

### THREE PERFECT DAYS IN COSTA RICA

The August edition of the prestigious magazine Hemispheres, in flight magazine of United Airlines's, promotes Costa Rica as the favorite destination of the month. Hemispheres August magazine includes an article on Costa Rica in its special section, called: Three Perfect Days. In this section, editors recommend one destination the airline flies to.

Beijing, Dublin, Frankfurt, London, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, among others, have been recommended as destinations in previous editions. Costa Rica was included because of its great tourist fame and is the first country in Central America and the third Latin American country to be recommended, as only Buenos Aires and México D.F. had been included previously.

The airline currently operates with one direct flight between San José and Washington D.C. every day. It also flies daily to Los Angeles, with one stop in Guatemala. United Airlines will open a new direct route between Chicago and San José in December.

Continental  
Airlines



### REPORTS RECORD IN LOAD FACTORS

**Continental Airlines** reported record load factors in global flights during the month of July. The global occupation factor was placed at historical maximum of 86.1% , 1.6 points higher than the figure for July of 2003.

For July of 2004 the occupation factor for main operations of national flights, increased by 0.8 points related to the same period of last year. The occupation factor for the main operations of international flights, was 85.6%, up 3.1 points over July of 2003 and 2.2 points higher than the preceding record, established in July of 2000.

**Continental Airlines** is the sixth largest airline in the world, with more than 2900 daily departures to 149 national and 119 international destinations in America, Europe and Asia. An additional 200 destinations are available through code agreements with other airlines.

### THE COUNTRY'S HOTELS AMONG THE BEST IN LATIN AMERICA

The country's hotel sector, form part of the list of the best hotels in the world. The Ministry of Tourism develops a strategy to strengthen the areas of greater potential for tourism.

The magazine, specialized in tourism, pointed out three hotels in Costa Rica as part of the list of 25 best in Latin America; this is an annual grading given by subscribers. These hotels are Los Sueños Marriot, Paradisus Playa Conchal and Punta Islita, located in Guanacaste. The survey analyzes factors as facilities, location, service and restaurant. The country with greatest presence in the list is Mexico, with a total of 13 tourist centers; the second country of the group is Argentina with 5 hotels, followed by Costa Rica. The Minister of Tourism, Rodrigo Castro, said that the combination of ecotourism, adventure tourism and traditional tourism, make a difference in the country's leadership in the world market. Mr. Castro states that these elements complement the country's hotel product offering.

Each sub-sector develops a strategy, according to the area and characteristics of the product. The National Plan for Tourism Development is flexible in this sense, and allows both the building of 4 or 5 - star hotels as well as hotels of 3 and 4 stars. We do not wish to enter into a development of lower

quality than that as it would impact the quality of the profile of visitors, and then we would risk a more serious dilemma - a great number of tourists generating less income.

The national plan for tourist development divides the country into 10 regions, each one of which identifies centers of primary and secondary development, in accordance with the installed product offering. Castro discussed how that offer strengthens areas of greater tourism development in the country, which permits having a product that is ready to attend a diversity of tourists.

"Logically, I'd dare to say, that a large part of the investment in these first few years, will be concentrated in the North Pacific, due to greater immediate development potential and the existence of the Daniel Oduber International Airport facilitating a greater attraction of visitation as well as the influence of the area's north plains that also attracts international tourism.

An important strategic factor to strengthen the areas, is the availability of international and local flights, the variety of itineraries and services is fundamental to this process. Airports in San José, Guanacaste and the South area, would communicate the Pacific, the Central Valley, the North plains and the Park of La Amistad.



**IBERIA**

## **AIRLINES INAUGURATES FLIGHT FROM MADRID TO COSTA RICA**

Iberia Airlines inaugurates a direct flight from Madrid to Costa Rica, starting on October second. The Ministry of Tourism expects that the visitation of Europeans to Costa Rica will be increased by 30% by the end of the year.

The Minister of Tourism, Rodrigo Castro indicated that after a process of negotiation, Iberia established four weekly flights to Costa Rica, in addition to the three flights connecting Panama and Guatemala with our country. The company Iberia intends to connect the capitals of Central America with its entire European network. During the last twelve months Central America, represents for Iberia nearly 245.000 passengers. The Costa Rican destination represents 41% of that demand, followed by Guatemala with 22% and Panama at 13%. The Minister pointed out that this new option offers the country an opportunity to strengthen its strategy for attracting the European market, which has increased in the first months of this year by 21%.

