

As a preamble, His Excellency Dr. Antony Stokes started his interview explaining that "the circumstances that characterize current relations between Cuba and the United Kingdom in the diplomatic sphere as well as in commercial exchange are full of potentials: both countries have embarked on a period of strengthening ties. The background is also one of improving relations between Cuba and the European Union (EU). Right now we are in the process of ratifying a new Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA), which symbolizes a new stage between the Union and Cuba to make future relations better and more fruitful. The British, who are still EU members, support this very positive step."

"However, we are about to leave the EU, in late March 2019, a rather complex process that doesn't mean in any way an exit from Europe. We remain proud to be part of that continent and have excellent links with the other countries of the community. We will support the rapprochement between Cuba and the Union, and at the same time we will increase bilateral relations with the island."

In that new scenario, the Ambassador reflected that as part of the EU they must follow their regulations, norms and agreements, but in the future, "as a country out of the Union, sovereign and independent, with a freer trade policy, we can strengthen even more our ties with other countries, as is the case with Cuba; I believe the Cuban government shares that aspiration. The United Kingdom's former foreign minister, during his visit to Cuba in 2016, opened the road to extend links in several ways, not only in the commercial sphere, but also in others, like culture."

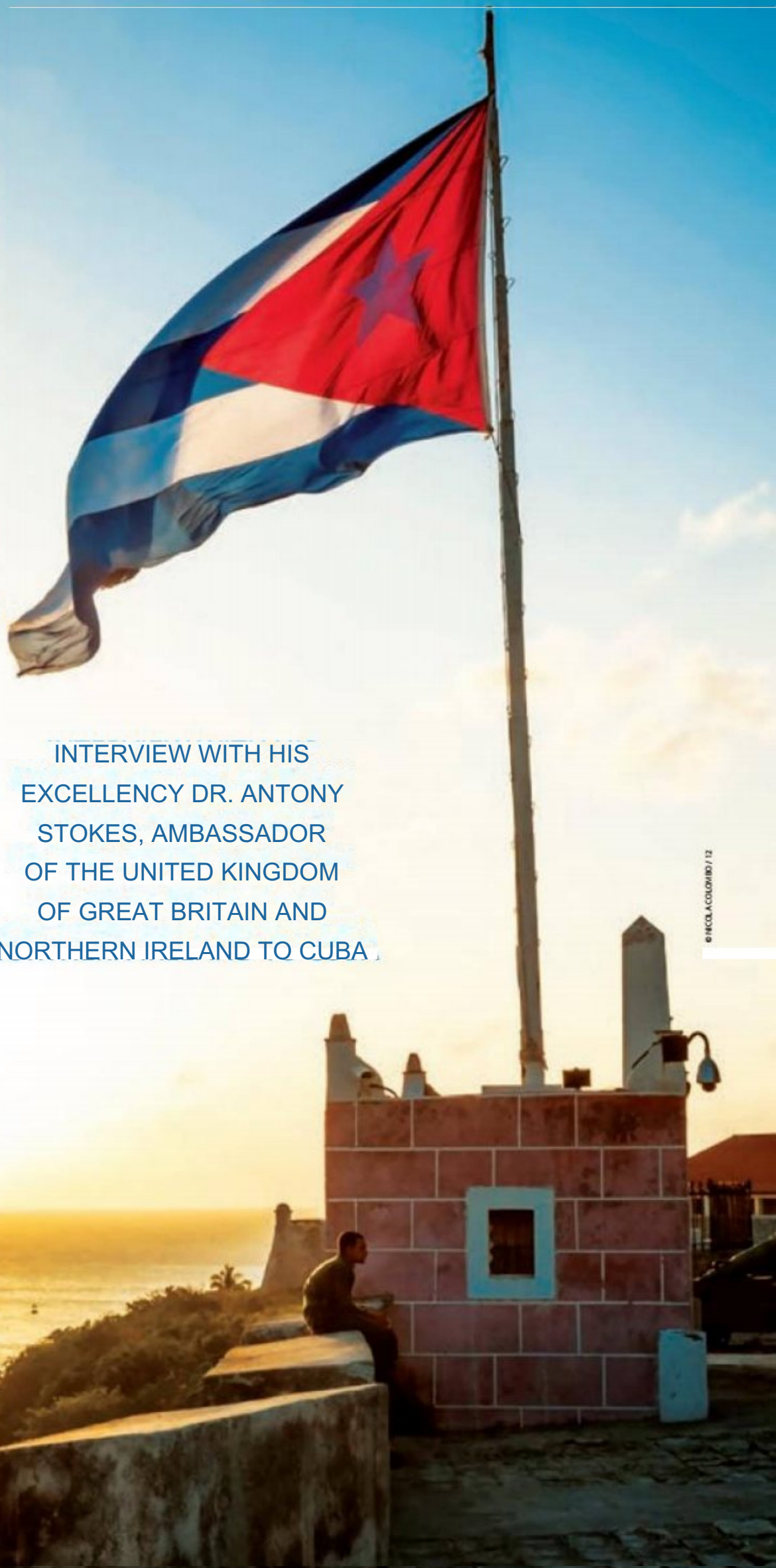
The United Kingdom doesn't have a large representation on the island, according to the Ambassador in Havana: "we do not have unlimited resources, but we have decided to make a greater commitment here in order to support more projects, more activity, more scholarships. We are focused on several priorities, areas in which we can offer something a bit special, different, unique; areas in which both countries can create added value?"

There are five or six issues in which the European nation is focusing its efforts, according to its Ambassador, "special opportunities in the context of bilateral relations with Cuba, something different than other countries... very specific cooperation programs where we see a common opportunity."

He highlighted among those the sphere of financial and banking services: "it is evident that London has great experience and capacities; I consider this to be an opportunity for us both as Cuba strengthens its economy and banking systems, and shares its challenges, modes, systems, successes and efforts. This is a specific sector, in which there is a coincidence of interests."

The Ambassador highlighted cooperation in the teaching of the English language. He

Tourism in Cuba Opportunity for



INTERVIEW WITH HIS
EXCELLENCY DR. ANTONY
STOKES, AMBASSADOR
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND
NORTHERN IRELAND TO CUBA

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Dr. Antony Stokes, ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to Cuba.

affirmed: "it's not as if we can teach Cuba something, but rather that we can share the challenge which the country is facing, support its ambition to achieve the aim of raising its people's ability in this need of modern life to speak and understand the English language."

With respect to this, he explained that the British Council has an intense program, backed by the ministries of higher education and education, working "side by side" - as he says - to collaborate in Cuba's intention of modernizing the teaching of the English language and raising the students' command of the language, mainly university students.

