the capital; Cuzco, the capital of the Inca Empire; the mysterious Inca ruins at

Machu Picchu; and the Sacred Urubamba Valley. Departures are daily through December 31.

Shoppers can buy Peruvian handcrafts, including pottery, weavings, alpaca sweaters, silver and gold jewelry, and wood carvings during tours of the workshops and boutiques of Cuzco's leading craftsmen in the colorful San Blas quarter; the Cuzco Center for Traditional Textiles to preserve Inca weaving; the Seminario Ceramics studio and gallery, showcasing designs from ancient Peruvian cultures, in the Urubamba Valley; upscale Lima boutiques like Dedalo (decorative arts and home accessories), Alpaca 111 (sweaters, clothes and weavings) and Ilaria (gold and silver jewelry); and during free time.

Sightseeing takes in Inca masterpieces in the Andes such as the lost city of Machu Picchu, Koricancha Palace (Temple of the Sun) and Sacsayhuaman Fortress; the Spanish colonial old city and pre-Columbian gold and silver in Lima; and Spanish colonial architecture amid Inca ruins in Cuzco.

Lunches and dinners at acclaimed restaurants include contemporary Criollo-French-Mediterranean cuisine at Astrid & Gaston, fish and shellfish specialties at Kapallaq, and reinterpreted Peruvian dishes at Huaca Pucllana, set in archaeological ruins, in Lima; and La Cicciolina, known for Mediterranean dishes, and MAP Café in the Museo del Arte Precolombino in Cuzco.

Tour prices of \$2,219 ppdo, in first-class, \$2,559 for deluxe and \$3,369 with superior deluxe hotels, cover seven nights in hotel category selected, breakfast daily, four lunches, three dinners, round-trip flights between Lima and Cuzco, extensive sightseeing with private driver, VistaDome train between Cuzco and Machu Picchu, transfers, hotel taxes and service charges. Continental Journeys can arrange roundtrip air between the U.S. and Lima. The minimum number of participants is two. The first-class and deluxe package uses a group tour in Machu Picchu.

Continental Journeys, 800-601-4343, info@continentaljourneys.com, www.continentaljourneys.com

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PANAMERICAN RECOMMENDS ESTANCIA LA CANDELARIA DEL MONTE

Tucked away in the heart of the "gaucho country" (the famous pampas or flat lands) and set amidst century old trees you will find the Estancia La Candelaria del Monte: an authentic, luxury ranch located 90-minutes from downtown Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The rooms are decorated keeping with the tradition of an Argentine ranch at the turn of the century. The ranch features a spa and swimming pool. Horses are available to ride under the shady trees or in the open fields of the ranch. Polo lessons are also available.

The ranch can lodge up to 10 guests; this is a bonus for those seeking peace and solace while traveling to Latin America. Enjoy exquisite local cuisine prepared by a creative chef. Owners Sebastian and Ines will pepper the conversation with local history and life in the ranch. Guests are treated to magnificent sunsets. This destination is perfect for one or two nights at the ranch.

PanAmerican Travel Services, 800-364-4359, info@panam-tours.com, www.panamtours.com

WEEKEND DEALS AT HILTON LATIN AMERICA

Hilton Latin America is offering a variety of packages available through December 31, 2007. Prices vary by property and are per room per night based on double occupancy, taxes not included. Packages are valid Friday to Sunday, based on availability, and certain restrictions may apply.

Guests can bring a touch of romance to their weekend with the "Be Romantic" package. The package includes deluxe or suite accommodation, chilled champagne, chocolate, and fresh flowers upon arrival, daily room service breakfast, complimentary use of leisure facilities, and late check-out until 10pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

When making reservations, guests should quote the booking code PR04BR. The "Be Romantic" package is available with rates starting at: Hilton Buenos Aires \$210; Hilton São Paulo Morumbi \$213; Hilton Cartagena \$289; Hilton Colon Guayaquil \$210; Hilton Colon Quito \$158; Hilton Barquisimeto \$155; Hilton Caracas \$153; and Hilton Margarita & Suites \$255.

