

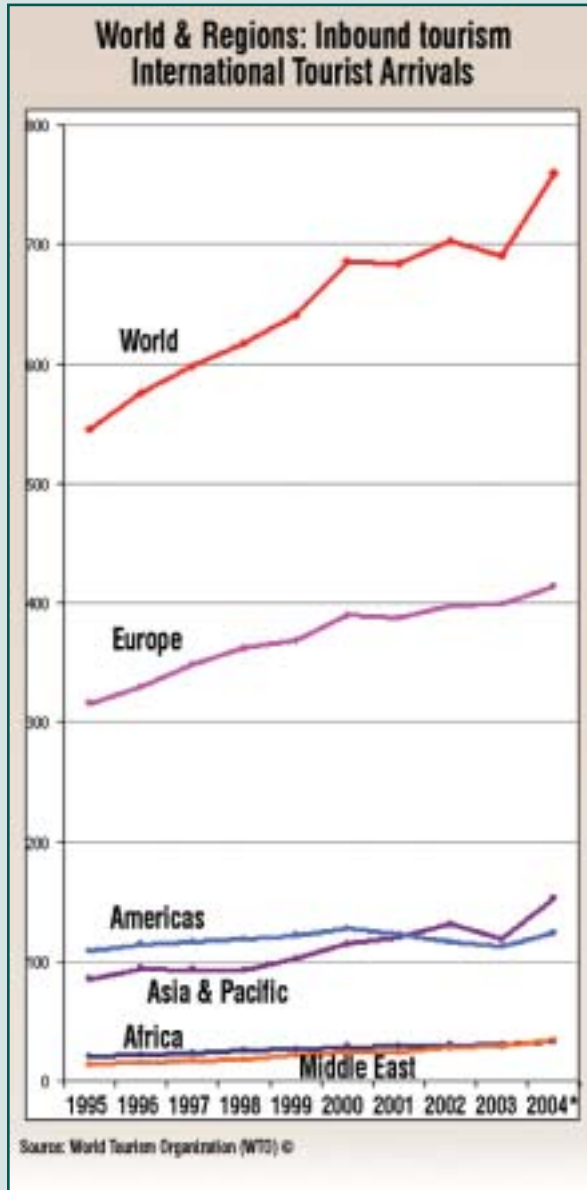
International tourism obtains best results in 20 years

After three years of stagnant growth, international tourism experienced a spectacular rebound in 2004. According to WTO World Tourism Barometer, international tourist arrivals reached an all-time record of 760 million — an increase of 10% over 2003.

“As we foresaw in October, tourism in 2004 reached a record of 760 million international tourist arrivals and the best growth rate of the last 20 years,” WTO Secretary-General Francesco Frangialli said. “We are confident that the tourism sector is back on the right track after three difficult years and though still in commotion over the tragic events in Asia, the tourism sector will surely show again its extraordinary resilience and its ability to overcome difficulties by making an important contribution to the quick recovery of the affected countries”.

In a context of double-digit world tourism revival, Europe reports the lowest result of all regions. International tourist arrivals grew by 4% to a total of 414 million, driven in particular by the excellent performance of countries in Central and Eastern Europe (+8%) and in Northern Europe (+7%). In contrast, results were significantly more modest in Southern/Mediterranean Europe (+3%) and in Western Europe (+2%). The more mature destinations in the euro zone were particularly affected by the increased competition from non-euro destinations, not only in Europe, but also in North Africa (Morocco and Tunisia) and in the Middle East (Egypt).

2004 was definitely the year of full re-



covery in Asia and the Pacific as the region attained a 29% growth rate, receiving an estimated volume of 154 million tourist arrivals. Following the trend already seen during the last months of 2003, most of the destinations in North-East and South-East Asia rebounded very strongly from the SARS effects, leading both subregions to end

the year with a projected increase of around 30%.

After three years of depressed figures, 2004 was the year that finally brought tourism in the Americas back to the growth side. Though still lagging behind the 2000 record volume of 128 million arrivals, international tourist arrivals increased by an exceptional 10% in 2004 to a total of 124 million, as all subregions performed positively.

