

## Title:

Cancun Beach Being Restored At A Record Pace

## Word Count:

495

## Summary:

When Hurricane Wilma swept through Cancun last October the mighty winds stripped away 8 miles of some of the most beautiful sandy beach in the world. Everyone from Mexican President Vincente Fox down to the local residents knew that the beach had to be restored or Cancun's future was in serious danger.

Within weeks the Mexican government pledged \$21 million to restore the beach. Now they have made good on that promise, and a massive barge being run by a Belgian firm is wor...

## Keywords:

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## Article Body:

When Hurricane Wilma swept through Cancun last October the mighty winds stripped away 8 miles of some of the most beautiful sandy beach in the world. Everyone from Mexican President Vincente Fox down to the local residents knew that the beach had to be restored or Cancun's future was in serious danger.

Within weeks the Mexican government pledged \$21 million to restore the beach. Now they have made good on that promise, and a massive barge being run by a Belgian firm is working day and night to replace the sand.

The target date to have the brilliant white sand back in place is the end of April, and already the large earth moving machines are smoothing the sand dredged up from the sea bed.

**\*\*A long-standing problem**

Cancun has some of the Caribbean's most beautiful beaches. But the resort town of roughly 300,000 is perched on the extreme southeast end of the Yucatan Peninsula, looking out into the Caribbean, and too often is directly in the path of hurricanes that come sweeping in from the sea.

The problem of beach erosion existed long before Hurricane Wilma. Local Cancun

officials have known for years that the shoreline was eroding and the beach was being washed out to sea. That process was given a boost by Hurricane Gilbert which swept away about half the beach in September of 1988.

One of the positive outcomes of Hurricane Wilma is that it got the government to make the commitment to beach restoration. What seashore experts had been trying to do for more than 17 years, Hurricane Wilma did in a matter of days.

**\*\*An essential resource for Cancun**

Erosion of coastlines and beaches is a problem around the world, but in Cancun, where it is the very lifeblood of the resort, the disaster of Wilma finally led to serious action.

Cancun consists of three distinct areas. Ciudad de Cancun, the actual town, has a population of about 300,000. Off the beach, the ecological reserve, has incredible lakes, forests and mangrove marshland. And then there's the Zona Hotelera, which is an island where most of the hotels and shopping malls are found.

Cancun is a mecca for tourists from the U.S., Canada, and Europe. It has more than 25,000 hotel rooms, hundreds of restaurants and several hundred shops. There are roads leading to the forest, making it an easy trip to see the forest and remains of ancient local Mayan culture.

Roughly 3 million tourists came to Cancun last year, spending about \$4 billion. But Wilma has put a damper on tourism this year. Working flat out, local workers expect that by May, about 90% of Cancun's hotel rooms will be cleaned, redecorated and ready for guests. The restaurants, bars and malls will be reopened, and more than 10,000 new palm trees will be planted along the main streets of the resort town.

The thousands of tourists, who are already starting to return to this famous resort, will be back in droves once the rebuilding and restoration are complete.