

# dkc NEWS from

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## Bulletin

The Dominican Republic goes upmarket The man who lit up Paris Eco-battle in Tasmania



### WHERE THE FIVE-STAR HOTELS ARE GOING IN THE CARIBBEAN

A GROUP OF PREMIUM HOTEL BRANDS ARE ABOUT TO OPEN PROPERTIES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, AMONG THEM FOUR SEASONS AND RITZ-CARLTON. DAVID KAUFMAN EXPLAINS WHY.

LONG REGARDED AS A package-trip destination, the Dominican Republic – which occupies the eastern end of the Caribbean island it shares with Haiti – is currently undergoing a makeover.

Buoyed by a growth in flights from the USA, and encouraged by an administration that supports tourism development, premium hotel companies including Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, Westin and ➤

The pool at Sivory Punta Cana, a five-star boutique hotel in the Dominican Republic

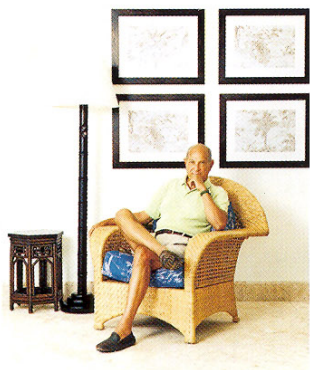
The golf course at Tortuga Bay. Below, from left: Oscar de la Renta in one of the Tortuga Bay villas he designed; the resort's Manantial Bar



► Trump are launching resorts there unprecedented in their scope and scale.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the country emerged as a destination for European budget travellers, thanks to sprawling resorts along its northern and eastern coasts created by hospitality giants such as Barceló of Spain. At the same time, a small community of international jet-setters, among them Julio Iglesias, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Dominican designer Oscar de la Renta, established the reputation of the golf resort of Casa de Campo, set on the island's south coast. (It has two courses designed by Pete Dye, and remains one of the Dominican Republic's most upmarket areas.) Five international airports were built to bring visitors directly to the beach areas, avoiding the lacklustre capital, Santo Domingo. And with the benefit of concessions that made their construction almost tax-free, new hotels shot up.

The results were impressive. About half a million tourists



visited the Dominican Republic in 1986. Ten years later, that number had trebled; and the figure for 2007 will probably have exceeded five million. The tourism boom has brought US\$3.5 billion into the economy and made the republic the top tourism destination in the Caribbean, displacing Puerto Rico (which had held that position for almost four decades).

In terms of quantity, the achievement was remarkable: in Latin America only Mexico and Brazil earn more from tourism, says the World Tourism Organisation. But the tourists



**WESTIN PLANS BETWEEN EIGHT AND 10 NEW HOTELS, THE FIRST TO OPEN IN SEPTEMBER**

were not affluent. 'There was a stigma attached to the country,' says Scott Berman, a Caribbean specialist and principal at the Hospitality and Leisure consulting division of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC). 'It was regarded as cheap; only for the price-sensitive.' This cloud had a silver lining, though: 'It was

one of the few places left in the Caribbean that was affordable to developers,' adds Berman.

The developers moved in. The republic's two most striking developments are Cap Cana and Roco Ki, both resort/residence projects spread over thousands of beachfront acres at Punta Cana, on the island's eastern extreme, and each costing billions of dollars. The developments are luring well-known international hospitality brands. Westin plans to build between eight and 10 hotels in Roco Ki and will launch the first in September; a Fairmont is set to follow. Ritz-Carlton and Trump are developing hotels on the 30,000-acre Cap Cana site, which will also include a 1,000-slip yacht marina, a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course, private villas priced from US\$750,000 and an upmarket shopping centre, the country's first. Four Seasons, meanwhile, is building a 200-room, US\$120 million hotel at Casa de Campo for completion in 2009. A new, US\$30 million international marketing campaign, and the launch of flights from key US cities such as Boston and New York, will help the Dominican Republic attract a better class of North American traveller.

The new resorts are mostly still a year or two away. But a trio of five-star boutique retreats has opened over the past two years: Casa Colonial on the north coast at Puerto Plata and, at Punta Cana, Sivory Punta Cana and Tortuga Bay – the last designed by Oscar de la Renta. Far more modest than the projects at Roco Ki or Cap Cana, these small-scale resorts (which, like most of the tourism infrastructure, escaped damage when Tropical Storm Noel passed through the island in October 2007) nevertheless helped persuade developers that the Dominican Republic

**CANNY MOVE** BA gets a 'new route' incentive worth \$1.1 million from Dallas/Fort Worth airport for moving its flight there from Gatwick to Heathrow

➤ could lure holidaymakers away from established luxury destinations. 'They have definitely helped to validate the market,' says Roco Ki chairman Rick Dortch – as has Punta Cana's privately owned airport. It is now the country's busiest, 'which ensures that there are enough first-class seats to make us feel comfortable with the destination', according to Ezzat Coutry, a senior vice-president at Ritz-Carlton.