Argentina’s improving economic situation, together with the devaluation of the peso, contributed to the good results obtained by the country (+11% in the first three quarters of the year), but also to the positive performance of nearby countries such as Uruguay (+28% until November), Chile (+14% up to October) and Paraguay (+15% for the full year) due to its importance as traffic generator in these destinations.

In Africa (+7%), 2004 was a particular buoyant year for destinations in North Africa, which with a 17% increase rate contributed determinately to the overall growth registered in the region, as performance of sub-Saharan destinations was rather flat (+1%).

In the Middle East tourism continues to be one of the most dynamic economic sectors. Arrivals grew by an estimated 20% to a total of 35 million, which makes the region the fourth most visited in the world, surpassing for the first time the volume of Africa (estimated to have received 33 million arrivals in 2004).

Continental Airlines Wins Three Major Awards

Continental Airlines was named “Airline of the Year” and “Best Airline Based in North America” — both for the second year in a row. It was also named for having the “Best Executive/Business Class” for the third year in the row. The OAG Airline of the Year Awards has been called “The Oscars” of the airline industry.

“These awards once again demonstrate that Continental’s employees are doing a spectacular job of delivering the service our customers want,” said Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Larry Kellner. “Consistency is one of the hallmarks of our product, and winning these awards repeatedly shows that everyone at Continental is doing a great



job meeting our customers’ needs and expectations — flight after flight after flight.”

The awards are based on votes by frequent flyers around the world who subscribe to OAG print and electronic travel information products. Jim Summerford, vice president-Europe, Middle East and India, accepted all three awards on behalf of the airline at a ceremony today at the Park Lane Hotel in London.

Continental Airlines is the world’s sixth-largest airline. Continental, together with Continental Express and Conti-

ental Connection, has more than 3,000 daily departures throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia, serving 150 domestic and 130 international destinations, more than any other carrier in the world. Nearly 400 additional points are served via SkyTeam alliance airlines, which include Aeromexico, Air France/KLM, Alitalia, CSA Czech Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Korean Air and Northwest Airlines. With 41,000 employees, Continental has hubs serving New York, Houston, Cleveland and Guam, and together with Continental Express, carries approximately 56 million passengers per year. Continental consistently earns awards and critical acclaim for both its operation and its corporate culture.

Sueño Azul
Sueño Azul
What's New?
 Sueño Azul Waterfalls Resort & Adventure Land now offers
 a world of magic and fun for all the family...

Sueño Azul Waterfalls One Day Tour attractions Only 40 miles away from San José (1-30 hr drive)

- Waterfall tour
- Canopy
- Swimming Pool
- Horseback riding, Rainforest Hiking, Biking, Yoga, Sport's Zone
- Tubing, Floating, Snorkeling, Fishing in the ponds
- Butterfly Garden, Leafcutter-ant Farm
- "Pioneer Museum" and "The Wonderful Costa Rican Legend's Museum"
- Lunch included at our One Day Tour restaurant "La Cascada"
- Transportation is included

Other activities available in the area for an additional cost.

Agreement Between Costa Rica and Panama Will Benefit a Border Park

Costa Rica and Panama agreed to strategic plan of eco-tourism development and the protection to the indigenous communities of La Amistad International Park (PILA), which straddles both nations and is home to some of the world's most unique species of flora and fauna.

“Development of this border area is linked to the rational use of biodiversity”, indicated Costa Rica's Minister of the Environment, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez Echandi, during a press conference in the Panamanian capital.

The Minister signed in conjunction with Ms. Ligia Castro, Panama's Director for the National Environment Au-



thority (ANAM), an agreement to formalize the creation of a bi-national commission of the PILA, for the 30 year old park.

Both officials coincided that coordinated efforts will facilitate the principal goal of protecting the park, which includes 193 thousand hectares on the Costa Rican side and 207 thousand hectares in Panama.

Due to its ample biodiversity the United Nations Organization Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) declared La Amistad Biosphere Reserve a World Heritage Site in 1983.