If it's a family getaway guests are thinking of, the "Get Together" package features accommodation, a second room at half price, daily breakfast, free meals for children (one child, up to the age of 10, dines free from Friday to Sunday when accompanied by a paying adult), and late check-out until 10pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

When making reservations, guests should quote the booking code PR09GT. The Get Together package is available with rates starting at: Hilton Buenos Aires \$190; Hilton Belem \$150; Hilton São Paulo Morumbi \$185; Hilton Cartagena \$211; Hilton Colon Guayaquil \$192; Hilton Colon Quito \$153; Hilton Barquisimeto

\$130; Hilton Caracas \$124; and Hilton Margarita & Suites \$160. For the perfect pampering weekend experience, guests can relax, revitalize, and rejuvenate with the "Spoil Yourself" package. The package, offers upgraded accommodation, daily breakfast, two beauty treatments per stay, and late check-out until 10pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

When making reservations, guests should quote the booking code PR04SY. The Spoil Yourself package with rates starting at: Hilton Buenos Aires \$220; Hilton São Paulo Morumbi \$243; Hilton Belem \$170; Hilton Cartagena \$265; Hilton Colon Guayaquil \$273; Hilton Colon Quito \$183; Hilton Barquisimeto \$160; Hilton Caracas \$100; and Hilton Margarita & Suites \$210.

For the 'just because' weekend, guests enjoy the "BounceBack in Style" package. The package includes accommodation, daily breakfast, free meals for children, and late check-out until 10pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

When making reservations, guests should quote the booking code PR09BB. The BounceBack in Style package is available with rates starting at: Hilton Buenos Aires \$190; Hilton São Paulo Morumbi \$185; Hilton Cartagena \$215; Hilton Colon Guayaquil \$175; Hilton Colon Quito \$115; Hilton Barquisimeto \$125; Hilton Caracas \$120; and Hilton Margarita & Suites \$160.

Hilton, 800-HILTONS, www.hilton.com

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**SPORTSTOUR OFFERS TOURS TO PEULLA, CHILE,
A PARADISE FOR ECO-TOURISM**



In the South of Chile in Vicente Pérez Rosales National Park, lies Peulla, a destination which, hand in hand with the Lake Crossing, invites tourists to experience unimaginable scenery and enjoy the quiet and beauty of the setting, highlighted by the surrounding volcanoes.

Peulla is not a transit point. It invites guests to stay more than one day and experience all the area has to offer. There are two hotels: Hotel Peulla, a classic building with a strong influence of Swiss architecture, has 60 rooms and facilities that provide a comfortable enjoyment of the surroundings; and Hotel Natura, which opened in March 2006, a four-star hotel. It has 45 rooms with a view of Cerro Techado, and it offers excellent food served in its restaurant, a bar, a spa, and numerous comforts. All the facilities of this hotel were designed to showcase the magnificent view.

Outdoor excursions led by professional guides are an excellent option to get to know the area in detail. Trekking to Cerro Riggi is a full-day excursion which carries travelers through thousand-year-old forests.

From the top of this hill the flight of the condors may be seen. Another alternative is the Canopy Ride. Carried out in the company of experienced and knowledgeable guides, this is a fun and exciting adventure. It carries you safely from treetop to treetop above the ground in a dense forest of coigües.

Horseback rides are also available. There are four alternatives: to Las Mellizas, to El Encanto, to Riggi, and to Los Helechos. Each of them has its particular charm, and all of them provide a view of the landscape, the evergreen forests, and natural waterfalls, among other attractions.

The excursion to Laguna El Encanto offers a unique panorama. Riding safari type vehicles, guests cross the Río Peulla and get to El Encanto, where they board El Coipo, a boat which travels along the quiet Río Negro.

The fishing season starts in November and ends in May, and the Fly Fishing excursion is appropriate for both experts and beginners. The locations for this are the Peulla, Negro and Blanco Rivers, as well as Lake Todos los Santos. The species of fish that

are found are Chilean trout, rainbow trout, fario trout, brook trout, and "percatrucha." This is practiced under the concept of catch and release.

There is no doubt that Peulla is an interesting and unique destination; Sportstour is ready to bring travelers to it.

Sportstour, www.sportstour.cl

**EXPLORA LODGE
WELCOMES GUESTS TO
PATAGONIA ON INCA TOURS**

Another option is Christmas in Patagonia for the year-end holidays. Spend seven-days and six-nights at Explora Lodge. Enjoy fine dining in Santiago, historic city sites, all the comforts of Ritz-Carlton Santiago and a day with penguins at "the end of the earth."

