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ARC'S WAIT-LOSS SECRETS REVEALED – SEE INSIDE COVER!

TRAVEL WEEKLY

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HOW WE'RE **LOSING THE WAIT** (AND KEEPING IT OFF!)

From application processing to commission payments, we've taken measures to trim the fat off our processes. The wait is coming off and we're feeling healthier and more flexible – but we're not satisfied. Everyone is looking forward to a more energized 2010 as well!



In Playa del Carmen, **El Taj** brings bit of Bali while blending in

By Laura Del Rosso

El Taj Oceanfront, the latest luxury vacation condominium complex in Playa del Carmen on the Caribbean coast of Quintana Roo state, is scheduled to open in late January.

It is the fifth such project by developer Jack Perlman, an American who has been based in Playa del Carmen for 15 years. Perlman has built four small condominium complexes with 100 units. They are Villas Sabe, Porto Playa, Maya Villa and El Taj Beachside.

They are marketed under the Condo Hotels Playa del Carmen brand and are located within steps of each other on a stretch of white-sand Caribbean beach in Quintana Roo state. All offer hotel amenities, including a 24-hour front desk, daily maid service, restaurant, airport transfers and fitness center.

El Taj on tap

The newest addition to the group, the 41-unit El Taj Oceanfront, is scheduled for a soft opening Jan. 28 and an official grand opening the second week of February.

It was designed by Sergio Segura, a well-known Mexican architect who lives in Playa del Carmen and was the designer of the oth-



er Condo Hotels properties.

According to Segura, the El Taj Oceanfront was designed with a Balinese theme that blends with the local landscape.

"The white colors, lush vegetation, wooden artifacts, four-floor height [adhering to the height restrictions of the region] and thatched roofs give a feeling that the building belongs right there, by the stunningly turquoise Caribbean sea, on a sugary white-sand beach, blending in with Mexican palapas seen everywhere on the horizon," Segura said. "Soft curves of the building seem to imitate the rhythm of the waves and the tranquil, peaceful environ-

ment that surrounds it."

The landscaping and decor features Balinese fountains, statues and art. Wooden palm columns lend structural support for the buildings, which are made of local wood and stone.

Pooling resources

In the center of its courtyard and facing the beach lies the Therapeutic Aqua Spa lounge, an outdoor deck area with self-operated massage chairs. The property has two swimming pools, one an infinity pool with large whirlpool tub and the other a larger, oceanfront pool that is part of the



At left, the 41-unit El Taj Oceanfront vacation condominium is scheduled for a soft opening Jan. 28 and an official grand opening in February. Above, the interiors of one-, two- and three-bedroom condominiums at El Taj Oceanfront are designed with a Balinese theme.

group's beach club. The latter is open to guests at all five Condo Hotels properties.

The interiors of the one-, two- and three-bedroom condominiums also were designed with a Balinese theme. The walls are decorated with authentic masks and paintings from the Indonesian island.

Each unit features private terraces; marble countertops in kitchens and bathrooms; high-end appliances; hurricane-resistant windows; whirlpool tubs; and private, outdoor showers.

The property's fitness center was designed by Vito Errico, the founder of the Equinox fitness club chain in the U.S. There will also be two restaurants, a scuba shop, a New York-style deli and, scheduled to open later, a spa.

Rates start at \$265 per night per condo. Visit www.eltaj.net.

MEXICO UPDATE

Palace Resorts, Le Blanc up agent outreach

By Laura Del Rosso

Palace Resorts and Le Blanc Spa Resort are offering higher bonus commissions and a new website for agents to book vacations online. Agents who sign up on the new Palaceresorts.com/travelagents site receive a private log-in and personal profile that tracks and records reservations and provides platforms to create new bookings.

Agents can book land-only stays, which pay 12% commission, and packages, which pay 10% commission.

The booking site's technology enables agents to search for specific booking param-

eters, choose desired airfare itineraries, add promotional offers, learn more about each hotel and room category without exiting the site and email price and itinerary quotes to clients for approval before final booking.

Meanwhile, Palace Resorts and Le Blanc Spa Resort enhanced their Travel Agent Bonus Commission Program to offer an incremental bonus commission for direct bookings and bookings made through wholesalers or GDSs with an earning potential of up to \$1,250 for every 10 rooms booked.

Agents who book at any of the 12 Palace Resorts or Le Blanc Spa Resort with individual stays for three or four nights receive a \$50 bonus commission per room; agents who book individual stays for five to six nights receive a \$75 bonus commission per room; and those who book individual stays for seven nights or more receive a \$100 bonus commission per room.

For every combined 10 rooms booked

within one calendar year at Palace Resorts and Le Blanc Spa Resort, agents receive an additional \$250 bonus. The per-room incentive and \$250 bonus is rewarded for every additional 10 rooms booked. Bonus commissions are also available with group bookings.

From Moon to Hard Rock

In other news, Palace Resorts and Hard Rock International announced that the all-inclusive Moon Palace Casino, Golf & Spa Resort, which just opened in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, will be rebranded as the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in the spring.

The 1,800-room property, set on 121 acres on Macao Beach, is Palace Resorts' first in the D.R. and boasts 11 restaurants and 12 bars. It also is home to one of the largest casinos in the Caribbean, with more than 48,000 square feet of gaming space and a high-limit poker room, VIP lounge and Race and Sports Book, in addition to 457 slots and 40 tables.

For more, see www.palaceresorts.com and www.hardrockhotels.com.



The pool at Avventura Spa Palace on the Riviera Maya.