

## **Mar de Cortes International Airport Officially Inaugurated**



One of Mexico's best kept secrets is about to be discovered. November 5th, 2009, is the day in which Puerto Penasco, Mexico passed from being a remote destination accessible only by car to a major tourism and residential destination. President Felipe Calderon was in attendance to officially open the International Airport that will service Puerto Penasco and the Sonora Gold Coast. Vacationers across America and Canada, and the rest of the world, will for the first time, have quick and easy access to Sea of Cortez beaches and the area's natural beauty, wildlife and recreational offerings.

"The commencement of commercial air service to Puerto Penasco represents a milestone in the development of one of Mexico's most exciting and now accessible tourism destinations," said Fernando Antillon, Director of the Mar de Cortes International Airport. "We look forward to continued partnerships with the federal government, the State of Sonora and the private sector to develop this beautiful region along the incomparable Sea of Cortez for generations of new visitors."

Commercial service will begin in November with fully functional airport and runway facilities and a modern, bright provisional terminal building. The entire airport project, including new terminal facilities is expected to be completed by 2012. Negotiations are currently underway for charter service from gateways in Canada and the U.S. as well as regional scheduled service from Phoenix, Arizona and Hermosillo, Mexico with such carriers as Aeromexico and US Airways. In the near future, additional scheduled and charter service is expected to provide access to Puerto Penasco from all over the world via major hubs including Houston, Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

The airport's 1.55 mile concrete runway is capable of handling Boeing 737's and 757's and similar type aircraft. After a planned extension of approximately 1,500 feet, it will also welcome Boeing 767's. Two taxiways can accommodate three aircraft on the aprons. The airport actually operated for one week in 2007 to accommodate President Calderon's aircraft on the

occasion of the Mexico-USA Border Governors Conference held in Puerto Penasco. At the time Calderon's pilot described the new runway as "one of the best in the country."



In addition to the Presidential Jet hundreds of people from different regions of Mexico and several industrial sectors were transported to the opening by Interjet and Aeromexico. The attendees also included Mexican media and several International agencies.

Mr. Daniel Chavez Moran, major stockholder and CEO of Grupo Vidanta owner of Mayan Palace Resorts, welcomed President Calderon, Secretaries of Federal Agencies, Fonatur CEO, Governors and several Mayors from the surrounding area. This Airport is the first built in Mexico with 100% private funds, invested by Grupo Vidanta.



Puerto Penasco will also serve as the home port for Holland America Line Cruises. The Sonoran Government is expected to spend \$15 million to jump start the construction of the cruise ship port facility. No other resort destination in Mexico has received this type of investment in infrastructure, new businesses and Real Estate projects from the Private Sector, Federal and State Governments.

Not only is the area receiving private investment from Mexico, there are also big investments from the United States, Canada and Spain. This investment diversity further exemplifies that Puerto Penasco will soon evolve into a of world class destination.

Known as “the world’s aquarium” and designated a World Heritage Site, the Sea of Cortez is renowned for its beaches, perfect weather, water sports, fishing and wildlife, including migrating whales and birds. Situated along the northern coastline, Puerto Penasco, with its distinct character and charm, is undergoing dramatic growth. In 1998, the destination welcomed 1.2 million visitors; in 2008 it was discovered by 2.35 million but that number is expected to swell dramatically with the inauguration of air service and the ongoing completion of numerous four and five star resorts. Appealing to young, active vacationers, over 60 percent of visitors are between 31 and 50 years of age, with high income levels. As Grupo Vidanta and other companies develop luxury vacation home ownership opportunities in the region as well as additional resorts, the population is expected to more than double. Visitor accommodations by 2025 are expected to top 40,000, from the current 6,000 units.