He said that many had viewed the Cuban educational system as "a jewel of the Revolution" He commented that the United Kingdom also provides free education for all the population, which is why "it is interesting to share the experiences of how we have implemented our respective systems?"

Other spheres of reciprocity include biotechnology and the pharmaceutical industry, in which he considers that "the level achieved by Cuba in the world sphere is remarkable". Another one is energy, about which he emphasized his country's ambitions in the oil, gas and alternative energy industries. He commented that some nine months ago the

Embassy organized an event in Havana on oil and gas, and they are going to organize another in early December. In regards to renewable energy, in which the Caribbean country has the ambitious goal of increasing its proportion for 2030, he underlined the joint solar power and biomass project in Mariel and in Ciego de Avila.

Visibly captivated, the Ambassador paused to refer to a phrase of his preference: We *are two creative islands*. "I like it a lot because it represents something real, they are not just diplomatic words. Cuba has a great power and impact in the cultural world with its brand, which is a very powerful attribute; that is to say, it has a much bigger profile than its size. Cubans are a very creative people, energetic and innovative... they have dance, music and culture in their blood, it is a wealth that can make things happen."

"And, to be honest," he continued, "I am of the opinion that we also have remarkable creativity epitomized by our music's impact in the world. Theater, cinema, the British Council and world-leading science are other examples of the universally recognized culture which transcends our borders."

Among his arguments, he added that four of the 10 best universities in the world are British, just like many global inventions, such

as computation, jet engines, the electric motor and the World Wide Web (WWW). Thus, "its impact is also much greater in proportion to the size of our island, which is why I like to celebrate "two creative islands?"

"Cuba is a source of creative ideas. From my point of view, as Ambassador of the United Kingdom, it is obvious that we must make good use of that coincidence of wealth; we are diverse, in fact Cuban culture is Latin and very different from the English and that can stimulate us further?"

Returning to the joint projects, he continued: "there is another in process, let's say that it's a symbol, led by the British Aberdeen Standard Investments Company (ASI), one of the world's biggest investors, which has decided to position itself in Cuba and is opting to manage Ceiba Investment. ASI is aiming to grow this fund to £ 300 million in coming years, and on 9 October it became the first direct Cuban Fund to be listed on the famous London Stock Exchange.

Ceiba is making investments in big offices, like the MiramarTrade Center, and several hotels ~ Meliá Habana and another three in Varadero. No doubt "this represents something new that is going to support Cuba's growth, and particularly tourism."

"And tourism is very important for us. We are one of Cuba's principal sources of tourists, and last year, according to the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR), more than 200,000 British visitors arrived, representing a growth of more than 30% in two years.

"The figures shift, and right now tourism is suffering from the impact of Hurricane Irma, which was a disaster for the country. What impressed me was the preparation and organization, especially of the Civil Defense, in the evacuation of around a million Cubans, but also thousands of tourists, including more than 4,000 Britons who were mostly staying on the northern coast, precisely the area through which the hurricane passed; they were evacuated, mostly to Varadero and later outside the country, efficiently organized by the Cuban authorities. I am grateful to the Cuban government, MINTUR and the Civil Defense for their mobilization and support to ensure our compatriots' safety?"

It should be emphasized that after the hurricane the United Kingdom was involved in the recovery process. "We have contributed around two million pounds sterling in support through the office of the Cuban Red Cross and the Ministry of Public Health

Tourism in Cuba Represents an Opportunity for the United Kingdom



> so that the communities can recover, fundamentally in reestablishing the roofs: the goal is to rebuild better than they were before. I believe we are the country that has most contributed to this program; we are very proud to have worked once again 'side by side' with the Cubans in this reconstruction of homes and infrastructure, so that Cuba can return to its normalcy, and we hope that this hurricane season will be more tranquil than the last one."

Indispensable In this Interview is the reference to the tourism megaprojects associated with the development of real estate involving companies from the United Kingdom, at different stages of execution.

His Excellency Dr. Stokes argued that these are large investments, important for a high-level tourism. "They aren't that easy since they are the first projects of that type in Cuba and everything has to be approved step by step by the involved parties; I hope they will advance as fast as possible."

Still on the subject of tourism, he thanked MINTUR for having declared his country the guest of honor at FITCuba 2018: "it was a very useful opportunity for us and for the British tour operators who operate in Cuba, from the biggest like Thomas Cook and TUI, to other smaller agencies like Virgin Holidays, Holiday Place and Captivating Cuba; and we received the backing of MINTUR, especially that of Manuel Marrero, a very energetic minister."

Those companies operate vacations mainly in the all-inclusive modality, which is the preference of the majority of the British tourists in Cuba. "I am confident they can continue working together to keep on improving year by year the value of the sector and the partnership between British companies and their Cuban counterparts."

Further on he reflected that "the volume of the market in Cuba is lower than in other

Caribbean destinations, but, in proportion, it has great potentials. The challenge is to exchange more with foreign companies, in our specific case with British agencies, to determine how to add more value to the tourist product and encourage its growth. That dialogue is very important?"

He affirmed that there are British cruise operators that include Morelia (TUI); he is aware of that industry's growth in Cuba, almost 10-fold in a few years. Regarding this he said: "I hope our companies increase their presence." He announced that the Virgin Voyages cruise line is going to start its operations in the Caribbean in 2020, although he said he cannot confirm if it is going to incorporate the Cuba destination on the route of its first operations.

In relation to the airlines, "the growth will depend on the amount of visitors; we have two regular London-Havana direct weekly flights on Virgin Atlantic Airways, plus the charter flights operated by Thomas Cook and TUI, which also depend on the tourist flow. The secret to catalyze more flights is, of course, identifying the measures to raise the standards and improve tourism's environment, service and value for money so that more tourists from the United Kingdom come to Cuba?"

"It's a question of seeing how Cuba wants the tourism system to function, for example how to optimize the use of the private sector, not just in terms of room rentals, but also in its presence in the services provided by the state-run hotels; how to assimilate more know-how from foreign companies, work more with international services... it's a challenge for the Cuban government; we cannot say how to develop the sector, but we are here to support that growth. We have experience and we are ready exchange knowledge with the Cuban authorities for greater progress". •



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Tourism in Caribbean Expected to Recover in 2019

After a depression in the tourism sector on a regional level, a decrease of between 3% and 4% is expected by the close of 2018 as a consequence of the hurricanes that passed through these islands in late 2017, it has been forecasted that for 2019 the arrival of tourists to the Caribbean will grow 4%.

This was revealed by the estimates of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), confirmed by its new president, Dominic Fedee, Prensa Latina reported.

