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TRAVEL WEEKLY



THE ADVISOR
MEXICO



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DIRECTOR, CUSTOM CONTENT
Irene Korn

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Catherine Shaw

GROUP DESIGN MANAGER
Mariza Moreira

ASSISTANT GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Angelica Mundrick

PRODUCTION
Michele Garth, Lisa Gonzales, Gayle Graizzaro

PUBLISHER
Bruce Shulman

For comments, suggestions or questions,
write to custom@travelweekly.com.

NORTHSTAR Travel Media, LLC
100 Lighting Way, 2nd Floor, Secaucus, NJ 07094
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www.travelweekly.com
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561-799-1788 or bshulman@travelweekly.com.

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THERE'S MORE TO MEXICO

BY SUSAN WRIGHT

With its prime location and exotic culture and cuisine, Mexico is benefiting from a recovery of confidence: two million U.S. travelers visited Mexico in the first quarter of 2014. That's over 12 percent more compared to the same quarter last year, moving tourism up to fourth place as one of the primary drivers of the Mexican economy.

Nobody knows this better than Zachary Rabinor, who founded the tour operator Journey Mexico 11 years ago. Journey Mexico is now busy expanding its presence in Mexico City, with offices also in Puerto Vallarta and Cancun. "We're seeing a huge latent demand from people who had put off going to Mexico. Now they're coming out of the woodwork," says Rabinor. "Our growth rates are through the roof—from 20 to 30 percent growth last year to 40 percent growth this year."

It used to be that travelers booked Mexico last minute, according to Rabinor, because they were convinced in the end by the attractive deals and packages. "But now we've got long bookings...Christmas and

into spring and next summer," he says. "The demand shows in the room rates, margins and occupancy. We're not only seeing more visitors but a lot more revenue. Mexico is a super destination."

EVERYONE'S PARADISE

Much of that demand revolves around Mexico's resorts, which have cornered the popular market by offering something for travelers of all ages. The most modern guest rooms and unique spa services combine with a vibrant nightlife and activities that range from tequila tastings and cooking schools to saving baby turtles and dance lessons, while kids' programs take the youngsters out to look at whale sharks and flamingos.

The beach resorts, of course, remain a favorite for Americans. "Some people are looking for culture, but most are looking for the beach," says Pam Brown, owner of White Sand Travel in Oklahoma City. Still, she notes, "Travelers might take a day trip to Cozumel and book some snorkeling. And some people want to do the

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— Zachary Rabinor, Journey Mexico



“I don’t get people who want the cheapest thing there is. If they do, I try to steer them away from that because it doesn’t take much to get a great upgrade in Mexico. And it makes all the difference.”

— Pam Brown, White Sand Travel

cenotes.” In the end, however, she says, “But mostly they want the beach.”

About half of Brown’s business goes to Mexico, with most of her local client base booking travel in the mid-range. “I don’t have a lot of people who want the highest end, but I also don’t get people who want the cheapest thing there is. If they do, I try to steer them away from that because it doesn’t take much to get a great upgrade in Mexico. And it makes all the difference.”

Rose Gray agrees that value is the biggest selling point for Mexico. As the business development manager for vacation travel with Fox World Travel, she says if a client wants to go somewhere warm but they don’t want to go to Mexico, then she gives them prices to Caribbean properties for a seven-night stay. “If that’s too high for their price range, then it’s much easier to come back around to sell the Riviera Maya and Cancun,” says Gray. “It’s much less expensive because there’s more competition. My clients walk out happy with a trip

to Riviera Maya. That’s why, for four years running, Riviera Maya/Cancun has been our number-one destination in Mexico.”

THE NEW FACES OF MEXICO

While Cancun/Riviera Maya and Los Cabos might be the first names that come to mind for a beach vacation, Mexico has embarked on a number of successful initiatives to get the word out to Americans about other Mexico destinations.

One of the biggest such efforts is the rebranding of Puerto Vallarta and Riviera Nayarit into Vallarta Nayarit—a campaign that is credited by the government with bringing in an additional \$40 million tourist dollars for the region in the first quarter of 2014, with 100,000 air seats added since the ads began running. The two states of Nayarit and Jalisco are no longer in competition for government funding and can now collaborate for long-term success under a consolidated brand. And Vallarta Nayarit continues to become

A PERFECT MARRIAGE

Mexico offers the perfect marriage of romantic beaches, luxurious rooms, fine dining and plenty of memorable activities for couples to enjoy together. That’s why Fodor’s Travel chose Cancun as one of the World’s Best Honeymoon Destinations for 2014, recommending in particular the Hyatt Zilara Cancun for its upgraded suite, a “swim-up” split-level featuring a wrap-around balcony with unobstructed ocean views.

Fox World Travel dedicates an entire team to planning destination weddings, and it’s no surprise that Mexico is their number-one destination wedding spot. “I think it’s because Mexico is so convenient,” says Rose Gray, with Fox World Travel. “Especially Riviera Maya. So if a couple wants people to come, it’s an easy sell. For \$1,200 to 1,500, their family and friends come to the wedding and they get an amazing vacation on top of it.”



a more familiar—and desirable—name to American travelers.

Hope Smith, owner of Born to Travel, an affiliate of Montecito Travel, thinks that the tourism board has done a good job in rebranding the area, pointing out, “There are a lot of different destinations within Vallarta Nayarit, like Sayulita, an established surfer’s paradise. There are still undiscovered places and culture there, like the Huichol tribes that make the tiny beads. You can also go into the villages in the mountains, where the old haciendas are.”

A similar focus is now on expanding tourism from the Cancun and Riviera Maya region to colonial sites in Yucatan, Chiapas, Campeche and Tabasco. In all, the government has earmarked about \$18 billion specifically for tourism, as well as funding projects like new medical facilities, convention centers and public parks, improving roads and placing wires underground in historical cities.

The funding supports advertising like the “Live It to Believe It” campaign that has helped transform the image of Mexico. “What the government did was launch a lot of different well-planned campaigns to promote the interior,” says Rabinor of Journey Mexico. “They’re highlighting the cultural and wildlife side by pouring money and attention into showing the other states and faces of Mexico beyond the beach.”