There is an optional pre- or post trip Australis Straits of Magellan cruise. Price is from \$5,895. Dates are December 17-28, 2007, December 23- January 3, 2008, December 17- 28, 2008, and December 23, 2008 – January 3, 2009.

For longer Patagonia adventures, Inca offers Patagonian Spring with Buenos Aires for tango and fine dining, and Peninsula Valdes to see elephant seals, whales and penguins.

Have a mini-trek on Perito Moreno Glacier, savor the lifestyle on an estancia, and spend five-days/four-nights at Explora Lodge where you can challenge yourself with a hike up to the base of Torres del Paine. 16-day excursions are November 5 - 20, 2007 and November 5 - 20, 2008. Price is \$7,795.

Patagonia - The Wild South starts with penguins at the "end of the earth" in Punta Arenas, Chile, then a cruise for five-day/four-nights through the Straits of Magellan exploring the Beagle Canal and Tierra de Fuego.

Have a mini-trek on Perito Moreno Glacier and then luxuriate with five-days/four-nights at Explora Lodge. 16-days, from \$7,995, January 24 - February 8, 2008, February 21 - March 7, 2008 and March 20 - April 4, 2008.

INCA, 510-420-1550,
adventure@inca1.com, www.inca1.com

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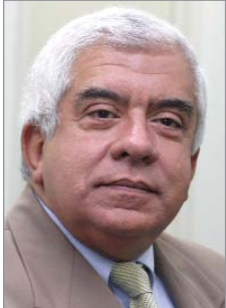
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BRAZIL'S NORTHEASTERN STATE OF ALAGOAS COMES UP STRONG ON THE OUTSIDE TRACK, VIRGÍNIO LOREIRO IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

By Mark Zussman



VIRGÍNIO LOREIRO

Tourism promotion is a subtle art that calls on destination managers to toot their own horns without disparaging the competition — or, at the very least, without disparaging the competition specifically by name. But at least one tour operator in the sun-blessed Northeast Brazilian state of Alagoas seems to have decided to play by rules of its very own invention.

If you go to the tour operator's Web site, you are invited to click to comparisons between the Alagoan capital of Maceió and the capitals of half a dozen rivals.

Salvador, the capital of exotic Bahia State, it is admitted, is larger, it has more history, the Pelourinho district of Salvador is allowed all by itself to be more effervescent than the whole of Maceió.

Fortaleza, the capital of always tourist-packed Ceará State, is acknowledged to be blessed with over-the-top aquatic-theme Beach Park.

Recife, the capital of noble Pernambuco State, is allowed to have a richer cultural life than Maceió and coral reefs every bit as gorgeous as those of Maceió.

In each and every comparison, though, a claim is made for Maceió on the basis of the unique beauty of its white-sand beaches, its lagoons, and the ease with which visitors get around.

Arrivals at Maceió's Zumbi dos Palmares Airport were up 17.6 percent in 2006 by comparison with the previous year, and that was more than double the overall national uptick of 7.3 percent. (The airport's name? An homage to the last leader of a community of perhaps as many as 30,000 fugitive slaves who, back in the Alagoan hinterlands, withstood government efforts to subdue them for the larger part of the 17th century.)

Alagoas also has a new secretary of tourism. He is Virgínio Loreiro, and he will be remembered by close readers of this magazine and by friends of Brazil in general as a former director of Bahiatursa, the much respected tourism promotion entity for the previously mentioned Brazilian state of Bahia.

In his 32 years of experience in the travel trade, Mr. Loureiro has also been an important player in the development of the Brazil National Tourism Mart, and he has been invested by Alagoas's new governor, Teotônio Vilela Filho, with full power to transform the local travel and tourism industry into one of the three principal axes of the state's economic development.

Alagoas Tourism Secretariat,
info@turismoalagoas.al.gov.br,
www.turismo.al.gov.br

KUROTEL RECEIVE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

The international known Kurotel – Longevity Center and Spa, celebrated its 25th Anniversary adding new top honor recognition to its achievements portfolio. Kurotel has been recognized the "Most Excellent Spa Hotel" in South America by Condé Nast Johansens guide. The gala ceremony held at Hotel Bell-Air in Los Angeles was co-hosted by supermodel Cindy Crawford.

