

VACATION AGENT

VA

The Changing Face of Luxury

How to take advantage of emerging trends



COVER focus

On the Cover: Velas Resorts' Grand Velas Los Cabos, which debuted in December.

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*Come and Experience
for Yourself!*

*Berlitz rated 310 European River Cruise Ships
AmaWaterways outranked the competition with*

THE HIGHEST RATED SHIPS IN EUROPE

In the new Berlitz guide to river cruising by expert Douglas Ward, AmaWaterways ships outranked the competition in the categories of accommodations, facilities, cuisine, hospitality and miscellaneous. According to Ward, "AmaWaterways spends considerably more on high-quality food ingredients and wine and on hotel crew service training than any other river cruise company." **Berlitz**

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SR. VICE PRESIDENT & GROUP PUBLISHER
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MANAGING EDITOR
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PRODUCTION MANAGER
Chesney Willard

EXECUTIVE EDITORS
Robin Amster, David Cogswell,
Jane Jamison, Brian Major, James Ruggia

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Linda Truilo

CONTRIBUTORS
Harvey Chipkin, Carla Hunt, Mimi Kmet

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593 Rancocas Road, Westampton, NJ 08060
P: 856-505-1400; F: 856-727-0136
www.travAlliancemedi.com

CEO: *Mark Murphy*

Regional Director, Northeast:
Laura Murphy

Regional Director, Southeast/Caribbean:
Kelly Chambliss

Regional Director, North Midwest/
Marketplace: *Mary Jane Jacobs*

Managing Director, Mexico/
Latin America: *Greg Custer*

Director of Sales, Mexico/Latin America:
Maria-Antonieta (Toni) Aguirre

Sales Support Manager / Production:
Ciara Cartwright

Resource Manager: *Rose Schreiber*

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
Email: info@vacationagentmagazine.com
Web: www.vacationagentmagazine.com
Advertising Inquiries
Email: sales@travalliance.com
PHONE: 856-505-1400



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THE VELAS VISION

Grand Velas Los Cabos features three infinity pools and a generous stretch of immaculate beach.

Juan Vela on the luxury brand's key selling points, new Los Cabos resort and commitment to agents

By Claudette Covey

For upwards of two decades, family-owned Velas Resorts has been delivering a true luxury all-inclusive product with superlative service, accommodations, programming and amenities. We caught up with Juan Vela, the company's vice president, to discuss the December opening of its fifth resort, the Grand Velas Los Cabos; how it sets itself apart from the competition; and its ongoing commitment to the agent community.

How does Velas distinguish itself from its competitors - both all-inclusive brands and traditional luxury brands?

There are no resorts in the market with our unique concept. However, if we were an EP resort company, our competition would be luxury brands, including Rosewood, Four Seasons and St. Regis Hotel & Resorts. This is not only because of the quality of our facilities and services, but also because of the variety, creativity, presentation and gourmet ingredients of our food-and-beverage offerings, which are comparable to those of top restaurants in world capitals.

While there are some other all-inclusives that have one standout restaurant, they do charge additional fees for dining there in addition to other fees, so they're not really all-inclusive. This contrasts with what we do. Other than very expensive wines and spa treatments, we don't charge extra. So the value equation is very strong.

Plus, we have kids and teens' facilities and programs second to none, Leading Spas of the World at our Grand Velas resorts, and state-of-the-art meeting, wedding and group facilities.

Velas Resorts has garnered quite a reputation for offering superior cuisine. What can guests expect on the food-and-beverage front?

Name your clients' favorite specialty cuisines - Mexican, French, Italian, Asian - and they'll find them exquisitely prepared by award-winning chefs. Cocina de Autor at Grand Velas Riviera Maya was the first restaurant in the world in an all-inclusive resort that won the AAA Five Diamond Award - and Cocina de Autor at the new Grand Velas Los Cabos was named among CNN's Best New Restaurants for 2017.



“Agents have played a big part in the success of Velas Resorts from Day One.”

— Juan Vela, Velas Resorts

Grand Velas Los Cabos debuted in December.



Restaurants are led by internationally renowned chefs such as Sidney Schutte, a two-star Michelin chef; Bruno Oteiza and Mike Alonso, owners of Mexico City's renowned Biko restaurant in Mexico City; and Xavier Pérez Stone, an Iron Chef winner.

When it comes to food and beverage, we also offer unique dining events and foodie experiences such as tastings (hot sauce, taco, tequila, mezcal and even sake), premium liquor brands and custom cocktails offered in innovative ways like margarita trollies. We have also been a trendsetter with our vegetarian and vegan menus.

What has the reception been to the new Grand Velas Los Cabos?

Grand Velas Los Cabos has already been referred to as a 'game-changer' for Los Cabos, 'paradise on earth' and 'fantastic' by several members of the media. They made a special note of the resort's food-and-beverage program, referring to it as 'extraordinary' 'spectacular' and 'superb.' The spa has been referred to as a 'destination in and of itself' - and the resort's service as 'impeccable from start to finish.'

What types of guests should agents recommend Velas Resorts to?

All travelers can find their ideal spots within Velas Resorts. Casa Velas and Grand Velas Riviera Maya's Grand Class adults-only sections are perfect for couples, while families enjoy the activities offered at Velas Vallarta, Grand Velas Riviera Nayarit and Grand Velas Riviera Maya's Ambassador section. Grand Velas Los Cabos has enhanced signature facilities and services of Grand Velas resorts, including duplex wellness suites with juice bars, wine-

based features inspired by the proximity to the region producing Mexico's fine wines, and dramatic ocean views and unique spaces infusing every area of the resort. Overall, Velas guests are travelers looking for a combination of top-of-the-line offerings from the cuisine and spa to accommodations and activities, all at a great value.

How important are agents to Velas Resorts?

Agents have played a big part in the success of Velas Resorts from Day One. So it's no surprise that we devote major resources - from our network of agent sales reps to fam trips to our Velas Experts program with terrific opportunities for extra cash bonuses and perks - to help them succeed.

The online program offers three easily obtained levels of certification - Velas Expert, Master Agent and Elite Agent. Agents are rewarded with generous bonuses and access to special amenities, complimentary nights, suite upgrades and VIP amenities for their clients, as well as a 50 percent bonus for all reservations and qualified bookings made during the first month of their Velas Expert registration.

Does being a family-run company bring any advantages to the resorts?

We have the flexibility to innovate and quickly respond to new market needs, tastes and opportunities, which is critical in the world we live in today. Velas Resorts has blazed a trail as being innovators with what we call our WOWs. These signature services, amenities and experiences add value and build our brand - like our handbag bar at Casa Velas, and VIP Baby Concierge and Billionaire Birthday Party for Teens at Grand Velas Resorts.

The Grand Velas Los Cabos offers the next generation of all-inclusive amenities and facilities - and ups the WOW ante. We've launched astronomy lessons for families led by the one of the destination's foremost authorities and a \$25K taco, the world's most expensive. Up next is an extreme adventure, the 'Next Big Idea Getaway' for entrepreneurs, C-Suite executives and those looking to get inspired and uncover their next big idea; a Juice Mixologist for our Wellness Suites; and a millionaires' wine lovers getaway that takes guests via private jet to the Ensenada bodega where Velas Resorts buys its Mexican wines.