Travelers are also more willing to explore Mexico outside of the major tourism areas since Mexico’s president instituted his decidedly different approach to dealing with public safety issues. Today, Mexico is reaping the benefits of the turnaround in the media coverage, as the homicide rate has declined two years in a row, according to the Justice in Mexico Project.

Gray agrees that some people are creatures of habit, and once they fall into the habit of going to Riviera Maya, they go back. “But we have other people who really want to try something new,” she says. “Now

EVERYONE’S A FOODIE IN MEXICO

Mexico proudly celebrates the traditions of its authentic cuisine, which is why UNESCO added Mexican food to the list of the world’s “intangible cultural heritage.” Today foodies everywhere are flocking to Mexico City to experience the culinary masterpieces of some of the top chefs in the world, such as Ricardo Muñoz Zurita, whose three Mexico City-based Azul restaurants star a regional Oaxacan mole that takes three days to prepare.

Resorts throughout Mexico are also catering to this new generation of foodies, from the unique gourmet offerings at Karisma Hotels & Resorts to the El Dorado Royale, which grows its own produce in hydroponic gardens.

Visitors want a lot of à la carte restaurants to choose from, good cuisine and high-quality liquor and wine, according to Rose Gray, with Fox World Travel. “They also want to get taken into town to purchase the seafood and locally grown produce, and then come back and help prepare the meal,” she says. “We have in-house trainings going on constantly so our agents are aware of these kinds of add-ons and upgrades. The customer is happier and the bottom line is happier when we upgrade them.”

they’re starting to do their own research. They ask, ‘What about Guadalajara? Or the ruins at Oaxaca?’ It’s very easy for us to do. We package it ourselves or we can work with a tour operator and sell it all rolled into one trip.”

UPSELLING MEXICO

The travel agent’s role is not to convince someone who wants go to Cancun for a week to go trekking in Copper Canyon, but when clients are thinking about traveling to Mexico, they often have a dream in mind that isn’t necessarily location-specific. Perhaps they want to relax on a remote beach, explore some ruins or find the best street taco in Mexico.

“We have to listen to what their dream is, and get into their head to understand

“We have to listen to what their dream is, and get into their head to understand the picture they’ve got in mind.

— Zachary Rabinor, Journey Mexico



THE TRUE MEANING OF LUXURY

The word luxury has different meanings for different people. For some, it could be an incredible B&B, a private villa, the Four Seasons or the Ritz Carlton. But luxury can also refer to the experiential wealth of sitting in a village with locals eating rice and beans.

“When clients work with a travel advisor they trust, then you can have a conversation with them to open up the possibilities of that destination. You can paint a picture and tell a story that will grab their imagination,” says Hope Smith, a *Condé Nast Traveler Mexico Travel Specialist*. “That’s worth more than anything.”

Zachary Rabinor, who is also a *Condé Nast Traveler Mexico Travel Specialist*, says the luxury market in Mexico has stayed relatively strong. “The biggest thing we talk about with our peers in other countries is that during the economic downturn, the luxury segment wasn’t that hard hit. Luxury travelers take travel as a birth right. The sole purpose is to relax and recharge. Travel is a dream and emotional response, and the agent has to remember that.”

“That’s the key element: an advisor who has been there to establish relationships with the hotels and the guides. That makes the whole success of the trip.”

— Hope Smith, *Born to Travel*

the picture they’ve got in mind,” says Rabinor. “Then we propose different opportunities that could be a good solution to satisfy what they have in mind. Our important job is to listen to their dream.”

To that end, agents have numerous opportunities to add destinations to a trip, plan daytrips and book commissionable activities in advance. In addition to the opportunities for agents, booking advance excursions provides a level of security for clients. “If we have a family and they promised their kids a year ago that they can swim with the dolphins, the last thing we want is for that activity to be sold out if they don’t book in advance,” says Gray. “So if it’s something they say their vacation would not be complete without, we add those excursions like nature parks, snorkeling and deep sea fishing in advance.” Plus, if clients run into any problems, they know the travel agent has recourse through the tour operator.

Smith says whether or not she books excursions in advance depends on the destination and hotel selected. “When I have a couple going to Rosewood or Viceroy, for example, I don’t like to cram their itinerary with a lot of different things,” she says. “So I make sure I have a good contact for them through the concierge or ground operator—and if they feel like doing more, they already know some of the choices and I can arrange it for them.”

In addition to relationships with tour operators, Smith makes a point of creating relationships with drivers and guides who can take travelers to the daily markets, art galleries or to talk to local artisans. “That’s the key element: an advisor who has been there to establish relationships with the hotels and the guides,” Smith says. “That makes the whole success of the trip.”

MEETING THE DEMAND

To accommodate the increased number of visitors, new airline terminals are being built around the country, and carriers continue to add service to Mexico from destinations in the United States. For example, Delta plans to add winter service from 13 U.S. gateways to Cancun, as well as Seattle to Cabo San Lucas and Puerto Vallarta. Delta will also add a second daily flight between Los Angeles and Guadalajara. Within Mexico, travelers have another option in TAR Airlines, which now serves Acapulco, Durango, Guadalajara, Los Mochis, Monterrey, Morelia, Puerto Vallarta, Queretaro, Tampico, Toluca and Zihuatanejo.

Another important piece of transportation news is the proposed rail line from Cancun to Merida with a stop at Chichen Itza. According to Mexico’s secretary of tourism, plans have been finalized and approved by the government. “Transportation is an issue in that area right now,” says Smith. “If you’re taking public taxis or private cars, it can be pricey. A train would cut down on those costs.”



GETTING OUTSIDE THE BOX

More and more, travelers are looking for adventure travel in Mexico in off-the-beaten-path destinations, along with activities related to experiential, cultural or active travel. “We’re seeing a growth in interest in Mexico as an adventure destination,” says Zachary Rabinor of Journey Mexico. “Mexico only needs more promotion. People don’t know that the wildlife is much more diverse than in Costa Rica and that there’s a canyon much bigger than the Grand Canyon. I always ask: ‘Do you know about these places?’ Very few people really do.”

