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TRAINING FOR THE TRAVEL TRADE

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CARIBBEAN

Puerto Rico gets ready for lift-off

BY STEVE HARTRIDGE

■ British Airways' new twice-weekly Gatwick-San Juan service, which takes flight for the first time on March 28, will put Puerto Rico on the map as an upmarket Caribbean destination.

At least that's the hope of the country's tourism body. Said Marimar Lidin, sales director Europe, Puerto Rico Tourism Company: "British Airways last flew to the country in 2000, so in a way it's been a lost decade from the UK, but we see this as a new era for tourism.

"With excellent onward connections (to other islands) from San Juan, we hope UK travellers come to see Puerto Rico as perhaps the 'plus element' to a two- or three-centre trip."

The focus would be on the higher end of the market and luxury products like the new W and St Regis hotels, which both opened in 2010.

Puerto Rico plans to work with select operators and travel agents in 2011 to help them build an 'al a carte Puerto Rico product', said Lidin, who claimed both Abercrombie & Kent and Kuoni are considering including the country.

"The trade is asking why BA is again



flying to Puerto Rico. The good thing for us is that in the UK we have a clean slate... there is little knowledge (about the destination) but also no myths to overcome; we can tell our story from the beginning," she added.

The country's marketing strategy will also include fam trips for travel agents.

The Spanish-influenced destination has a great climate and superb beaches, but what helps stand it above the regional pack is residents who genuinely enjoy

engaging with visitors, said Lidin.

"We have all the beach and greenery you would expect from the Caribbean but we really are the only destination where you can engage with the locals on several levels. Puerto Ricans like to go out, like to dance, like to dine and like to talk to tourists. European travellers like and appreciate that."

The year-round British Airways flight will leave Gatwick on Mondays and Fridays. www.topuertorico.org

Jalousie reopens as The Tides

■ Jalousie Plantation in St Lucia started welcoming guests back to the resort in the run-up to Christmas after a comprehensive overhaul of the resort.

The property, re-branded as The Tides, Sugar Beach, is set within over 100 acres of virgin rainforest with access to the only white-sand beach in the southwest of the island.

Eleven luxury Sugar Mill rooms have been fully-renovated and feature private walled gardens, outdoor plunge pools, and a personalised butler service.

There are also 42 new luxury villas, two new bars (and two new restaurants). Also new is the Rainforest Spa, with tree-house treatment rooms and a temascal (an 'Amerindian steam room').

The Tides, Sugar Beach is a member of The Viceroy Hotel Group's Tides hotel brand, which also includes a property in Miami and two on Mexico's Caribbean coast.

www.thejalousieplantation.com

Cap Maison serves up local flavours

■ Five-star St Lucia property Cap Maison is offering cookery classes designed to 'inspire guests to appreciate the colourful variety and quality of the island's produce.'

The classes start with a visit to nearby Castries market to source local ingredients such as plantain, dasheen (root from a Callaloo plant) and Mahi Mahi. Guests are then taken to Cap Maison's restaurant, The Cliff at Cap, where they learn all about West Indian cooking. The dishes created within the



class form part of lunch and recipes are provided at the end of the course. The cookery classes take place weekly on Saturday mornings (price around £31). www.capmaison.com

CARIBBEAN IN BRIEF

Friendship singles head to Jamaica

■ Singles specialist Friendship Travel has a Jamaica all-inclusive option. Seven nights at the Jewell Dunn's River Beach Resort & Spa (formerly Sandals Dunn's River), lead in at £1295pp. The resort recently reopened after a \$7 million overhaul. www.friendshiptravel.com



SuperClubs gets new UK profile

■ SuperClubs has appointed Martin Grass and Tracy Denman-Hughes as its UK representation arm. Martin, who set up the original SuperClubs office in 1988, said: "It's great to again be involved with the company that started the all-inclusive idea." Contact Martin on 07786 453384 or Tracy on 07768 747329. www.superclubs.org

Dominica has a green message

■ Dominica will be pushing its green credentials in 2011. There are no international chain hotels on the island and most eco-lodges and resorts have signed up to a pledge to preserve the destination's fragile eco-system. Leading lodges include Rosalie Forest Eco Lodge and Jungle Bay Resort and Spa. www.visit-dominica.com

Tourism update

Caribbean Tourism Organisation



The Caribbean Tourism Organisation would like to wish everyone a successful and prosperous 2011!

As temperatures drop in the UK, they are soaring in the Caribbean and now is a great time to escape the winter blues and embrace the warmth of the Caribbean!

Get ready for lots of enquiries and keep updated on the latest news from the Caribbean by joining the Caribbean Training Programme. With so many new hotels and resorts planned to open in the Caribbean in 2011 there's something for everyone.

One of the many advantages of joining the CTP is receiving a bi-monthly newsletter crammed full with news from the Caribbean region. It'll help you increase your knowledge and includes details of additional training schemes, events, roadshows and all our educational.

Find out more about the Caribbean Training Programme by contacting Sonja Rogers on 020 8948 0057 or by email at srogers@caribtourism.com. And if you're already on the programme, then recommend a friend!

CARIBBEAN VILLAGE

Don't forget to look out for – and of course visit – the Caribbean zones/stands at various trade and consumer shows throughout the UK & Ireland in 2011.