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PRESS

Mazatlan calls for more Canadian lift

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Canadian vacation business to Mazatlan is strong enough to warrant an increase in flight capacity by Canada's leisure airlines, says a resort marketing executive from the Mexican beach destination.

"The load factors are very high, so we really need more flights to Mazatlan," says Gilberto Aviles, VP sales and marketing for El Cid Resorts (the company operates four properties in Mazatlan). He also serves as the director of the airline and marketing committee for the Mazatlan Tourism Trust. The popular holiday destination on Mexico's Pacific coast saw a 15% to 20% increase in hotel bookings over the last year, says Aviles. Between 50% and 60% of those are in Mazatlan on vacation packages, with the remainder filling out the population of long-stay visitors.

An expanded flight schedule might best be accommodated during the summer months, at least initially, says the VP.

Mazatlan received over 1.5 million visitors in 2011, and research by the Mexico Tourism Board on airline efficiency and capacity indicates that the city needs more air seats to keep up with growing

demand from Canada, he said. "Western Canada is one of our primary source markets," said the VP. WestJet operates four weekly flights to Mazatlan from Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary. Sunwing operates one flight from Toronto.

"We're pleased to have doubled our capacity into Mazatlan since we began service there in 2007," said a WestJet spokesperson. Also solid are the advance bookings for Mazatlan. The current schedule "is firm" until the transition to the summer schedule in May 2013, said the rep.

The Canadian market has even outpaced the US in terms of arrivals growth to Mazatlan over the past three years, says Aviles. Canadian arrivals have posted increases of 10% to 15% from 2009 to 2011, while the US has wavered between 5% and 10%.

Mazatlán is one of the best places in Mexico to experience Mexico's culture and history, says Aviles, and prides itself on being a "Colonial City on the Beach." Threats to visitor security, which have garnered a lot of press in recent years, have been rendered a non-issue, says the VP.



Gilberto Aviles, VP sales and marketing for El Cid Resorts in Mazatlan

