

Venezuela Going All Out to Attract Visitors from U.S., Other Nations

By CLAIRE COX
United Press International
Caracas, Venezuela — (AP) — Tourists from the United States are "discovering" Venezuela nearly 475 years after the first European set foot on its fertile soil.

The land, named "Little Venice" by Alonso De Ojeda and Amerigo Vespucci in 1499, is far from unknown to North Americans, however.

For several decades, oil companies from the continent to the north have been pumping "black gold" from the ground and the sea. Various United States manufacturers, including auto and rubber companies, have brought many experts here.

A total of about 53,000 United States citizens live and work in Venezuela. This is the largest number of North American civilians in any country in the world.

Small Segment Known

A small segment of Venezuela is known, too, to the cruise ship passengers who have debarked at La Guaira, the port of Caracas, for day-long tours of the area near the sea.

But only now is Venezuela being opened to full-scale tourism for the first time, thanks to the speed of the jet airliner, a revaluation of the currency and a multi-million dollar campaign by the Venezuelan government to attract visitors from the United States.

Until recently, Venezuela was too expensive for all but the richest travelers from the north. It also was too far away for persons with limited time for travel.

With the revaluation of the Bolivar, the tourist may buy 40 per cent more with his dollars than he could a year ago.

Four-Hour Flight

And a flight from New York to Caracas aboard a Venezuelan Airline (VIASA) Convair 440 takes only four hours, non-stop, which is less time than it takes to fly from New York to Los Angeles.

The government has pro-



DISCOVERING VENEZUELA — Tourists from the United States are now "discovering" Venezuela nearly 475 years after the first European set foot on its fertile soil. Cathedral of Merida in Merida, Venezuela. (UPI)

vided between \$11 and \$12 million dollars to promote tourism, mainly from the United States. In 1959, 27,500 North Americans, most of them cruise passengers, visited the country, in 1960, the figure rose to 37,000. It dropped to 32,000 in 1961, with only 9,000 of the visitors staying more than three days.

Dr. Luis Perez Barreto, the government's director of tourism, hopes that this year 15,000 to 20,000 North Americans — in addition to cruise passengers — will vacation in Venezuela.

"The numbers of North American visitors are so low now that with any kind of promotion, we expect it to go sky high," he said in an interview. "We are so close to New York and our economies are so intertwined that North American tourists will find much of interest here."

Perez said his country had prepared for its bid for tourism by building the necessary hotel facilities to support

"a good flow" of visitors. Scattered throughout the country, which is somewhat larger than Texas and Oklahoma combined, is a chain of new hotels, most of them government-operated.

Two, the luxurious Tamanao in Caracas and the Del Lago in the oil city of Maracaibo, are run under contract by the Intercontinental Hotels corporation, a subsidiary of Pan American World Airways.

Another, a \$47 million complex of stone and glass buildings on the beach at Macuto, near Caracas and La Guaira, is due to be opened by the Sheraton corporation this year. Government officials expect the Sheraton Macuto will complete their present hotel-building program and provide the springboard for tourism throughout Venezuela, to ski areas in the Andes, Hot Springs, Great Plains Hunting Grounds, island resorts or the prosperous capital of Caracas.

A short flight — or a long,

For a sharp contrast, a tourist may fly to Caracas, where the Hotel Llano Alto is situated in the heart of Venezuela's Llano — or Great Plains. There the activities mainly center on jaguar hunting, horseback riding and swimming. Most of Venezuela's extensive cattle herds graze on the Llanos.

Another government hotel is the Tama, at San Cristobal, in the foothills of the Andes, near the Colombian border. This is the heart of Venezuela's prosperous coffee-growing country.

One-Hour Side Trip

A one-hour side trip by car from this resort takes a visitor to the Hotel Aguas Calientes, at Urena, for thermal baths. Each room is equipped with four taps in the bath, each providing a different kind of water from hot springs.

Margarita Island, an hour by plane from Caracas, offers tourists a touch of colorful history, swimming, fishing, industry, and a pearl diving Vista is the principal tourist haven on the island, which was a pirate hideout in older times.