Hope Smith of Born to Travel agrees that adventure travel in Mexico is poised for a surge in growth among the North American market. But, she stresses, “You really have to know the lay of the land to advise your clients on adventure travel.” To that end, she’s preparing to return to Chiapas soon to familiarize herself with new smaller hotels. “The beauty of Chiapas is that while it’s not undiscovered by Europeans, it’s still unknown to Americans,” she says. “There are incredible archeological sites that aren’t as visited as Chichen Itza. Around Palenque, and deeper into the Lacandon jungle, there are exclusive six- to 10-room properties surrounded by coffee plantations with strong influences from the Mayan culture.”

Hotel conversions, openings and expansions are in **full swing...** with **new brands** and corporate money flowing into Mexico...and that bodes very well for the **future of Mexico tourism.**

And with Carnival Cruise Lines returning to Mexico this October, that makes five major cruise lines serving Mazatlan again, including Princess Cruises, Holland America Line, Norwegian Cruise Line and Azamara Club Cruises. “Cruise ships have a massive impact when they come to town,” says Rabinor, who lives in Puerto Vallarta. “It keeps restaurants full and activities pumping. They are an important economic impetus and important for the overall feedback on the country, because people who cruise tell friends they went to Mexico and had a great time. It’s definitely a great indicator of overall confidence in the location, so we’re delighted to see them come back.”

Hotel conversions, expansions and openings are in full swing in response to these initiatives, with new brands and

corporate money flowing into Mexico. Hyatt’s first foray into all-inclusive resorts will result in three converted and renovated properties open by the end of this year in Cancun, Puerto Vallarta and Los Cabos, with the Hyatt Ziva Cancun coming in late 2015. Just a sampling of other new properties includes the Dream Sands Cancun Resort & Spa, the Emporio Family Suites in Cancun, the Hilton Mexico City Santa Fe, the Holiday Inn Express & Suites Puebla Angelopolis, the Holiday Inn Express in Puerto Vallarta and the Vallarta Gardens Resort & Spa, a unique development of 56 luxury villas.

There are too many plans for renovations and developments in the pipeline for late 2014 and 2015 to list them all—and that bodes very well for the future of Mexico tourism. ■



ALLEGRO COZUMEL RESORT

Ultimate Dive Experience

Calling all divers! Discover more than 4,000 species that inhabit the Palancar Reef—one of the top dive destinations in the world—with Allegro Cozumel Resort's new Ultimate Dive Experience program. Dive enthusiasts will enjoy this new package that includes a variety of services and amenities to ensure an unparalleled diving experience.

Ideal for all diving levels, the Ultimate Dive Experience package features a variety of complimentary inclusions, such as accommodations in a Superior Premium Ultimate Dive Experience room, a daily dive tank, access to an in-room wetsuit drying rack, exclusive check-in and check-out service, a private lounge to socialize and hang out, equipment storage and care, and discounts at the Dive Shop.

A brief five- to 10-minute boat ride carries guests from the resort to Cozumel's best dive destinations, including the Palancar Reef, part of the MesoAmerican Barrier Reef—one of the largest reefs in the world. With four boats departing daily from the Allegro Cozumel Resort, divers can choose when they would like to be transported to their tropical adventure under the sea.

The Ultimate Dive Experience accommodations feature 36 rooms conveniently situated in close proximity to the beach and a private pool, ensuring that divers are just steps from the water at all times. Diving guests are also granted special admittance to a secluded lounge where they can unwind while taking in the beautiful sea views. Guests who book the Ultimate Dive Experience must be PADI scuba certified or equivalent.

Located on the beautiful San Francisco Beach, Allegro Cozumel guests can relax and rejuvenate on land or enjoy and explore vibrant underwater life. Allegro Cozumel Resort is one of the top all-inclusive destinations for couples and families alike. With its prime location overlooking the Mexican Caribbean Sea, unlimited meals and snacks at numerous restaurants and bars, refreshing pools, fitness facilities, nightly entertainment, and countless land and water sport activities, there are plenty of options for guests to explore.

At this family-friendly destination, children can play at the Kids Club and pirate-themed water park while parents take advantage of the relaxing boutique spa. The resort is conveniently situated just 20 minutes from the international airport and is a 45-minute ferry ride from Playa del Carmen, Mexico.

For more information, contact your preferred tour operator, call 800.858.2258 or 877.348.3255, email reservations@divecations.com or visit occidentalhotels.com.

BOOK BECAUSE

DIVINE DIVING EXCURSIONS

The Ultimate Dive Experience offers ample scuba diving amenities and deluxe guest accommodations, creating a superior experience for dive enthusiasts visiting from all over the globe. The Ultimate Dive Experience offers PADI-certified divers access to complimentary dives and exclusive services and amenities in premium accommodations. All-inclusive rates from \$106 per person/per night, double occupancy.



LOS CABOS

Two Seas, One Paradise

Located at the tip of the 1,000-mile-long Baja Peninsula, Los Cabos is one of the world's most diverse tourism destinations. Boasting a dramatic desert backdrop, surrounded by coastlines of the Pacific Ocean and Sea of Cortes, Los Cabos is home to award-winning resorts and culinary offerings considered among the world's best. A growing list of championship golf courses, rejuvenating spas, world-renowned sport fishing tournaments and a state-of-the-art convention center add to the destination's unmatched appeal.

Many new and exciting things are happening in Los Cabos, making it a top choice among travelers. The destination currently has 14,000 rooms,

with 1,300 more under development at properties slated to open in 2015, including Thompson Cabo San Lucas, The Resort at Diamante, Park Hyatt, The Ritz-Carlton Reserve Los Cabos and JW Marriott Puerto Los Cabos.

For golf enthusiasts, two new golf courses are on the horizon: Quivira Los Cabos, an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature Course at the exclusive Quivira Residential Community, and El Cardonal at Diamante, the first Tiger Woods-designed course in Mexico.

Due to a diverse eco-system, Los Cabos lends itself to a number of amazing eco-adventure activities. From swimming with whale sharks in La Paz Bay and riding camels through the Baja

desert to the exceptional scuba offerings at Cabo Pulmo Marine Park and world-class sport fishing that attracts anglers from around the world, Los Cabos truly offers something for everyone—regardless of adventure level or travel personality. Other activities include driving ATVs, mountain biking, stand-up paddle boarding, surfing, kayaking, snorkeling and swimming with dolphins.