Source:Costa Rica Tourist Board

Budget®
Car Rental

**Mayoristas, ahora con nosotros
ustedes podrán ofrecer sus servicios
en todo Centro América.**

Costa Rica	Honduras
El Salvador	Nicaragua
Guatemala	Panamá

www.budgetcentroamerica.com

Nature Air™

Inaugurates Daily Flights to San Carlos

Since May 1st, domestic air carrier - Nature Air - has been operating a daily flight to the city of San Carlos, located in Costa Rica's northern region. Landing specifically at the runway at El Tanque in Arenal, Na-

ture Air becomes the first airline to operate this route with daily flights.

The 19 seat Twin-Otter airplane is the largest craft operating domestically in Costa Rica. Fares for a one-way ticket start at \$40 for Costa Ricans, \$65 for

tourists and \$45 for residents of the country.

Departure from the Tobías Bolaños Airport near San José, is at 11:40 a.m. arriving at El Tanque in Arenal by 12:10 p.m, providing access to this diverse area in less than 30 minutes. For many years San Carlos has undergone great tourism development, due to the great gamma of the activities related to adventure and nature. In addition waterfalls, rivers of crystalline waters, caverns, indigenous reserves and beautiful lagoons; the Arenal Volcano is one of the most important attractions of this area.



Source: Costa Rica Tourist Board

Come!!!

Discover the fields of one of the best pineapple plantations in the country! Live and learn about the unique growing and harvesting cycle of Costa Rica's top agro export in the first and only pineapple tour.



For more information visit: www.agritourscr.com
Write us: info@agritourscr.com
Tel(506) 2821349 Fax: (506)282 1383



Visit the biggest SURF SHOP on the pacific coast, where you can find all kind of accessories and international brands.

Surf Shop & Boutique

TAMARINDO ADVENTURES

TA3

- Scooters
- Dirt Bikes
- Snorkeling gear
- Atv's (four wheelers)
- Kayaks
- Boogieboards
- Surfboards (over 100)
- RACKS



Costa Rica
tours and rentals company

for more information call: (00506) 653-0108 - (00506) 653-1019
www.tamarindoadventures.net - e-mail: info@tamarindoadventures.net

Panama:

Cultural Heritage, a Reflection of its Roots

As a meeting point in the history of the countries of Latin America, Panama is a country forged by various cultures and traditions that come together to create a unique complexity and exotic environment. The country's ethnic diversity is reflected in the traditional products, such as wood-carvings, ceremonial masks and pottery, as well as in its architecture, cuisine and festivals.

To visit Panama is to dazzle the senses, where indigenous and European cultures combine to create a country without equal. Panama's architecture is a reflection of the different groups that make their home there. The Kuna Yala region, home to the Kuna Indians with their traditional huts, stands in contrast to the homes built by Swiss, Yugoslavian, Swedish, German and American immigrants in the styles unique to their respective countries.

Casco Antiguo

The ancient city of Panama, currently undergoing restoration, is a site of great historical and architectural importance, and was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO on December 6, 1997. Visitors to the site can see homes built at the beginning of the last century, narrow lanes with ancient ruins, beautiful colonial churches, the National Theater, the Church of San José, with its famous golden altar that was saved from the greed of the pirates and the ruins of the convent of Santo Domingo and its famous Low Arch, which is over 300 years old. Panama City also has several museums, such as the Canal Museum, the History Museum and the Reina Torres de Araúz Museum, which focuses on the anthropology of the isthmus -



Casco Antiguo

the Art Museum and the Museum of Natural Sciences — among others.

Panama will satisfy every palate

Panama is an ideal place to enjoy local cuisine, which varies from region to region. Some of the local dishes include sancocho de gallina (chicken stew), carimañolas (deep fried meat rolls), new corn fritters, fried pork rinds and jerked beef, a delicacy for any discriminating diner. Fish and seafood are prevalent in several areas, including the famous dish known as “Fu-Fu”—a soup made from coconut milk, green plantains and fish with a pinch of a distinctive spicy condiment called “chombo” chile.