In turn, the source affirmed that the territories that did not suffer from the climate ravages this year registered a solid increase, but insufficient to compensate for the losses of the entire area. Out of the 23 Caribbean destinations that contribute statistics, 13 reflected increases in the arrival of visitors during the first semester, in proportions that oscillate from 1.7 to 18.3%. During the first semester of 2018 the destinations with the best performance were Guyana, with an 18% increase; Belize (17%); Cayman Islands (16%); and Grenada and Bahamas (each one with 10%).

Meanwhile, it was reported that with seven million travel-

ers, the U.S. market maintained its leading position as the principal source for the Caribbean, although it showed a 16% depression with respect to the first semester of 2017; Canada broke a new record in arrivals for the period, with 2.4 million tourists, +4.7%; and arrivals from Europe improved when some three million tourists were added in the semester, although there were reductions for the cases of Puerto Rico, Anguilla and Bermuda.

The *Central Bank of the Dominican Republic* reported that, from January to August of this year, 4,644,049 non-resident visitors entered the country by air, for a year-on-year growth of 5.5% with respect to the same period in 2017. Out of them, 4,027,620 were foreigners, a 4.3% increase; while the non-resident Dominicans witnessed a variation of +14.5%. The principal source market was the United States with 43.6% and, by regions, they were North America (60.8%), Europe (22.4%), South America (12.6%), Central America and the Caribbean (3.9%); and the remaining 0.3% from Asia and the rest of the world.

Cuba closed the period of January to August with 3,268,878

international visitors - unofficial figures at 97.9%, compared to 2017. The leading source markets, by order, are: Canada, United States, Cubans resident abroad, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Russia and Argentina.

The figures issued by the *Jamaica Tourist Board* indicate that between January and August 2018 that country received 2,957,407 visitors, for a 4.8% increase with respect to the same period last year. These data include 1,717,572 passengers and 1,139,835 cruise visitors.

Following we are summarizing the performance of the tourist flow of other Caribbean destinations, whose latest published statistics correspond to the close of the first semester of 2018, for which we are grateful for colleague Giacomo Dilauro's collaboration:

○ According to the *Bahamas* Ministry of Tourism report, that country received a total of 3,402,870 tourists, by sea and air, +4.1% in relation to 2018/2017.


© The *Antigua and Barbuda* Tourism Authority reported that that destination showed the greatest affluence of visitors

in that period in more than 15 years, for a total increase of 7% and 6% in arrivals by sea. Meanwhile, the principal sources grew: United States, Canada, United Kingdom and the Caribbean.

○ For its part, *Cayman Islands* broke a record by welcoming more than 1.3 million visitors - an increase of 19.5%. The combined spending contributed more than 396 million dollars, around 55 million more than in 2017.

© Official figures affirm that *Belize* received a total of 269,502 tourists: +17.1% compared to 2017. Moreover, the reception of 629,684 cruise passengers implied a 10.2% increase.

Particularly concerning the arrival of British tourists to some Caribbean destinations, in the period of January to August 2018, according to the statistics available at the dose of this edition, we see that the British market contributed 136,118 tourists to *Cuba*, coming in as the sixth market source, although below the previous year (88.3%); and 131,157 visitors to the *Dominican Republic*, a flow that ranked it as the fourth European market. ♦



INTERVIEW WITH CARLOS LATUFF CARMENATE,
PRESIDENT OF THE GAVIOTA S.A. TOURISM GROUP.

Gaviota Arrives at its 30th Anniversary, and Continues Building the Future

Paradisus Rio de Oro Hotel.

The Gaviota S.A. Tourism Group recently celebrated successfully its First Gaviota

Destination Tourist Mart from October 3 to 7 in the Grand Muthu Cayo Guillermo Hotel, in Jardines del Rey, with the presence of some 300 participants, tour operators, travel agencies, airlines, international associated hotel chains and the specialized press from countries issuing tourists to Cuba. The exchange provided firsthand updated information about the novelties for the next seasons.

The following interview with Carlos Latuff Car men ate, Gaviota's president, is about the Group's operation, as well as its projections.

Latuff, just when in 2018 Gaviota is celebrating its 30th anniversary it is an ideal moment to reflect on the premises and strategies that have allowed the Group to hold a leading position in tourism in Cuba and among the region's hotel chains, what are your considerations?

The Gaviota Group's growth is the result of arduous work throughout these years in order to diversify the markets that visit Cuba, as well as to offer at all times a service of excellence where clients can appreciate the essence of our country, its culture, history, traditions and, most important, our people's hospitality and solidarity. This is why the Group's development continues, with the aim of contributing to the country's economic development. This is the principal reason why we cannot allow ourselves to even make a pause in growth and consolidate our results.

Which are the tourist destinations in which Gaviota Tourism Group is present?

We are present in the principal tourist regions of Havana, Varadero, Cayos de Villa Clara, Jardines del Rey and Holguin. You can also find us in the township of Baracoa, Topes de Collantes ~ in Sancti Spiritus -, Pinar del Rio and a small representation in Santiago de Cuba. Starting this year, we opened new places, beginning in Cayo Cruz, in the province of Camaguey, and work has already started in Cayo Paredon Grande, in Ciego de Avila, and in Holguin.

How many hotels and rooms does the group have and what's the rate of expansion previewed for the close of 2018 and in subsequent years?

Our Tourism Group is the principal Cuban hotel chain with more than 30,000 rooms in a total of 88 installations, in that sense, adding that we have a 12.8% annual growth rate of the hotel plant, concluding with between 1,500 rooms and 3,500 rooms a year.

Gaviota's will to open new hotels in the capital has been reported, actions that are added to the program for Havana's 500 years, in this sense what are the projections?

Actions have been intensified to open new hotels in Havana as part of the program for the city's 500th anniversary. There are plans to open next year three more installations in Old Havana, as well as continuing with other important projects, in Havana as well as throughout our country.





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you to your destination in the cities and on the road.

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We have standard category cars for the average tourism arriving to our island and the nationals; for more exclusive clients we have at their disposal: the deluxe category; for adventure lovers we offer the jeeps; and the Coco Taxi is an excellent option to tour the city, but if you prefer a tour with period cars, nothing better

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- 0 **Excursions:** With integrated trips, organized in a set itinerary, in which visits to several destinations are included.
- 0 **Circuits:** Made up by a series of integrated trips characterized for being organized in a

tour in which the itineraries of two or more excursions can be combined.