Los Cabos' culinary scene is rapidly growing. With numerous highly rated restaurants and world-renowned chefs, Los Cabos is quickly becoming a mecca for foodies looking to indulge. Farm-to-table dining is one of the most popular trends in the destination; authentic farm experiences provide travelers with a true taste of organic dining.

It has never been easier to travel to Los Cabos. The destination currently welcomes flights from 24 cities in the U.S. and Canada, and six cities in Mexico. Additionally, once there, new and improved roadways have helped reduce driving times significantly, and the new Terminal 2 at the Los Cabos International Airport (SJD) provides travelers with a great experience from the moment they step foot in Los Cabos.

For more information, go to visitloscabos.travel.

BOOK BECAUSE

UNIQUE EVENTS

Los Cabos hosts many great events throughout the year, but these two are sure to draw your clients in:

- **Los Cabos International Film Festival:** From November 11 to 16, celebrated artists, filmmakers and A-list personalities from around the world will converge in Los Cabos, providing a unique opportunity for attendees to interact with key players in the film industry amid a spectacular setting. Find out more at cabosfilmfestival.com/home.
- **Sabor a Cabo:** Taking place November 30 through December 6, Sabor a Cabo is a must for foodies visiting the destination. The weeklong celebration consists of a series of unique culinary events, highlighting local flavors. Visit saboracabo.mx for more information.



PARADISUS PLAYA DEL CARMEN AND PARADISUS CANCUN

Experience Pure Freedom

Paradisus Resorts, a leader in the luxury all-inclusive resort category, offers your clients an extraordinary vacation featuring cuisine by masters like Michelin-starred chef Martín Berasategui, award-winning spas, lavish accommodations and impeccable service—all situated in the most spectacular oceanfront destinations on earth. Guests can expect elegant beachfront settings, rich architecture, vibrant landscapes and lush details.

Paradisus Resorts offers unique luxuries for the entire family through their signature Family Concierge. Guests opting for this service will enjoy lavish family suites; private VIP lounge for check-in/out with a special kid-friendly

design; private pools and beaches with valet service; Life Enriching Activities, such as sushi making; a complimentary cell phone for communication with the Family Concierge staff; special children's amenities, including mini robes and slippers and kiddy welcome amenities; and our favorite kid-friendly perk—milk and cookies turndown service.

Paradisus' signature Royal Service offers unparalleled luxury in a private environment for adults only. Preferential features of Royal Service include luxurious suite accommodations, certified butler-driven service, VIP lounge for check-in/out, specialty Royal Service restaurants and bars, and private pools and beach area with concierge service. In addition, Royal Service guests have

access to upgraded amenities, including personalized turndown service, aromatic pillow menu, in-room whirlpool bath preparation and minibars stocked to suit personal preferences.

Paradisus Playa del Carmen, featuring two resorts—La Perla and La Esmeralda—overlooks a picturesque bay of Mexico's Riviera Maya. At the heart of Paradisus Playa del Carmen, guests will find El Zocalo, a common area featuring 14 restaurants, bars, lounge venues, YHI Spa and GABI Club. La Esmeralda houses 510 suites, including 120 Family Concierge Luxury Suites and two Presidential Suites. La Perla features 394 suites, including 120 Royal Service Suites and 60 Swim-Up Suites.

Paradisus Cancun is set against a spectacular white-sand beach of the Caribbean Sea. The resort features four spectacular pools, 10 different restaurants boasting international cuisine and à la carte options, a variety of indoor and outdoor bars and lounge areas, a Kids' Zone, Teen Zone, Fitness Center, YHI Spa and YHI Spa for Kids, nine-hole par-three golf course and a tennis court. The resort houses 668 suites, including 93 Family Concierge Luxury Suites and 140 Royal Service Luxury Suites.

For more information, call 888.741.5600 or visit Paradisus.com.

BOOK BECAUSE

ADDED REWARDS

Guests can enjoy up to \$1,500 in Tropical Savings and experience the pure freedom to just be at Paradisus Resorts. For stays of four to six nights, enjoy \$550 in resort credit, good for room upgrades, YHI Spa services, gifts, golf green fees and more. For stays of seven nights or more, enjoy \$1,500 in resort credit. Book at Paradisus.com by December 21, 2014 for travel through December 22, 2014.



IBEROSTAR HOTELS & RESORTS

Everything Shines Brighter at IBEROSTAR

Welcome to Mexico's shining stars. At IBEROSTAR Hotels & Resorts, excellent cuisine, warm hospitality, well-appointed guest rooms and an exciting range of activities combine to create all-inclusive destinations where memories are waiting to be made. IBEROSTAR treats guests to amazing experiences at truly welcoming beachfront locations in Riviera Maya, Cancun, Cozumel, and most recently, Riviera Nayarit—Mexico's hottest new locale.

From the sparkling pools to the dazzling beaches, the challenging golf courses to the relaxing spas, IBEROSTAR has created one-of-a-kind, all-inclusive resorts that feature picture-perfect settings and kid-friendly hospitality.

Discover some of the world's most

sensational snorkeling and diving at IBEROSTAR Cozumel. Enjoy the vibrant city life of Cancun, all in a five-star setting at the beachfront IBEROSTAR Cancún. Swim in Riviera Maya's only wave pool at IBEROSTAR Paraíso Lindo and IBEROSTAR Paraíso Maya. Stroll the mile-long shoreline at IBEROSTAR Paraíso del Mar and IBEROSTAR Paraíso Beach and explore their interconnected pools, fountains and tropical gardens. Or build sandcastles and memories on the beautiful, expansive beach at IBEROSTAR Tucán and IBEROSTAR Quetzal.

The all-new, AAA Four Diamond IBEROSTAR Playa Mita is an unforgettable resort nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the Western Sierra Madre Mountains in Riviera Nayarit. With tropical temperatures year round, Riviera

Nayarit boasts some of the best fishing, snorkeling, surfing and whale watching in the world. Guests enjoy the finest accommodations, superior hospitality and incredible, all-inclusive dining.