“It is a very advantageous position to try to increase the European travel market given excellent lengths of stay. This expansion allows us to count with four weekly direct flights from Spain to San José, Costa Rica, plus an additional two by the company Air Madrid, totaling six direct weekly flights, from the European continent.”

Mr Castro considers the negotiation process with the Spanish airline as flexible, Costa Rica’s demand as tourist destination was advantageous, over the rest of the Central American countries.

“But basically it is in the policy of the Costa Rica Tourism Board, government entity in charge of negotiations, to attract airlines a policy that has been in effect for last two years.

## **MORE TOURISTS ARE VISITING OUR COUNTRY**



More tourists visited our country; the first semester of this year reported an increase of 28%. A study by the Costa Rica Board of Tourism shows that airports Juan Santamaría, and Daniel Oduber in Liberia have experienced an increase international visitation, which surpassed 455.105 passengers for the first semester of 2003 to more than 583.000 visitors for the first 6 months of this year. Due to these and to annual projections, ICT expects that tourism arrivals, including all means of transport will increase by 12% for 2004. The estimated income generated by this sector could well surpass \$1,400 million for the present year.

**Delta AIRLINES**

## **INCREASES DAILY FLIGHTS TO THE COUNTRY**



**DELTA AIRLINES** will offer two additional daily flights from Atlanta to Costa Rica starting next December 2nd, informed Ana Fabela, Sales Manager of DELTA AIRLINES for Central America and Mexico. Ms Fabela stated that since the beginnings of this route in 1998, flight occupations have shown an average increase of 6% annually. DELTA currently offers 6 direct flights weekly from Atlanta to the Daniel Oduber Airport, located in Liberia. These two new flights will be from Atlanta to Juan Santamaria International Airport.

## NATIONAL PARKS FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF WORK



Developing projects destined to consolidate Costa Rica's national parks network, is the job of the National Parks Foundation, which celebrated its 25th anniversary. This private, non-for-profit organization, distributes resources attracted from international donations, to cater for needs in protected wildlife areas and to purchase land to transform it into new protected areas.

Nature protection promotes arrival of more tourists.

Dr. Abel Pacheco, President of Costa Rica, pointed out that one of the advantages of preserving the natural richness of the country is the considerable increase of Tourism, generating income in the order of millions of dollars.

He also assured that this administration has shown remarkable evidence of making advances towards the model of sustainable environmental development and for that reason he made a new request before the Legislative Assembly to approve environmental guarantees for Costa Rica.

## US AIRWAYS WILL EXPAND ITS ROUTES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



US Airways will schedule one weekly flight to Daniel Oduber International Airport in Liberia as part of its product offering for 2005. The airline will also include in its expansion flights from the US to Barbados, Aruba and will add St. Thomas and Liberia additional destinations.

This integration will be carried out during the last months of this year and the first months of 2005. The new routes are part of a growth strategy, developed by the airline 4 years ago.

US Airways is one of the most important airline companies of the East coast of the United States. The company has centered its operations for the Latin American area, on Caribbean destinations such as Cancun, Bahamas. Mexico and Costa Rica are the only destinations of Latin America.

The regional Sales and Marketing Manager of US Airways, Mauricio Chacón, pointed out that Costa Rica has been a success for the company as destination. The airline began its operations in the country, in December of 2003, with two flights Saturdays, to Philadelphia and Charlotte. Mauricio Chacón said that the demand increased the first three months of operation, so they had to increase to nine weekly flights.

For February 12th they foresee the opening of service between Charlotte-Liberia, on Saturdays.

Results for the month of July place US Airways as the third largest carrier airline leaving from Costa Rica to the East coast of the United States. Costa Rica's success as destination opens the possibility of integrating more flights to the airport of Liberia in the short term.

US Airways' distribution centers are in Charlotte and Philadelphia. These centers are near to cities that are key for Business and Tourism. For the last three months, US Airways, has been the airline with highest percentage of occupation leaving from San José with levels that reach 88%.

## COSTA RICA IS MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN HAWAII

Costa Rica took over Hawaii's place as best adventure destination last year, as revealed by the publication Pacific Business News, of Honolulu.