- 0 **Business:** Trips comprising a series of components, among which the executive services for work and professional activities stand out.
- 0 **Organized events:** Work or professional group meeting, made up by a series of services geared at meeting the working needs of the participants, whose objectives are focused on specific themes.*

Gaviota Arrives at its 30th Anniversary, and Continues Building the Future

Carlos Latuff
Carmenate, president
of the Gaviota S.A.
Tourism Group.
Photo: TTC.



What participation does the management and marketing modality by international hotel chains have, at present and in perspective?

As a fundamental line of business, Gaviota seeks the association with different international hotel chains to operate our hotels, through management and marketing contracts that provide us with an internationally renowned commercial brand, well-positioned distribution and marketing systems which have an impact on the different markets, as well as accredited management methods and procedures and the contracting of executives with a high level of international experience who can pass on to our workers knowhow and experience.

Gaviota currently has signed management and marketing contracts with a total of 15 international operators of different nationalities: Spain, the United States, India, Portugal, Canada, Mexico, France, Germany and Singapore; the Spanish ones are the most numerous. Work is continuing to increase and diversify them.

Are there plans to open at the same time new non-hotel installations?

As I commented before, our development links tourist services and regarding this it takes into account that each region under development be accompanied by the opening of Tourist Plazas to complement our products.

How have the tourist indicators performed during 2018 and which are the principal markets?

It should be recalled that 2018 has been affected by a group of negative factors that have had an impact on the arrival of clients to our destination and we estimate a last four months with better results. The principal markets continue being the traditional ones like Canada, and with important growths, others like Russia, Mexico and Cuban residents abroad; In addition, actions are being consolidated in important emerging markets in Europe and Asia.

What particular incidence does the British market have for Gaviota?

The British market plays an important role for our Group, especially in the summer, which is why we will continue strengthening and supporting it.

Any other subject you wish to refer to?

We continue building the future... ♦



Playa Pesquero Hotel.



Three from Dominican Republic



6,000 ROOMS TO BE ADDED

Minister of Tourism Francisco Javier García advanced that several construction projects will be initiated and that they will incorporate approximately 6,000 new rooms, with an investment of some 1.5 million dollars, reported arecoa.com.

"They are high-standard rooms. The good news is that part of this is a project with more than 500 rooms in Samaná, close to the town, which is a very important element for that tourist zone, mainly because the presidency of the Republic, together with the Ministry of Tourism, is making a special plan for the development of Samaná, which will soon be announced," he indicated.

In relation to the growth being witnessed by the local tourist industry, the official said that the sector maintains a growth pace within the estimate, which is of 6%.

TOURISM HAS GENERATED ALMOST 36 BILLION DOLLARS IN SIX YEARS

Minister of Tourism Francisco Javier García affirmed that in the

six years of the Danilo Medina government, the tourist industry generated around US\$35,979,000 dollars and created more than 122,000 new direct job posts; it grew from 201,235 in 2012, to 323,595 last 2017-

Despite the balance of his current work at the head of the Ministry of Tourism (MITURJ, García added that 11,215 rooms have been built during Medina's administration; from 66,044 in 2012, last year closed with 77,259, "not counting the amount of new hotels being built in 2018."

He said that tourism is one of the brightest points of the current government's work, since the arrival of almost 36 million visitors during that period is highlighted.

Moreover, García emphasized the advances made to boost religious tourism in the country and assessed the achievements reached during the six years of President Medina's term in office,

according to a press release sent to arecoa.com.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC GARDENING PROCESS OF CORAL REEF

A group of business leaders and the Eastern Aquatic Association, began a gardening process against the damages sustained by the coral reef at the Bávaro resort region that has reaped fruits over three years later, published the *Dominican Today*.

To conduct the process, the aquatic services providers of La Altagracia Province joined the Grupo Puntacana Foundation, a leading natural resources conservationists in the country, to develop the first coral gardening project in the area of Cabeza de Toro.

The Caribbean region's reefs have undergone natural damage due to hurricanes, uncontrolled fishing, chlorine and explosives, as well as other ecological factors related to fish and seaweed. •

President Varela Signs Regulation of Tourist Promotion Fund

PANAMANIAN President Juan Carlos Varela signed the internal regulation of the International Tourist Promotion Fund, which equips the country with a financial structure that will facilitate the policies and projects to attract the arrival of more tourists.

The administrator of Panama's Tourism Authority, Gustavo Him, highlighted that this fund is an investment that will have returns. "This step will allow all our actions to be more expedite, that tourism grows and permeates the entire sector and that private enterprise, which is this industry's driving force, have a strong presence in all the decision making," he underlined. •



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Tourists arrive at Gran Caribe's I si a del Sur Hotel, in Cayo Largo del Sur. Photo: TTC.

Cuban Tourism Gradually Recovers its Growth

Cuban Minister of Tourism Manuel Marrero affirmed that the national tourism industry is gradually recovering from the unfavorable situation created in the destination's marketing after the passage of Hurricane Irma.

"In the first 16 days of September we have registered a 65% growth/ he announced in statements to the press during the first day of the MITM Americas Havana, and he explained that some 160,000 tourists have arrived during that period, while in 2017 they were only 70,000.

"These four months are going to be good and they are going to allow us to recover from the decrease we have had, we are going to grow and once again break the record of international tourism arrivals to our country when the year closes."

According to the minister, it is expected the country will reach the figure of 4.8 million tourists and for 2019 the goal will be five million.

During the inaugural speech, Manuel Marrero made a presentation of the Cuba destination which "currently has 69,286 rooms, 69% of them in four- and five-star hotels. In general, and as part of the wide-ranging investment process being carried out in the country, 5,000 new rooms will be concluded.

"We have continued diversifying and expanding the foreign participation in the development of Cuban tourism. There are already 21 foreign hotel managements of renowned international prestige administering hotels in Cuba, with 45333 rooms grouped in 95 management and marketing contracts, which means that 65% of all the country's rooms are being operated under some of the foreign investment modalities.

"On the other hand, in tourism we have 27 joint ventures that operate some 5,000 rooms. In turn, we have the development programs up to 2030 that cover 610 new projects, through which Cuba can have 103,000 rooms by that year - although the country's potential surpasses the 400,000 rooms -, which enhances its offer for international tourism and also includes the events and incentives segment."

Marrero recalled that in 2017 the country reached a new record of tourist arrivals with 4,689,894 visitors for an 11.6% growth and a 16.2% growth more than what was registered in the rest of the Caribbean's tourist destinations, despite the impacts of Hurricane Irma and the new measures applied to Cuba by the U.S. government.

On this point, the minister recalled that the Caribbean nation is the only country in

the world that U.S. citizens are banned from visiting freely as tourists; the large publicity agencies refuse to promote the destination; and the inputs the industry demands have to be imported from Europe and Asia. However, more than 600,000 Americans traveled to Cuba last year, despite the limitation that they can only do so under the 12 approved permits.