IBEROSTAR Playa Mita's exciting SPA Room category presents a new level of indulgence and relaxation. These adults-only, ocean view rooms include upgraded spa amenities, a \$50 SPA credit and access to a private sun-filled relaxation veranda, special treatment areas, whirlpool and more.

At IBEROSTAR Grand Hotel Paraíso in Riviera Maya, your clients will experience adults-only luxury and the world's highest level of service and grandeur. Here, the suites are spectacular. Personalized butler service caters to every desire, and a world-class spa with exclusive therapies, including couples-oriented treatments, melts the world away. It's no wonder that IBEROSTAR Grand Hotel Paraíso was named #1 All-Inclusive Resort in the World by TripAdvisor's 2013 Travelers' Choice Awards.

IBEROSTAR is the name behind Mexico's most sought-after destinations. From adults-only splendor to the ultimate family-friendly destinations, there's something for everyone.

For more information, call 888.923.2722 or visit IBEROSTAR.com.

BOOK BECAUSE

FUN AND FACT FINDER

- IBEROSTAR Grand Hotel Paraíso, Riviera Maya was named TripAdvisor's 2013 #1 All-Inclusive Resort in the World
- AAA Four Diamond recipients include IBEROSTAR Grand Hotel Paraíso, IBEROSTAR Paraíso Maya, IBEROSTAR Cancún and IBEROSTAR Playa Mita
- Let IBEROSTAR treat your clients to the ultimate in setting and service. Book a stay of four or more nights at a family-friendly IBEROSTAR resort in Mexico and receive up to \$300 in resort credit. Receive \$400 in resort credit for booking four or more nights at IBEROSTAR Grand Hotel Paraíso. Visit iberostaragentincentive.com for more information.



OAXACA, LIVE IT TO BELIEVE IT

Feel the Magic

Live a magical experience in Oaxaca, well known for its rich indigenous culture, original and sophisticated art, and heavenly food.

In 1987 Monte Alban, meaning White Mountain, received the UNESCO World Heritage designation for its cultural and historical importance in Mexico. Situated just a few miles west of Oaxaca City, with a spectacular view of Oaxaca Valley, lies the ancient Zapotec capital—a city organized to perfection. The pyramid ruins, temples, plazas and other residential structures allow visitors to easily imagine and understand how the Zapotecs lived thousands of years ago.

Also a UNESCO site is Mitla, a former Zapotec religious center. Here visi-

tors will find a series of structures and patios adorned by stonework mosaics. The amazing artwork has endured the passing of time due to its perfect craftsmanship.

A must in Oaxaca is a walk through the main square, called Plaza de la Constitucion. It is home to Oaxaca's Palacio de Gobierno, the Cathedral of Oaxaca and Santo Domingo Church, a former convent and one of the finest and most lavishly ornamented baroque churches in Mexico.

Just a few steps away, the Ethnobotanical Garden features a huge collection of living plants that showcase Oaxaca's rich biodiversity. Nearby is the Museum of Oaxacan Cultures, containing exhibits dedicated to the history, art

and cultures of the region. Don't miss the treasures of tomb #7 from Monte Alban, a Mixtec burial that included finely crafted gold, silver, precious stones and tangled carved bone.

Walking through the streets of Oaxaca, visitors find endless delicious restaurants and coffee houses. The traditional food of Oaxaca is well known around the globe for its exotic supreme taste, and the people of Oaxaca take pride in keeping the country's exquisite culinary customs alive. Taste the flavors of the seven moles of Oaxaca accompanied by local mescal, made from the native maguey plant.

The Oaxaca region produces some of the finest handicrafts in Mexico. Two of the most unique and sought-after items are black clay pottery and colorful painted animal carvings, known locally as *alebrijes*. These souvenirs serve as a perfect memory of a trip to Oaxaca.

Learn more at visitmexico.com/en/Oaxaca.

BOOK BECAUSE

BOUNTIFUL ECO-TOURISM

Opportunities abound in Oaxaca for exploration, connection to nature and adventure. Huatulco, a coastal paradise in the east, boasts nine bays and 36 beaches. Here, clients might encounter wildlife ranging from armadillos and white-tailed deer to black iguanas and salamanders. On the southern coast of Oaxaca, the town of Santa Maria Tonameca is home to a turtle research center, as well as conservation centers for butterflies and iguanas. Travelers with surfboards head straight for Oaxaca's Puerto Escondido to ride the waves of the Mexican Pipeline. For even more action, the eight remote Zapotec villages high in the Sierra Norte, called the Pueblos Mancomunados, offer visitors the chance to enjoy adventures like hiking, mountain biking, zip lining and horseback riding while visiting with the indigenous "People of the Clouds."



RIU HOTELS & RESORTS

New Online Specialist Certification Program

RIU Hotels & Resorts announces the recent launch of its new online program for agents, riuspecialist.com, providing valuable tools, resources and key facts about the chain's hotels and destinations to help you sell the RIU experience in Mexico, Central America, North America and the Caribbean.

You'll also enjoy program benefits, such as a certificate for a complimentary two-night stay, a digital welcome kit with logos for your emails and business cards, your personalized RIU Specialist Diploma and access to special RPC promotions.

CHAPTER 1: GETTING TO KNOW RIU
Learn quickly and easily with educational resources such as fact sheets, websites, videos, photography and sales manuals. With more than 100 hotels and 60 years of experience in a variety of All Inclusive vacation

destinations, we'll guide you in choosing the most suitable resorts for your clients, whether they are families, couples, multi-generational or single guests.

CHAPTER 2: RIU BRANDS

We will focus on two of our three categories within the RIU brand, Classic Hotels and Riu Palace Hotels, both targeted to leisure travelers. You'll learn about our renowned All Inclusive program, providing guests with unlimited access to in-room drinks, unlimited meals in each hotel's main restaurant, unlimited reservations at the specialty restaurants, non-motorized sports, and daytime and nighttime entertainment.

CHAPTER 3: MEXICO, COSTA RICA & PANAMA

With 20 hotels to choose from in Mexico,

Costa Rica and Panama, you'll discover details about some of these countries' best destinations, including Cancun, Riviera Maya, Riviera Nayarit, Mazatlan, Cabo San Lucas, Playa Blanca and Guanacaste.