The traveler who prefers to tour by car may drive 400 miles east of Caracas to the historic pirate port of Cumana, where the government has another modern hotel. It is said that there are so many small fish in the bay it is impossible not to catch enough for a meal.

Tourists with only a few days in which to travel outside Caracas can reach Mara-

cay in a two-hour drive over a scenic four-lane mountain road and a divided superhighway. The government hotel at Maracay, in a rich agricultural valley, is one of the most luxurious in Venezuela. The glass-walled building is air conditioned and overlooks a large swimming pool, a golf links and tennis courts.

Remains Focal Point

Caracas remains the focal point for tourism, however, there are commercial hotels offering rates as low as \$4 a day for a single room. Atop the mountain overlooking Caracas is the Hotel Humbolt, reachable by a spine-chilling cable car ride. This circular tower containing night clubs, restaurants, and several hundred rooms, each with a spectacular view, is closed at present, but the government hopes to put it back into operation when tourism booms.

The plan eventually is to provide package tours, beginning and ending with visits to the beach and taking groups to various points around the country, depending on the lengths of their stays. The high cost of a transportation is being dealt with in part through organizing tour groups large enough to charter entire airliners at considerably less than regular fares.

"The air fare from New York is \$278," Perez said. "A 17-day excursion out of New York is priced from \$332. It should be less. The transportation prices must be lowered."

ury hotels in Venezuela compared with five hotels in Miami Beach, which indicated that his country now is competitive in accommodations. The price for a room and three meals in Miami Beach ranged from \$17 to \$35, he said, while it was \$18 to \$23 in Venezuela.

"A year ago, Venezuela was among the most expensive," he said. "Now it is one of the lowest."

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Expert Offers Tips on Fatigue

If your summer plans include house painting, building furniture or readying a boat for sailing, here are some fatigue-insurance tips from expert experts who advise the United States Army.

Feet, they say, often cause the most difficulty. The home handyman will probably stand longer in one afternoon than he ordinarily does during an entire week.

"Wearing worn out shoes and tight, non-absorbent socks is a short-cut to exhaustion," notes Dr. Joseph Lelyveld, head of the National Foot Health Council and a consultant on foot care to the U.S. Army. "Efficiency slackens and jobs take extra time and energy."

"For any kind of active work," he says, "a man needs a comfortable oxford-type shoe that fits and supports the foot."

Active feet perspire more than usual, therefore an absorbent durenne mercerized cotton sock at least a half inch longer than the longest toe is recommended. Durenne yarn is used in many name brands of socks as well as shirts and underwear.

Another tip from army experts concerns shirts and underwear. Climatologist Dr. L. P. Herrington of the Yale School of Public Health, also a consultant to the Army, says, "When we work hard and the body's cooling system goes into operation we have only about 19 square feet of evaporative area. "However," he adds, "we can feel more comfortable by adding to the body's effective cooling surface. Wearing a shirt of mercerized cotton next to the skin absorbs and evaporates twice as quickly as other cottons."

Although Dr. Herrington recommends wearing mercerized cotton next to the skin as a comfort measure, he advises that the number of clothing layers be kept at a minimum.

Proper Planning Aids Entertaining

Week-end entertaining can sometimes be a problem, especially if the hostess holds down a nine-to-five job five days a week and then comes home to a myriad of chores.

However, proper planning for your week-end guests can make the difference between being a charming, relaxed hostess, or a nervous one. Keep entertainment informal, serve "fun" meals or let the guests help with a few light chores. Be a thoughtful hostess by having the guest room attractive and stocked with extra towels, a few magazines and a good lamp to read by. It helps when visitors are not put on a "time-clock" schedule for rising time or for midday meals or excursions.

Don't fret about what time the guests will arrive Friday evening. A quickly prepared supper of any number of delicious ready-cooked frozen food specialties can be heated and served in a matter of minutes. For dessert, an assortment of candy, chocolates and coffee satisfy almost everyone's craving for a "sweet" ending.

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