With regard to the quality of the tourist services he affirmed that "advances are continuing to be witnessed on a country level. The assessment indicators show that the level of general satisfaction stands at 95%, the value for money is at 88% of satisfaction, the level of recommendations is at 97% and the levels of repeat visits is more than 40%.

"The Ministry of Tourism and the tourism business system continues working on the improvement and updating of the tourist product, in raising the quality and in new communication and marketing actions that encourage tour operators, travel agencies and airlines to work our destination.

"We ratify our commitment to welcome, on an equal basis, all those who visit us with the greatest hospitality and professionalism, showing them an authentic Cuba that is developing as a destination of peace, health and safety," he concluded. •

FITCuba 2019 Already on Way



THE 39TH INTERNATIONAL Tourism Fair, FITCuba 2019, the major meeting of Cuban tourism, to be held next May 6-11, will have Havana as its venue, will be dedicated to events and incentives tourism and Spain will be its country guest of honor.

Precisely when Havana is getting ready to celebrate on November 16, 2019 its 500th anniversary, its selection is valid as the venue for FITCuba 2019.

It's a very correct decision to dedicate the Fair to the events and incentives product, since Cuba is renowned for its infrastructure supporting the congresses industry and being able to convene hundreds of meetings; as well as choosing Spain as country guest of honor, since it is one of the principal market sources for the island, while having a specific high value weight in foreign investment in the Cuban tourism sector. •

MITM Americas Havana, A Successful Event



The organizers and participants in the MITM Americas Havana fair, held September 18-21 in the Cuban capital's Meliá Cohiba Hotel with 200 participants from 27 countries, described it as a successful and memorable edition.

There were more than 4,000 meetings between buyers and exhibitors, which will generate an estimated two million euros' worth of business, between the mid- and the long term.

During the closing ceremony, Charo Traba-do, president of MITM Americas and general manager of Gsar Marketing, expressed her satisfaction in finding in Cuba all the necessary conditions to cater to the most demanding tourist of the MICE segment.

She announced that the 2019 edition will again have Havana as its venue, as part of the celebrations for the 500th anniversary of the city's foundation.

She thanked the Cuban Ministry of Tourism for "its unconditional support and its trust once again in MITM Americas to develop and consolidate the meetings tourism."

"We continue committed and betting on Cuba which is a great country which we love and carry in our hearts. We are leaving very pleased to have received once again the warmth and love of this wonderful people."

Special mention went to Meliá Cuba for its continuous support to the three editions held in the Caribbean country; to the Ecotur Travel Agency, the Skedio group and the rest

of the hotel chains and service suppliers involved in the fair's organization.

Coinciding with the close of MITM Americas Havana, the first Congress of the Latin American Cultural and Tourist Group (ACTUAL) opened its doors and lasted until September 23 with equal success.

Armando Bojórquez, president of that organization and of the Federation of Latin American Travel Agencies (COTAL), expressed his satisfaction over being in Cuba again.

A faithful admirer of this country and its people, he announced that the second congress of the organization he represents will also have as its venue Havana in 2019, in his opinion, with a higher attendance and success than this year, to promote solidarity and brotherhood between the peoples of Latin America and the rest of the world.

On behalf of the Cuban Ministry of Tourism, Bárbara Cruz, marketing director, thanked the election again of the Cuban capital as the venue of both events.

She affirmed that the 22nd edition of MITM Americas has reinforced Cuban tourism's position on a global level and "has exceeded the expectations of the distinguished buyers who have visited and the exhibitors who have presented their programs, offers, services and destinations in order to position the meetings, events and incentives tourism in our Cuba destination."

MITM Americas is the oldest MICE interactive international fair in the Americas and the Caribbean.®

CARICOM in Favor of Single Regional Market

THE CARIBBEAN Community (CARICOM) is increasing its efforts for the creation of a Single Market and Economy (CSME), according to the results of a meeting held in Georgetown, which brought together the prime ministers and heads of other ministries of the 15 Caribbean nations and British dependencies members of CARICOM, reported Prensa Latina.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley reaffirmed the group's commitment to identify the best way of achieving a single regional space, especially in terms of transportation and communications.

She said that the key measures included in the CSME design will benefit the lives of the peoples of the member countries, not just individuals, but also the companies wishing to move between the area states without having to register or pay significant sums in each territory.

She announced that in the next meeting of the heads of state of CARICOM a protocol related to government purchases will be signed, which will allow businesspeople from the region to participate in government contract tenders.

Founded in 1973 through the Chaguaramas Treaty, CARICOM is made up by Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, as full members; British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos as associate members; and Aruba, Colombia, Curacao, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Saint Martin and Venezuela as observers. •

Cuba has all the necessary conditions to cater to the most demanding tourist of the MICE segment.



Golf in the Caribbean Grows



F. MARTIN

Golf, a game that some have described as aristocratic, is one of the most popular games that the Caribbean islands offer today to tourists.

The modern game of golf originated in 15th-century Scotland at the usual level is played on a course with an arranged progression of 18 holes over wide country areas of slight undulations and short grass frequently near the sea.

The game has gained great reputation for its quality in regional countries.

Golf, unlike most ball games, cannot and does not utilize a standardized playing area, and coping with the varied terrains encountered on different courses is a key part of the game. The game at the usual level is played on a course with an arranged progression of 18 holes, though recreational courses can be smaller, often having 9 holes.

The Islands, from the tip of Florida to the north coast of South America, has surged for-

ward with several exciting new golf developments.

The most respected providers of international golf cruise have been operating for years in the Caribbean Sea.

The value of golf as a tourism tool, a newly developed salt-tolerant turf grass, paspalum, has begun to drive golf growth in the tropics. The beauty quotient of Caribbean venues has always outweighed their cosmetic flaws, but golfers now can have it both ways.

About 56 million people play golf worldwide; 267 million in the United States, 5 million in Canada, 5.5 million in continental Europe, 14 million in Japan, and 3.8 million in the United Kingdom.

Of this 56 million, between 5% and 10% travel overseas each year for the main purpose being to play golf -therefore making the international size of the golf tourism market between 2.8 million and 5.6 million.

Very near from the Caribbean islands, the leading market in terms of golf as a sport is the United States.

The Caribbean is a real golfing paradise, with luxurious golf resorts and hotels across the tropical Islands of Barbados, Jamaica and Dominican Republic.

Dominican Republic is the undisputed leader of golf in the tropics. At least seven of the DR's courses have consistently topped Golf Week Magazine's Top 50 courses in the Caribbean and Mexico.