CHAPTER 4: CARIBBEAN PROPERTIES

You can also easily locate information about the facilities in our 15 destinations in the Caribbean, including Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, Aruba and Saint Martin.

CHAPTER 5: RIU PLAZA HOTELS LINE

You'll get to know our urban line, RIU Plaza Hotels, with properties in prime locations in a growing number of major cities: Panama City, Panama; Guadalajara, Mexico; Miami Beach, Florida; Berlin, Germany, opening soon; and New York Times Square opening in 2015. These business-oriented hotels feature first-class meeting facilities.

CHAPTER 6: TRAVEL AGENT SUPPORT

Riu Partner Club provides one free night upon your registration and points for each booking, which can be redeemed for free stays. Riu Agents features flexible payment options, real-time cancellations and changes, up-to-date offers, access to RIU professionals and the best prices for your clients.

To learn more about becoming a RIU specialist, visit riuspecialist.com.

BOOK BECAUSE

BECOME A RIU SPECIALIST AGENT

This program provides you with a variety of tools, resources and special benefits to inspire you to sell the RIU experience in Mexico, Central America, North America and the Caribbean. You will learn how to access resources quickly, match clients with hotels and sell the different RIU brands with confidence.

You'll also enjoy many special benefits, including:

- Certificate for a two-night stay (via RPC points credit)
- Your RIU Specialist Diploma
- Digital welcome kit with logos for emails and business cards
- Special RPC promotions



GENERATIONS RIVIERA MAYA BY KARISMA

Gourmet Inclusive® Resort Debuts Little Eko Chefs, by Karisma

In August 2014, Generations Riviera Maya is taking its renowned Gourmet Inclusive® Experience to the next level, building upon Karisma's commitment to eco-, culinary- and family-friendly vacations with the debut of Little Eko Chefs.

Earlier this month, the launch of Little Eko Chefs was hosted by the exceptionally talented Alexander Weiss, Season 1 Winner of *MasterChef Junior*. A culinary wunderkind in the kitchen, this 13-year old chef led Generations Riviera Maya's youngest guests through the first-ever Little Eko Chefs Class at the Eko Kids Club, which featured inventive yet approachable dishes and ingredients from Karisma's 75,000 square foot Greenhouse. Little Eko Chefs—providing foodie families with fun tips,

interactive techniques and easy to replicate recipes—continues to take place on a daily basis, offering 10 different theme classes at the Eko Kids Club. Upon completion of the class, kids are provided with a certificate as a token for their participation in the program.

Little Eko Chefs presents only a taste of what Generations Riviera Maya has to offer. The new resort is located on a secluded beach facing the Mexican Caribbean, offering the most spacious oceanfront suites in the destination with personalized butler services and amenities of a luxury resort on an intimate scale. It's perfectly suited for multigenerational families, couples and wedding parties seeking quality time together while vacationing in the heart of the Riviera Maya.

As part of Generations Riviera Maya's Gourmet Inclusive Experience, guests are invited to enjoy any of its four beachfront restaurants and two lounges, including casual, shared fare at Chef Market; traditional Mexican "street" style at Palms Gourmet Terrace; Pan-Asian cuisine at Jade; a fresh Mediterranean menu and lounge at Habb; tastes from around the world at the Wine Kitchen, Restaurant and Tasting Room; and drinks at the resort's swim-up bar and lounge, Swell, featuring high-top tables and bar stools within the pool.

For children, Generations Riviera Maya offers the Eko Kids Club with supervised activities for kids four to 12 years of age, showcasing fun and educational activities with an environmentally friendly twist. In addition to Little Eko Chefs, the Eko Kids Club boasts a movie area, craft station, library, gaming consoles, ball pit, trampoline and much more. For infants and toddlers, Baby Beach Lounges provide a shady respite from the sun. Agents who book stays for families at Generations Riviera Maya can invite them to participate in the newly debuted Little Eko Chefs program complimentary.

For more information and reservations, call 800.284.0044 or visit travelimpressions.com.

BOOK BECAUSE

EXTRA EARNINGS

Agents will enjoy 19% commission when booking at Generations Riviera Maya, or any of the award-winning Karisma Gourmet Inclusive® El Dorado Spa Resorts, Azul Hotels and Generations Resorts on the Riviera Maya. Offer valid for bookings until September 30, 2014 on stays until December 22, 2014. Agents must register their bookings at KarismaGI.com. Commission is capped at 19%. Restrictions apply.



VALLARTA–NAYARIT, LIVE IT TO BELIEVE IT

Historic and Happening

Two destinations united geographically that live as one. This region is one of the hottest vacation spots in Mexico, because of its great climate and an incredible diversity that provides visitors with such a range of unique experiences.

Home of tequila, mariachi and the *charro* (Mexico's cowboy), Puerto Vallarta, located in the State of Jalisco, continues to be a Mexican pueblo at heart and the most Mexican of beach destinations. Surrounded by the Sierra Madre and sheltered by the Bay of Banderas, the town is easy to get around, with all activities, hotels and restaurants, and the airport within a 20-minute drive of each other.

Guests have a choice of more than 22,000 guest rooms, from AAA Four Diamond properties to historic one-of-a-kind boutique hotels and villas. In addition to the beaches and numerous attractions, guests will find hundreds of tours that run the gamut from adventure and gastronomy to luxury and LGBT-focused.

Already celebrated by consumers, media and industry leaders, Puerto Vallarta continues to maintain its high international standards with constant infrastructure renovations and the ongoing introduction of new services. With 96 years of experience, Puerto Vallarta knows how to present a true Mexican experience to visitors—

and it's no wonder that Puerto Vallarta continues to be one of the top three most searched beach destinations by U.S. and Canadian travelers.

Mexico's newest luxury destination—the Riviera Nayarit—is ready to be unveiled on the world market. This hip and happening destination is an elegant and exclusive getaway designed to harmonize with the exuberant nature that surrounds it. Its splendid beaches and the impressive Sierra Madre Mountains are easily reached via flights from several U.S. gateways.