"This recognition is a reflection of unique experience provided by Kurotel dedicated staff member, making worth every single effort to encourage people to live a healthier lifestyle," said Rochele Silveira, Kurotel's Director who attended the ceremony.

Using the latest technologic, the Kurotel is committed to treat the client as a whole by addressing all aspects of human behavior. It offers 25 years of family-guide experience to take care of the greater human gift: your health. "It has been 25 years since our dream came true. The greatest achievement of all is to hear from our guests: "My life has changed after my stay at Kurotel," says Neusa Silveira, Kurotel founder director. Condé Nast Johansens is the most comprehensive illustrated luxury guide to hotels, inns, resorts, and spas throughout the Americas, Great Britain and Europe, and the only guide book to carry the prestigious and widely-recognized Condé Nast seal of approval.

Kurotel Longevity Center and Spa, www.kurotel.com.br

MEET ECUADOR SEMINARS TO BE HELD IN MAY

The Quito Visitors Bureau and William H. Coleman, Inc. are holding a Meet Ecuador Seminar featuring a special group of Ecuador Suppliers and U.S./Canada Tour Operators to help sell the four regions/products of Ecuador. Dates and places are Atlanta, Georgia Aquarium, Monday, May 7; New York City,

The Sports Club/LA Rockefeller Center, Tuesday, May 8; Toronto, Canada, CN Tower, Wednesday, May 9; and Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Thursday, May 10.

Meet Ecuador is a half day working session. Francisco "Pancho" Dousdebés' presentations on all four regions/destinations will make Ecuador "Come Alive." Visitors will leave with detailed information about the Amazonia, Andes, Costa and Galapagos regions. Activities wrap up around 2:00 pm.

Supplier Table-Top meetings are "pre-

scheduled" to make sure you meet all the professionals involved with your clients. You will get specific product, promotion, and "how to book" information that you can start using immediately.

The registration fee of \$15 (U.S.) or \$20 (CAD) includes all the working sessions plus the welcome breakfast and lunch. The registration fee is \$20 (U.S.) or \$25 (CAD) (\$5 more) – with an additional qualified colleague.

Registration Forms and all details are available on line. Attendance will be limited to 100 travel agents, and space is limited. William H. Coleman, Inc, 800-874-2324, ext. 8020, www.meetecuadorseminars.com

GALAPAGOS ISLANDS STARTING AT \$2,729 WITH SUNNY LAND TOURS

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Sunny Land features seven, eight and 11-day cruise and tour packages visiting Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. Starting from \$2,729 per person, the seven-day package includes round trip air from the U.S., all transfers in Ecuador, three nights first class hotels with breakfast, half-day city tour in Quito or Guayaquil, round trip intra-Ecuador air to

Galapagos Island to meet the cruise, and a three-night cruise with all meals and shore excursions included.

Rate is based on roundtrip air from Miami, ppdo, and includes government and hotel taxes. Other U.S. gateways are available. Rate is subject to seasonal supplements, airport taxes, and Galapagos National Park entrance fee.

Sunny Land Tours, 800-783-7839, www.galapagoshotdeals.com, www.sunnylandtours.com

ALTA MEMBER AIRLINES PASSENGER TRAFFIC CLIMBS 3.9 % IN 2006

The Latin American Air Transport Association (ALTA) announced that its member airlines carried 92.4 million passengers in 2006, up 3.9 percent from 2005.

Traffic and capacity declined slightly during the year, 0.6 percent and 0.2 percent respectively, as a result of cutbacks in the number of flights operated by Varig, one of the largest airlines in the region.

The higher reduction in traffic than in capacity brought down the load factor to 70.8 percent, 0.3 percentage points less than in the previous year.

Excluding Varig, passengers carried, traffic and capacity increases during 2006 were 6.6 percent, 11.5 percent and 11.8 percent respectively, while passenger load factor dropped 0.2 percentage points. Freight ton kilometers declined 2.8 percent in 2006.

The Latin American Air Transport Association (ALTA), www.alta.aero

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COVER PHOTO CREDIT: Mexico Tourism Board

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