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**Cayman colours
WestJet program**

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WestJet takes off to Cayman Islands

Think a getaway to the Cayman Islands is out of your clients' reach? Think again. The upscale destination is now more affordable to get to with WestJet Airlines offering a new non-stop service from Toronto to Grand Cayman this winter.

By Mary Nguyen

One-way fares to the Caribbean destination start from \$179, plus taxes and fees – and the savings don't stop there, says the tourist board's Paul Minich.

"It is true that we draw a slightly more affluent traveller, and we do have amazing properties and restaurant experiences to cater to their every need, but there are also fantastic mid-range properties and family restaurants that have been appealing to Canadian families for years," he says, as the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism's country manager for Canada.

Two examples of such value-based accommodations are the Sunshine Suites Grand Cayman Resort and Comfort Suites hotel, both of which are offered by WestJet Vacations. In addition, the tour operator arm of the airline also offers the high-end Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort and Westin Casuarina Resort & Spa on Seven Mile Beach.

WestJet Vacations has already launched what Minich calls "aggressive" packaging in partnership with the four properties. To complement the new service, the tour operator is offering agents' clients' three-night packages starting from \$689, plus taxes and fees.

"Not surprisingly, Canadians are already seeing fares to Grand Cayman becoming much more competitive heading into this winter season, and the price value on lift is encouraging new package deals aimed at the dive sector, the likes of which have never been seen before in Canada," he says, adding that the partnership with WestJet has been in the works for years.



Cayman Islands Premier McKeeva Bush (third from right) is flanked by WestJet crew following the arrival of the airline's inaugural flight to Grand Cayman on November 4.

The new lift is, in fact, the next step in the destination's three-year strategic plan that will also see it ramping up its marketing efforts out west.

"For the last two years, we've been noticeably more active with our promotional outreach in cities like Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg," says Minich. "And you can expect to see more of that as we roll out an advertising, PR and marketing campaign to attract more western [Canada] visitors to our shores."

With some 25% of Canadian visitors to the Cayman Islands coming from the region, he says the added airlift from the Calgary-based airline will

only boost that figure.

As for whom agents should consider sending to Grand Cayman, Minich says to look for the signs of "all-inclusive fatigue."

"Canadians who have grown tired of compound-like environments and those that are looking for great restaurants, excellent hotels and condominiums and a safe environment that encourages exploration and cultural experience are the types of travellers we're seeing," he says.

WestJet's new service takes off three times weekly, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, through April 28, 2011. (www.caymanislands.ky; www.westjet.com; www.westjetvacations.com)