According to both Dortch and Coutry, the Dominican Republic's relatively large size

and population both add to its allure for developers. The former provides enough undeveloped land to support large-scale schemes such as Roco Ki and Cap Cana; the latter means that low-cost manpower is available to build them. 'The island also has its own sources of raw materials such as cement and wood easily at hand, which helps lower costs,' says Dortch. 'On many other islands everything has to be imported.' And the Dominican government has built the roads and highways necessary

### THE REPUBLIC'S LARGE SIZE AND POPULATION BOTH ADD TO ITS ALLURE FOR DEVELOPERS

for smooth transfers between resorts, airports and beaches.

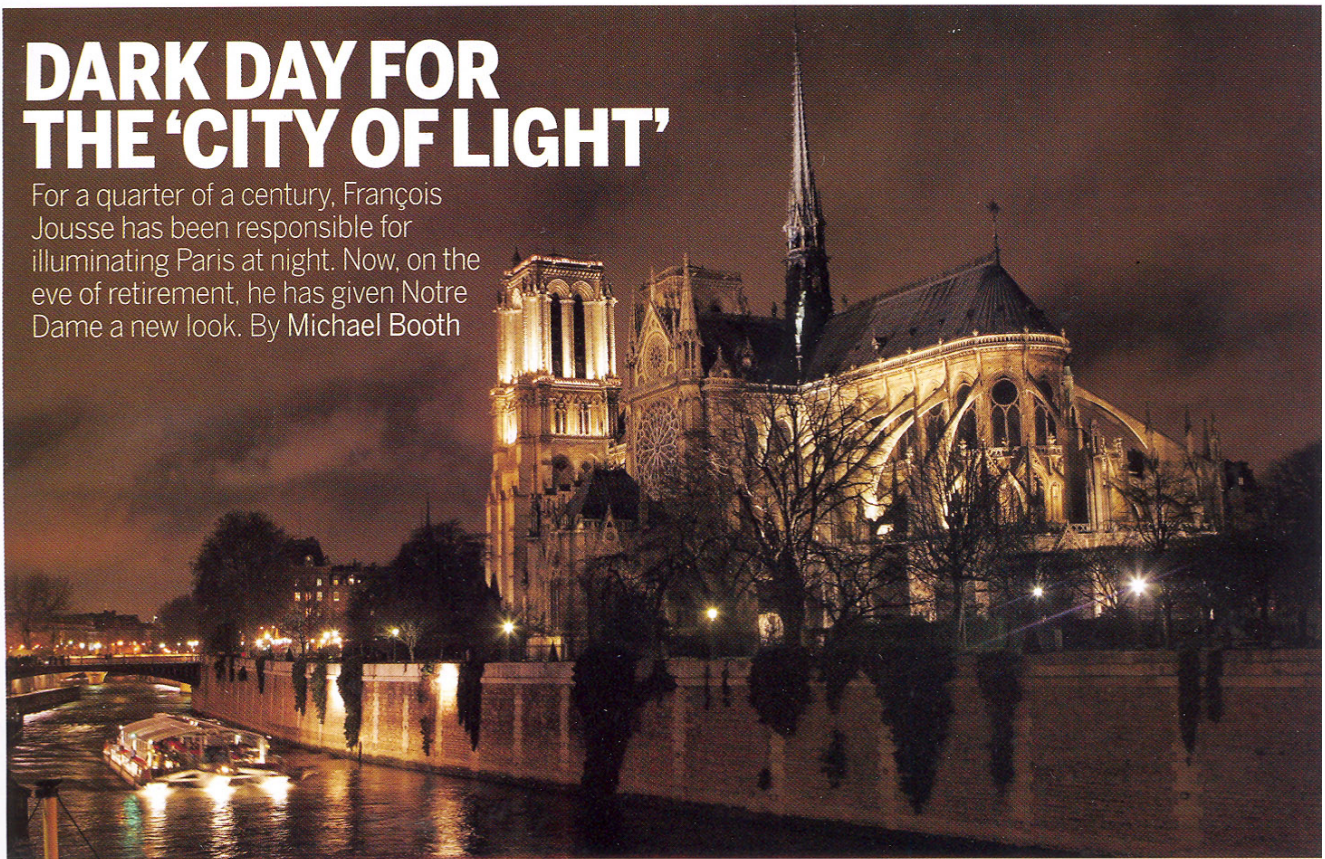
Quite how UK tour operators will react to the advent of the new, premium-brand hotels is hard to judge. Currently, the Dominican Republic remains a destination for mid-market package holidays; among the upmarket

operators, Sovereign Luxury Holidays is unusual in including the republic in its programme.