An annual study performed among 6 thousand specialists in luxury travel, by the independent travel agency network - Virtuoso, shows that last year their clients favored Costa Rica, over Hawaii, the world-class destination.

To the question of what they considered the best adventure destination, 17% of persons questioned, answered Costa Rica, while 9% chose the American states and 8% preferred Africa. Similarly, among the younger traveler, 20% answered that they preferred Costa Rica, 13% Hawaii and 10% Alaska.

The country was also selected as the best destination for honeymoon travel, in the September issue of Modern Bride magazine. This year, the web page Elmundoviajes.com selected Costa Rica as best worldwide adventure and sports destination, while last year the American Society of Travel Agents chose Costa Rica as a training destination.

Such acknowledgments confirm that the promotional efforts of the country, has allowed it to be positioned in an important worldwide destination for Americans and Europeans. It is this image which has motivated more airlines to fly to Costa Rica, which in turn increases expectations among travel managers.

## TRANSIT OF TOURISTS INCREASED IN AIRPORT OF LIBERIA



**T**ransit of tourists increased by 80% in the last two years for Daniel Oduber International Airport. Some airlines are studying the possibility of including this route in their schedules.

The manager of the Airport of Liberia, Analive Rosales, said that commercial flights from Delta Airlines, were the first arriving to this terminal. Today Continental, American, and Mexicana airlines have been added. "Since 1995 international flights have come here, when the airport started international operations; the quantity of flights arriving was normally less than we see today, and besides that, they were charter flights; we started

commercial flights on December of 2002, with sold out flights."

Ms. González said that in 2002 the Airport offered 3 weekly flights; today travellers may choose among an itinerary of 14 scheduled flights operating 7 days a week.

González pointed out that coming directly to Guanacaste may be very attractive for travelers, so far this year around 90.000 passengers have passed through the Liberia Airport facilities. "We know that currently the airport is growing quite strongly and this has created some interest and expectations of many airlines arriving to Costa Rica, in this case the tourist destination is Guanacaste, and it is becoming ever attractive to airlines as a point for business."

The manager stated that the majority of travelers arriving to this airport, come from the United States and Canada.

## CULTURE, NATURE AND ADVENTURE ATTRACT EUROPEAN TOURISTS

**E**uropean tourists begin to see Central America as an important destination, especially as it combines cultural, natural and adventure attractions, which according to market research, is just what they look forward for their holidays.

Mr. Javier Vega, Executive President of the Central American Tourist Agency located in Madrid, concerning the first Central American Tourism Congress, said that the isthmus should work harder in strengthening these aspects, to be more successful in the European market. According to Vega, the main reason that European tourists visit other countries is to get to know their culture, followed by natural and adventure attractions.

European Tourism could increase income significantly as Vega pointed out that the European market spend not only more holiday time, 10 to 14 days longer than North Americans do, but that they spend more. European tourists spend an equivalent of what 1,8 tourists "short haul" tourists spend, he remarked.

This year Central America will receive around 639.000 European visitors, 14% more than last year, when figures reached 560.711. European tourism, said Vega, could significantly increase the income generated by this activity, since Central America receives only 2,6% of the earnings produced by the industry for the entire continent.

## NEW AIRLINE WILL FLY TO OUR COUNTRY

**B**y the end of this year a flight arriving to Costa Rican territory will probably not bring persons wearing sunglasses and carrying back-packs, but people wearing business suits with portfolios in hand. This because Atlantic Airlines will open a new route between Tegucigalpa, Honduras and Costa Rica; they intend to capture the market of business travel.

Currently the airline is processing the corresponding operation permits and expects in the next days to present the requirements to grant the exploitation certificate of the routes.

The information was given by the General Direction of Civil Aviation, confirming that company's plans to operate two daily flights, with stops in Managua, Nicaragua.

Nevertheless, the tourist part of this new association is not ruled out, because as Hondurans develop their Caribbean coast as a destination for Costa Ricans, other multi destination alternatives are possible.

Being directed to business people, it is expected that persons will have the possibility of doing round trips on the same day.

Atlantic Airlines has 10 years of operation and its fleet includes Boeing 737-200 airplanes, which may be also be used for transporting freight.