The DR's courses, counting 86 sea-facing holes and 39 ocean-side, offer tee time by the sea, or along lush inland courses designed by the most acclaimed golf course architects, including Pete Dye, Jack Nicklaus, Robert Trent Jones Sr., Gary Player, Tom Fazio, Nick Price, and Greg Norman.

In Cuba golf courses possess excellent natural conditions. The Havana Golf Club and Varadero Golf Club, are excellent examples of the Island's courses and are visited by professional and amateur golfers from all over the world.

Playing golf in Cuba involves exposure to the island's natural beauty adding to the game's at-

traction and ensuring a relaxing, memorable holiday.

The international elite Golf event "Cuba Golf Grand Tournament", will be held from October 25th to 27th, 2018. There will be one practice round and two competition rounds, disputing three prizes per category.

The Varadero beach golf club has a 72-par course located in the northern coast of the Ixcacos Peninsula with challenging difficulties for any category of players. It was designed by architect Les Furber with the incomparable style of Robert Trent Jones.

The golf course in Varadero, about 75 miles east from Havana, gained international prestige when the European Challenge Tour's Grand Final was held in 1999 and 2000.

Golf is a club-and-ball sport in which players use various clubs to hit balls into a series of holes on a course in as few strokes as possible.

For the Caribbean It is also an excellent tool of its tourism industry, crucial in the economies of the islands.



Mexican Caribbean launches unified Tourism Board

THE STATE of Quintana Roo, one of Mexican top tourism hotspots encompassing 11 world-renowned destinations, has launched a unified Mexican Caribbean Tourism Board to oversee promotional efforts for less traveled destinations.

From Mayan ruins to multi-color lagoons and eco-friendly sanctuaries, these off-the-beaten-path destinations check off all the boxes for adventurous and selective travelers.

Classic Roc Presidente Hotel Celebrates its 90 Years

In February 2018 the current *Roc Presidente Hotel***** celebrated five years with Roc

Hotels brand, but this classic of Havana's hotel industry is actually celebrating its 90th anniversary since it was inaugurated on December 28, 1928, when it was the highest building in Havana.

With a privileged location, on Avenida de los Presidentes and some 200 meters from the famous Malecón seaside drive, in the popular residential district of El Vedado, it is 5 km from Old Havana and 20 minutes away from Jose Martí international Airport.

It maintains intact its luxury, elegance, classic atmosphere and architectural style typical of the period, which denoted the American model, although its interior decoration irradiates Spanish airs; and it gracefully boasts "10 floors of history": a tower of peculiar vermillion and beige colors, visible from faraway from diverse angles of the city.

After an effective promotion, in the 1940s it had already gained international fame and was reviewed by important foreign tourist

guides; in the 1950s it was requested by tourists, businesspeople and diplomats.

The Chez Merito Restaurant was inaugurated in 1950, located on the first floor of the hotel, recognized as the first in Havana with air conditioning and one of the pioneers with a deluxe menu and French-style service, thus its fame was expanded worldwide.

Great personalities make up the list of illustrious visitors, from all parts of the world and periods, such as Lola Flores' artistic cast, Gary Cooper, Josefine Baker, Nat King Cole, Alicia Alonso, Miguel Barnet and many others, a list that is also enhanced by being the venue of Casa de las Américas and the Alicia Alonso International Ballet Festival events.

With a heritage of more than 400 museum pieces which possibly turns it into the only Havana museum hotel, the *Roc Presidente* has 158 rooms equipped with all the comfort modern clients seek and it stands out for its personalized attention.

Its facilities include the Restaurant Buffet, with views of the Avenida de los Presidentes,

which provides a wide-ranging and varied international and Caribbean breakfast and theme suppers, always accompanied by a service of excellence; the Meat Place Steak House Restaurant at the pool, recommended for those who enjoy good gastronomy - it serves an assorted gamut of light food -, in the midst of a charming tropical climate.

In a classical and elegant environment, delicately decorated, the a la carte Chez Merito Restaurant offers varied menus: tapas, executive, wines and diverse beverages. There are also options for those who prefer to take in the breeze of the nearby Malecón and appreciate an excellent view of Havana in the Lobby Bar/Terrace, open round the clock, which places at your disposal the most wide-ranging menu of snacks, coffees and beverages and, at night, clients can penetrate the magic space of Live Cuban Music.

With great jubilation, the hotel's executives and workers are carrying out multiple activities to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the *Roc Presidente*.





Cubanacan Hotel Group Expands Its Offer in Santiago de Cuba

At the foot of one of Cuba's most surprising mountain range, nature shares privileges with the tourist industry. The Cubanacan hotel group's recently inaugurated *Segundo Frente Hotel***** opens its doors to the wonders offered by the Sierra Crista! and becomes a jewel of the tourist offer of Santiago de Cuba.

Located in the municipality by the same name, as added value the hotel connects not only with nature but also with a transcendental stage of national history. It is very close to the monument that keeps the remains of the fighters who felt in the Frank Pals Eastern Second Front during the last stage of the struggle for the revolutionary triumph; and to the Museum that tells the story of that stage.

Other sites of interest for tourists are several museums related to the revolutionary struggle, the town of El Frente and the capital city.

The hotel has 51 rooms, 20 of them matrimonial, three with high standard and 28 doubles,

all of them duly equipped. Especially standing out among its facilities are a buffet restaurant, two bars, a nightclub, a wine cellar, a gym, day and night entertainment, games room, Jacuzzi and a stable. The latter provides horseback riding services through the paths related to the historic theme or through natural sites.

The Garden Ville deserves a mention apart. It has three high-standard rooms, a meeting room, Jacuzzi, bar, swimming pool for adults and children, restaurant, gym, parking, turning it into a deluxe option for the most demanding clients, who can use the hotel services or choose a customized treatment.

On the other hand, the *Casa del Campesino* transfers tourists to a rural environment with available rooms for this purpose, made out of wood, with typical furniture, a ranchbn thatched-roof restaurant, in a natural and peaceful environment.

Another of Cubanacan's novelties in Santiago de Cuba is £05 *Peregrinos Hotel****, in the town of El Cobre, just one kilometer from the National Sanctuary of

Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre. Ideal for culture and nature tourism, this eight-room installation also stands out for its vicinity to the first opencast copper mines in the Americas, the El Cobre railroad, the first at the service of mining in the country and the eastern zone; the ruins of French coffee plantations, among other attractions.

In statement's to TTC, Paula Vázquez Díaz, assistant delegate of Cubanacan Hotels in Santiago de Cuba, commented on other openings previewed for the start of the high season, which will ratify the group's protagonist role in the destination, in which it currently has the largest amount of rooms - more than 1,000 - distributed in 12 hotels.