The Riviera Nayarit features a number of AAA-rated resorts, including four Five Diamond hotels—the pinnacle of luxury according to the classification of the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences. The hotels themselves vary in style, ranging from an intimate Relais & Chateaux boutique property to yoga retreats to large up-scale resort chains.

For more information about Puerto Vallarta and Riviera Nayarit, go to vallarta-nayarit.com.

ACTIVITIES ABOUND

Puerto Vallarta's colonial center, Zona Romantica, remains true to its past with colonial architecture, bands playing on Sunday afternoons and numerous gastronomy and handicraft artisans in the markets. Surrounding haciendas welcome guests to experience their long-protected way of life and even make and taste some *raicilla*, a cousin of tequila made in Puerto Vallarta.

From the hotel developments in Nuevo Vallarta to the virgin beaches in the north, visitors can choose among dozens of activities and environments in Riviera Nayarit. Discover the Hidden Beach at the Marietas Islands, surf in the hippie-chic town of Sayulita, watch a polo game in San Pancho, partake in turtle releasing in Rincon de Guayabitos, let the port of San Blas take you through history or enjoy a birdwatching expedition in La Tovara.



UN-CRUISE ADVENTURES

Unrushed. Uncrowded. Unbelievable.

Remote scenic islands set amid a cerulean sea. Forests of giant cardon cacti. Coastal mangroves and red rocky cliffs. In the Gulf of California, also called the Sea of Cortes, weeklong cruises explore the marine life-rich sea and desert landscapes of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Send your clients on the trip of a lifetime to a place described by John Steinbeck as “ferocious with life” and often called the “Galapagos of North America.”

The 84-guest *Safari Endeavour* sails inclusive weeklong cruises round trip from San Jose del Cabo, Baja California Sur from November to March.

Adventure activities include desert hiking, a mule ride into the arroyo with a local rancho, whale watching, kayaking, snorkeling, paddle boarding, skiff excursions, swimming with sea lions and a tour of historic Loreto. Other highlights, depending on time of year, include a trip to Magdalena Bay to see gray whales and calves up close or to La Paz for encounters with gentle whale sharks. Dolphins, blue-footed boobies, flying mobulas and other creatures make frequent appearances.

Your clients will enjoy exquisite meals; superb service from friendly crew; fine wine, premium spirits and

microbrews; relaxing in the on-deck hot tub; a sauna; exercise equipment; yoga on deck and massage. Transfers and fees/taxes are included in the cruise fare.

The line’s Adventurist Club offers travel agents selling tools, information and agent specials. To join the Adventurist Club, participate in web presentations and pass an online exam. Certified Adventurists earn bonus commissions, listing on the line’s website, savings on fam rates and other valuable benefits. Register at un-cruise.com/extranet.

For more information, call 888.862.8881 or visit un-cruise.com.



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GRAND SIRENIS RIVIERA MAYA

Fall in Love with Great Savings

With savings up to 20 percent, couples can escape to paradise and enjoy a romantic getaway this upcoming fall. Grand Sirenis Riviera Maya Resort & Spa, a modern beachfront property, offers endless options for intimate moments. From floating effortlessly down the lazy river side by side to enjoying a candlelight dinner at day's end, couples will create memories to last a lifetime.

At award-winning Spa Grand Sirenis, a 30,140-square-foot facility inspired by the four elements of nature—air, water, earth and fire—your clients can indulge

in a beachfront couples massage or choose from a variety of other world-class spa treatments, such as lavish facials and body wraps.

Due to its prime location, alongside the largest coral reef in the Riviera Maya, the resort offers guests amazing snorkeling and scuba diving opportunities. Couples can now experience a guided snorkel tour—one of the resort's daily activities—free of charge.

Couples will enjoy oversized guest rooms, all of which include a Jacuzzi fit for two. The eight à la carte restaurants and four buffets ensure a variety of dining options so clients can explore tastes

from around the world. After dinner, they can view a live show at the open-air theater or delight in a nightcap at one of the resort's fully stocked bars.

As the weather cools, heat things up with a romantic trip to Grand Sirenis Riviera Maya.

Contact your preferred tour operator for details on fall savings or email marketing.usa@sirenishotels.com.



Call Your Preferred Tour Operator Now!

www.sirenishotels.com



GRAND PALLADIUM RESORTS

Eco-Learning, Nature Walks and Zoos

Crocodiles, flamingos and monkeys—oh my! With innovative and extensive age-tiered programs for kids from one to 19 years of age and eco-park style grounds where kids bounce with delight as they spot iguanas, flamingos and other creatures, Grand Palladium all-inclusive resorts in Mexico's Riviera Maya and Riviera Nayarit provide magical getaways for families. Kids' programs incorporate each destination's flora and fauna into their days with entertaining educational activities that create an appreciation for nature. Both resorts also offer guided ecological walks for kids

through carefully preserved habitats.

At the five contiguous Riviera Maya properties, many families are drawn to the crocodile habitats at feeding time. The koi ponds and flamingo habitats also fascinate a number of kids. The property's lush, landscaped grounds and green policies have earned the Riviera Maya Grand Palladium Resorts EarthCheck Silver, Travelife Gold, MARTI (Meso-American Reef Tourism Initiative) and the Kuoni Green Planet recognitions for their environmental policies.

In addition to the nature trails winding through its verdant park-like tropical acreage, the smaller but equally

eco-friendly Grand Palladium Vallarta Resort & Spa along the Riviera Nayarit has a small rescue zoo. Here, kids can watch monkeys at play, marvel at the size of ostriches and admire macaws, parrots and other tropical birds. Marsupial bandicoots from Australia, turtles, deer and a crocodile are among the other rescued wildlife that found a home here. The hotel is certified by the EarthCheck benchmarking and certification program for its animal care and eco-friendly standards.

For more information, visit palladiumhotelgroup.com.



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VILLA LA ESTANCIA, RIVIERA NAYARIT AND LOS CABOS

Exceeding Expectations

At Villa la Estancia, elegance and sophistication combine to offer guests a unique experience that exceeds all expectations. These resorts, which are the most exclusive of the Villa Group brand, provide the comfort and privacy of luxury residential suites.