Dance, a symbol of diversity

The local folklore can be experienced through a multitude of festivals, dances and traditions that have been handed down from generation to generation.

The beautiful “Pollera” is the typical dress for the Panamanian women. The “Pollera” is embroidered on fine weave fabric with intricate, brightly colored designs that take over a year to complete. The men's finery consists of embroidered, long sleeved shirts, three-quarter length pants and the traditional “Montuno” straw hat.

The different festivals reflect the influence of the different ethnic groups that make up the country. To the north, in Colón Province, one can observe traditions of African influence, such as Congo drums dating back to the era of slavery and the Black Christ feast. In contrast, the May Pole ceremony is found in Bocas del Toro, which is a European tradition. Throughout the country year-round festivals take place in each town in honor of the Patron Saint of each town. The Panamanian carnival, which is held before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent, is world famous for its processions, bands and singers - which, together with the rich folklore of street musicians and beautiful women dressed in the traditional “polleras” and adorned with gold jewelry - make it a colorful celebration of the mix of different customs of all the ethnic groups.

The artisan pottery offers visitors a great variety of designs to choose from. Styles range from imitations of Pre-Colombian motifs to folk images and of varied uses—from dishes to planters.

The Panamanian Institute of Tourism (IPAT), is a governmental entity that promotes Panama's various travel products such as ecotourism, sport/adventure tourism, archeological tourism, historical tourism and meetings and conventions on a global scale.

The sun is
rising in a
fascinating
destination



Nestled on a secluded private beach just 25 minutes from Panama City, the 300 Room InterContinental Playa Bonita Resort & Spa is a sanctuary for the senses. The Resort offers a 10,000 sq. foot Holistic Spa, three restaurants, spacious meeting facilities and luxurious accommodations to impress and entertain the most curious and well travelled visitors.



INTERCONTINENTAL

Playa Bonita Resort & Spa

PANAMA

RISING DECEMBER 2005

Sales and Reservations - Bern Hotels & Resorts Panama Tel. +(507) 206-8800 Fax. +(507) 206-8870 • U.S. Toll Free 1-877-800-1690
reservaciones@bernhotelspanama.com • www.playabonitapanama.com • www.intercontinental.com



THE BEST OPTION IN ALL INCLUSIVE

Distance from San José: 2 hours by highway.
Hotel Amapola is located in a touristic attractive zone, with a great amount of restaurants and entertainment centers. Besides, this is the most important area to practice surfing due to the wonderful waves of its beach. This exotic hotel offers the ALL INCLUSIVE SERVICE, excellent to enjoy with family and friends.

- Buffet Style Meals
- Snack Bar
- Wet Bar
- Swimming Pool
- 2 Jacuzzis
- Casino
- Volley Ball Court
- Parking
- Beach Club
- Daily Entertainment

TAKE
ADVANTAGE
OF OUR SPECIAL
RATES

200 mts. Este de la Municipalidad de Garabito. Playa Jacó. Tel.: 643-2255
reservacion@hotelamapola.com

America West and US Airways to merge

New airline will provide customers full-service offerings and consumer-friendly pricing structure of a low-cost low-fare carrier

The transaction is expected to be financed with approximately \$1.5 billion of new capital from:

- \$350 million of committed new equity plus a planned rights offering
- More than \$675 million from partners and suppliers
- \$250 million or more from aircraft-related financings and/or sales
- Expected release of \$200-300 million in cash reserves



The combination would form one of the industry's most financially stable airlines with \$10 billion in annual revenues, approximately \$2 billion in total cash and among the lowest debt levels of all major airlines

The new airline is expected to have one of the most efficient work groups in the industry. Once the anticipated annual cost savings and revenue synergies of over \$600 million are implemented, the new airline will be positioned for profitability at oil prices above \$50 per barrel.

The new airline will operate under a single brand of US Airways, but its operational labor groups will be integrated over two to three years with emphasis on minimizing any dislocations within the work groups.



U-S AIRWAYS