According to the official, the new installations will be: *Enramadas Hotel*, of the E brand, in the city's historic center; the *Perla de Cuba*, on Jesús Menéndez Avenue, the epicenter of Santiago's carnivals; the *Mar Paraíso Hotel*, close to Santiago's coast; and it will open an installation in El Cobre by the same name, also of the E brand.

Thus more than a hundred rooms will be added to Cubanacan's offer. At present, for city tourism the group has the *Meliá Santiago*****, *Iberostar Casa Granda*****, *San Félix*****, *Imperial*****; the three-star *Versalles* and *Punta Gorda* hotels and the *Hostal San Basilio*****, under the E brand.

Visitors can choose many and diverse options in the city of Santiago de Cuba: the Bacardi, Piracy and Colonial Art museums; Enramada and Padre Pico streets, the Bahía-Carretera Turística Seaside Promenade; Céspedes Park and the surrounding buildings - the former residence of Velázquez and the gold foundry of the Spanish Crown and the Santa Basílica Metropolitana Cathedral Church -, the famous Moncada Garrison, Santa Ifigenia Cemetery and the San Pedro Castle (Morro).

For the sun and beach modality there are the *Club Amigo Carlos Corales**** in Baconao, and the *Brisas Sierra Mar Los Galeones*****, in the municipality of Guama. In both locations the geographical environment can be used to mix enjoyment with the nature offer. •





Cruises Through the Caribbean Sea

The Caribbean closed the first semester of 2018 with the deployment of 35.4% of the world's cruise fleet and a 10% growth, thus consolidating this modality as the region's largest tourist market, according to the Cruise Lines International Association's report.

After its cruise industry increased 37% last year, with 1.2 million cruise passengers, the *Dominican Republic* welcomed 359 ships in the first eight months of 2018, and 911,081 visitors (including tourists and crew members), for a year-on-year increase of 0.12%, the Ministry of Tourism reported. The leading Dominican port in this tourist modality is Carnival's Amber Cove, located in Maimón, Puerto Plata; followed by La Romana.

In particular, three ships of the Oasis line will call simultaneously in Puerto Plata after the port's remodeling, and Cap Cana (Punta Cana) is getting ready to receive thousands of cruise passengers during the 2018-2019 season, on board some dozen medium- and large-size ships from Celebrity Cruises, Royal Caribbean, Norwegian Cruise Line, Holland America Line and Azamara Club Cruises, among others.

Cuba's ports are currently mooring 17 cruise lines with 25 ships, four of them with itineraries from the United States (Royal Caribbean, Norwegian Cruises Lines, Carnival and Pearl Seas). At the close of the first semester of 2018, international visitors arriving through this means grew 21% in relation to the same period last year.

There especially has been a 115.7% growth in U.S. visitors; out of the 387,496 visitors who arrived in the country through this means in the first semester of 2018, 30.5% were from the United States and 31.3% were Europeans. For Americans, the trips on these vessels are considered one of the best ways of getting to know the island, since it is one of the means accepted for Americans to visit the largest of the Antilles.

Havana was named as the Best Destination and Port for cruise ships in the Caribbean region by the Cruise Critic website, considered one of the world's biggest online communities on this subject. In 2017, the Havana terminal received some 328,000 passengers and by the close of 2018 it is expected that the figure will be 500,000.

According to reports, Royal Caribbean has strengthened its

bet on Cuba for the 2018-2019 season on board the ships *Empress of the Seas* and *Majesty of the Seas*, which will make stopovers in Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba. The *Empress of the Seas* will make journeys of 3 to 8 nights to Havana and Bahamas with stopovers in Nassau (Bahamas), Key West (Florida) and Havana (Cuba).

It will also tour the rest of the island's destinations in itineraries with stopovers in Santiago de Cuba (Cuba), Cienfuegos (Cuba) and George Town (Grand Cayman). The *Majesty of the Seas* will offer up to two extra nights to enjoy the environment and Havana's famous nightlife and will carry out 3- to 5-night itineraries from Tampa (Florida) and Fort Lauderdale (Florida) with stopovers in Key West (Florida), Havana (Cuba), Cozumel (Mexico) and CocoCay (Bahamas).

In 2017 *Puerto Rico* registered the arrival of some 1.2 million travelers, a record figure, and the entrance of 152 million dollars to the local economy. For 2018 it expects to reach the 1.7 million, which will have a bearing of 250 million dollars on the economic impact. The record figures obtained in June 2018 were due to

a great extent to the increased visits by large-size cruise ships, like the *Anthem of the Sea*, *Allure of the Seas*, the new *Carnival Horizon*, *Harmony of the Seas* and *MSC Seaside*, one of MSC's most luxurious and modern and whose first stop in the Americas was on that island. To date, the new *Viking Sea* ships called for the first time in the port of San Juan, using it as a mother base, and the deluxe *Silver Muse*.

Moreover, *Belize* received 629,684 passengers in the first semester, an increase of 10.2% with respect to the same period in 2017; *Costa Rica* estimates that no cruise ships will arrive during the 2018-2019 season with 224,000 tourists; and *Nicaragua* reports the monthly arrival of 160,000 visitors through the port of Salvador Allende and that 36 ships were catered to by the San Juan del Sur port.

Meanwhile, *Panama* says that some 80 vessels have been registered in the Colón 200 Cruise Port's calendar, on which some 200,000 tourists will travel. The arrival of ships like *Infinity of Celebrity Cruises*, *Island Princess* and *Norwegian Pearl* is expected by the close of 2018, bringing in addition U.S., British and German cruise passengers. •



Islazul Hotel Group Strengthens City Tourism in Santiago de Cuba

The Islazul Hotel Group offers the *Libertad-Rex Hotel Complex* and *Las Américas Hotel* in Santiago de Cuba.

City tourism is one of the modalities with the highest demand in the province of Santiago de Cuba, located to the east of the country and one of the most relevant territories of national history and culture.

The Islazul Hotel Group forms part of the accommodations offer in the capital city with the *Libertad-Rex Hotel Complex*, located in the vicinity of the Plaza de Marte, one of the city's busiest points. Such a privileged location allows for an agreeable stay and getting to know its principal streets, commercial centers and its people.

One of the attractions in the *Rex Hotel* is a museum room used by revolutionary Abel Santamaria during the days prior to the attack on the Moncada Garrison, one of the principal events in Cuban history visitors will be able to be a part of.

The *Libertad-Rex Complex* appears among the recommendations of travelers on the TripAdvisor website, standing out among the largest and most trustworthy travel sites in the world.