The exclusivity of the 250 hacienda-style accommodations in Riviera Nayarit and the 156 deluxe all-suite villas in Los Cabos will keep guests enchanted from the minute they step on site. Adding to the ambiance is the private-home experience, which exudes from each and every villa. Spacious one-, two- and three-

bedroom units, complete with expansive kitchens, superb amenities, and incredible views, are available for the comfort and convenience of every guest.

When staying at these resorts, one has a choice between a multitude of fine-dining options, numerous indulgent spa services and various activities designed to entertain the whole family. Additionally, guests have full access to the restaurants and amenities at our sister resorts, which are located nearby. Furthering the experience is the exceptional service, exquisite architecture and breathtaking views.

Villa la Estancia is among the most

prestigious resorts in all of Nuevo Vallarta. Its proximity to a variety of tourist attractions, golf courses and sightseeing opportunities throughout the Bay of Banderas makes it the perfect selection for every traveler.

In Los Cabos, Villa la Estancia offers incredible views of the Sea of Cortez and is by far the best option for those looking for a central location, close to the action of downtown, while maintaining the peace and tranquility of an exclusive resort.

For more information, visit villalaestancia.com.

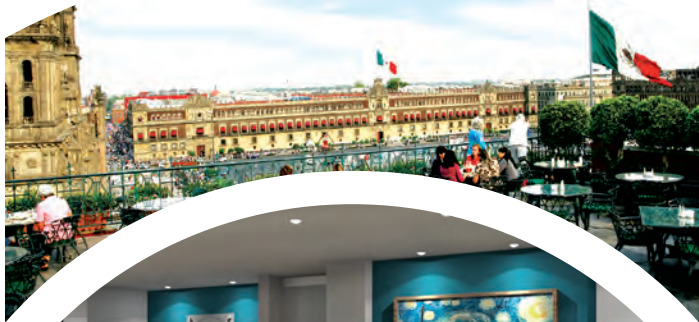


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HOTEL ZOCALO CENTRAL, MEXICO CITY

A Shining Star in the Heart of Mexico City

Experience the history of Mexico City. Enjoy the bustling Main Square of one of the largest cities in the world. Immerse yourself in the center of this renowned city so full of culture. Hotel Zocalo Central is the place to stay!

After a recent major renovation, Hotel Zocalo Central is the new shining star in the heart of Mexico City. Guests can expect a blend of contemporary style and Mexican tradition, and service provided direct from the soul. The experienced management staff centers all its efforts on guest satisfaction as the primary goal.

Guests will stay in one of the 105 fully renovated guest rooms and suites, complete with modern touches such as double-glazed windows, plasma televisions, a pillow menu and 24-hour room service among other amenities. A fitness center and steam room are on site.

Staying in touch is easy at Hotel Zocalo Central. Guest

rooms feature complimentary high-speed Internet access and phone calls do not have any additional fees. And at the Coffee Bar, guests can check their email via available iPads.

A highlight is the rooftop restaurant El Balcon del Zocalo, featuring a breathtaking view over the Metropolitan Cathedral and the heart of Mexico City—the famed Zocalo. Here, visitors enjoy breakfast, relax for lunch or sip a drink before dinner while drawing inspiration from the past. Historic, central, the heart of Mexico—this is the new Zocalo Central!

For a limited time, a reopening rate is available starting from \$99 USD plus taxes (rate per room per night on European Plan basis). Ask for travel agent rates.

For reservations, contact the tour operator of your preference, email reservaciones@zocalocentral.com or go to centralhoteles.com.



BAHIA PRINCIPE RIVIERA MAYA RESORT

Luxury and Leisure for All

Set among beautiful Mayan ruins and lush tropical gardens on the sands of pristine beaches, the Bahia Principe Riviera Maya resort offers its guests the all-inclusive vacation of their dreams.

With an emphasis on class and comfort, Bahia Principe Riviera Maya resort staff provides guests with a wide selection of services and activities throughout the property. Fin fanatics can go for a swim with the dolphins at the exclusive Dolphinaris Tulum. Nature lovers can explore the property's beautiful gardens and the nearby Sian Ka'an, a UNESCO World Heritage site that hosts a huge selection of flora and fauna. And culture enthusiasts can head to the Hacienda Dona Isabel to enjoy the colorful, energetic folklore performances of la Fiesta Mexicana.

With four hotel properties to choose from at Bahia Principe Riviera Maya Resort—each with its own appealing characteristics—guests are free to vacation in their own way. Grand Bahia Principe Coba is a great destination for families, as it's equipped with spacious suites that accommodate up to four adults and four kids, and is home to a water park as well as a variety of fun group activities. Located right on the beach and encased in tropical landscaping is Grand Bahia Principe

Tulum, providing a serene stay where your clients can relax in style. Luxury Bahia Principe Sian Ka'an, a member of the prestigious Don Pablo Collection, is an 18-and-over resort that showcases maximum luxury through a minimalist design and has access to one of the most impressive golf courses in the Mayan Riviera.

Luxury Bahia Principe Akumal, opening in November of this year after undergoing a complete and lavish renovation, will be the latest addition to the Don Pablo Collection. It will offer the top-tier amenities and service associated with the prestigious name.

Bahia Principe's Riviera Maya Resort has everything from picture-perfect beaches and a vibrant nightlife to fine-dining options and fantastic spa

facilities. The plethora of resort amenities are just steps from the four hotels that offer deluxe accommodations and attentive customer service. The many facets of this grand resort combine to provide a beautiful and memorable stay, which can be enjoyed by all.

For more information about our hotels and destinations, visit bahia-principe.com.

VACATION FUN FOR EVERYONE

At Bahia Principe Riviera Maya Resort, there are activities and adventures waiting for guests at every turn. Guests who are feeling lucky can check out the recently opened Casino de Coba. At the state-of-the-art Dolphinaris Tulum, visitors enjoy swimming and interacting with dolphins. The beaches have achieved Blue Flag designation, a testament not only to the high standards that are set for guests, but also to the care that goes into preserving the natural beauty of the Mayan Riviera. And a dip in one of the many resort pools, complete with swim-up bars, is sure to refresh guests.

BOOK BECAUSE