But the situation is likely to change when the new hotels are completed. One contractor at a tour operator which books clients into the best-known properties in Barbados, St Lucia and 11 other Caribbean destinations, says that it does not feature 'DR' because 'it fails to meet our clients' expectations. The new hotels are still some way off; but once they are open we will look at the destination again.' 

## DARK DAY FOR THE 'CITY OF LIGHT'

For a quarter of a century, François Jousse has been responsible for illuminating Paris at night. Now, on the eve of retirement, he has given Notre Dame a new look. By Michael Booth



**T**HE MAN WHO, for more than a quarter of a century, has been in charge of illuminating the City of Light retires in March. Before 1981, when François Jousse was appointed chief engineer for doctrine, expertise and technical control (French for 'the lighting guy'), Paris had

no coordinated lighting strategy. Jousse changed all that. Over the past 26 years he and his team of 30 *concepteurs lumières* have defined a majestic nocturnal lightscape that is the envy of every other city in the world. It costs £500,000 per night.

'Back in the 1980s, buildings were illuminated only from

the front, just the façade,' he explains. 'With the Hôtel de Ville and Sacré Coeur, we lit them from the rear and sides as well.' The latter was Jousse's greatest challenge. 'The shape is so complex, we had problems with the shadows on that one.'

Jousse started his career as a city council engineer in

1963, initially working in the refuse department. His later role was created especially for him when a superior learned of his interest in electricity and photography. What followed was the creation of a mood lighting system on the grandest of scales, encompassing 300 ➤

**BUDGET SKIING** A Ski Club of Great Britain survey shows the average cost of a snowsport trip bought in the UK for the 2006/7 season was £648



Left, lighting engineer François Jousse beneath Notre Dame's flying buttresses

► churches, bridges, public buildings and monuments.

Jousse's largest project was the £4 million redesign of the lighting of Notre Dame, inaugurated in November after 15 years of often fraught negotiation with the Catholic Church (which vetoed some of his designer's ideas as too 'Disney') and the French government, which owns the cathedral and forbade any drilling of the masonry. Jousse still feels twinges of regret when he sees the end result. 'We wanted a wave of lights to cascade down the side of the building every hour, like a clock chiming,' he says. 'But the clergy said no.' Nevertheless, Jousse's subtle use of myriad small bulbs to bathe the building in a soft light – 'stronger at the top so you feel that you are moving closer to heaven', is how he describes it – is a triumph.

Jousse's talents have not only been harnessed for the greater glory of the Paris monuments. His lighting skills have been used to fight crime, too, improving security at the Parc des Princes stadium and in the notorious alleys of Bercy, among other trouble spots.

As befits a city that was first illuminated by Louis XIV, the Sun King, in 1669, and still uses light fittings created during the Second Empire, Jousse has always been acutely sensitive to the heritage of the buildings he lights. An expert on the history

of lighting and a self-styled 'philosopher of monument illumination', he believes that lighting can illuminate the history of a building or tell a story, drawing attention to a quirky feature or leading the eye on a chronological journey through a façade.

'I am very proud of the lighting in the garden of the Petit Palais, for instance,' he says. 'It tells the story of one day, from sunrise to sunset, every 14 minutes.'

Above all, his trademark has been to illuminate buildings within the context of the city, not just as stand-alone stars. 'I try to consider the panorama, not just one building or monument. In many cities the only things that are lit are banks and hotels, but they light to advertise, or express power and money, not beauty. But the integration of lighting is very important. Also, you must express the character of the city. Paris is not Barcelona. Paris is about power; we must be cool and subtle.'

Perhaps the most important lesson for other cities in what Jousse and his designers have achieved in Paris is that great lighting can enhance the visitor experience in ways few other town-hall initiatives can. Never mind the *Mona Lisa* or Louis Vuitton's flagship store, the theatricality of a floodlit place Vendôme, or the audacious hourly glitterball display at the Eiffel Tower are indelible memories for visitors to Paris. 