Another excellent accommodation option in Cuba's second most important city is the *Las Américas Hotel*, which stands out for its competent services and a rooted hospitality culture.

It also attracts visitors for its being near to important recreation centers and to one of the most popular Santiago de Cuba avenues, Enramada, or such emblematic sites as the Casa de la Trova and Cespedes Park.

▶ TOPES DE COLLANTES

Nature \$ Tourism * in Cuba's Mountains.

THE SPLENDID *Topes de Collantes* Natural Park, in the Escambray mountain range, in the very heart of the island of Cuba, provides an excellent nature and adventure tourism program.

Declared a Protected Natural Landscape, a management category granted by the National Center for Protected Areas, its microclimate favors the habitat of more than 100 bird species, 45% of which are endemic to the country, and the rivers' unevenness between the mountains cre-

ates amazing waterfalls, like that of the Caburni.

Grouped by natural parks, which can be visited through excursions, the sites of tourist interest display beautiful landscapes, a high degree of endemism, a diversity of flora and fauna, gardens with exotic species, caves, lookout points, cascades, waterfalls and pools.

The Guanayara, El Cubano, Codina, Altiplano *Topes de Collantes* and El Nicho parks offer specialized programs: theme paths,

trekking, horseback riding, bird watching, swimming in natural pools and camping. The Cayo Las Iguanas Park, which is accessed on catamarans or sailboats after a two-hour journey, in addition provides snorkeling, swimming in the sea and safaris.

Los Helechos Hotel, the Villa Caburni and, specifically for health and quality of life tourism, the Kurhotel Escambray, are the accommodations - the three belonging to Gaviota - that operate in the destination.

The complementary offers include: the Casa del Canopy, more than 800 m above sea level, which features a tour of some 1,000 m hanging from a cable between towers at different heights; the Casa del Café, where the nectar is processed using traditional methods; and the Information Center.

Given the terrain's morphology, the journeys through *Topes de Collantes* are carried out on rustic transportation, jeeps or trucks, about which the visitors must be well informed.

Together in favor of nature

Villa El SaltonUt is located in the province of Santiago de Ceiba, 111 Frenle municipality, in the head of the Sierra Maestra. It stands out for being an accommodation for rest and enjoyment in the midst of an emblematic flora and fauna, as well as the waterfall for which the installation is named.



Villa Guajimico: Located on the central southern coast of the island of Cuba, in the province of Cienfuegos, Guajimico is bathed by the Caribbean Sea, between two of the most beautiful, important and historic colonial cities in the Caribbean, Cienfuegos and Trinidad, the latter declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988 together with the Valle de los Ingenios

It features a group of small and welcoming cabanas, surrounded by exuberant vegetation, very close to the Yaguanabo River. Its geographical location, a few meters from the impressive Guamuhaya massif, also known as Escambray, it facilitates trekking and the enjoyment of one of Cuban nature's most complete ecosystems. The highlight is the well-known Cueva Virgen, a place full of stories and legends from the times of pirates and corsairs.

Guajimico, the indigenous name that means "Place of the fish," defines one of the principal attractions; its fantastic under water fauna. Moreover, its international diving center provides courses for beginners and professionals; and other water sports, like kayaking and sailing on catamaran, favor the delight of visitors with a veritable local maritime life.



Havanatur's 40th Anniversary Megafam Showcases the Authentic Cuba

More than 350 guests, among them travel agents, tour operators and the specialized press from 16 countries, participated in the Megafam organized by the Havanatur 5. A. International Group of Tour Operators and Travel Agencies as part of the activities for its 40th anniversary.

In 18 different programs, the visitors toured nine of the country's tourist destinations, among them Havana, Varadero, Holguin, Santa Clara, Baracoa and Santiago de Cuba. A relevant moment was the meeting of all the groups in Varadero, Matanzas, where they were updated on its hotel prod-

uct, enjoyed a tour of the bars, organized visits to gastronomic installations of the Palmares Non-Hotel Enterprise, and carried out excursions with nautical activities.

In that context, the *Cubanisimo By Havanatur* theme product was presented, implemented in the Roc Arenas Dora das Hotel with the aim of offering clients genuine Cuban experiences in terms of gastronomy, culture and traditions.

In addition, the renovation works were shown of the capital city of Matanzas for its 325th anniversary, whose result can be enjoyed during the high season. An-



Evelyn Guilarte, general director of Havanatur S.A.

other novelty presented was the tour to the Cárdenas Rum Factory, linked to the Rum House in Varadero, to also be marketed during the 2018-2019 winter season.

In the ceremony held in Varadero's Plaza Las Morias, Evelyn Guilarte, general director of Havanatur S.A., said "we are proud to be the first and only tour operator with its own travel agency in Cuba, which for 40 years has been able to consolidate a position in the international market with representation in more than 13 countries, offering a customized assistance service that guarantees the satisfaction of our clients and identifies and accredits us as the Cuba specialist."

This group of Chinese visitors was among the 350 guests that participated in Havanatur's 40th Anniversary Megafam.



Cayos de Villa Clara Supports Sustainable Tourism

THE ABSOLUTE guarantee of the supply of potable water to the Cayos de Villa Clara destination, to the central north of the island of Cuba, is ensured by the operation of two desalinization plants in Cayo Santa Maria.

The first one started operating this year with Mexican technology, comprising four modules of inverse osmosis and contributing 50 liters of water per second to the 140 liters per second pumped today from terra firma to that group of cays.

A second one, with the same capacity, will start up in 2019 to reach the 100 liters per second through that source, Gaviota's marketing vice president, Frank Pais Oltuski, reported.

The inverse osmosis method used to desalinate seawater, recognized as the most efficient from the energy point of view, consists in using a sem [permeable membrane that lets the water go by, but not the salts, based on a principle of difference of concentrations that caus-

es a difference in the osmotic pressure on both sides of the membrane. Its selective efficiency is measured by the retention of approximately 99-5% of the dissolved salts, which makes the water apt for human consumption with a similar quality to that of the traditional sources.

The conservationist vocation of this tourist destination, which forms part of the Bahia de Buena Vista World Biosphere Reserve, is also endorsed by five plants for the treatment of liquid wastes generated by hotel exploitation - they produce between 20,000 and 30,000 cubic meters a month of reusable water for gardening; the recycling of all types of wastes from the very operation; and an installed power generation capacity of 55 megawatts/hour, almost a third of the current demand, and all are underground networks.

In Cuba, similar experiences with seawater desalinization are applied in other tourist destinations, like Cayo Largo del Sur, Jibacoa, Santiago de Cuba, Sagua la Grande, Playas del Este and Cobarrubias.