

# CAP JULUCA REOPENS WITH NEW EMPHASIS IN MARKETPLACE

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Villa Bedroom

The iconic Cap Juluca Resort , which has been greatly enhanced since May 2012 with the investment of more than US \$ 15 million, by its original owners, Charles and Linda Hickox, has reopened with an emphasis on marketing strategy following the seasonal break. Having overcome a period of negative publicity, the hotel's forward thrust has been made even easier in that it has just been ranked “#1 Beach Resort in the World” by the readers of *Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report*, and rated as “#1 Resort in Anguilla” by *US News and World Report*.



Villa Living Room

In addition, much progress has been reported in the ongoing discussions between the Owners and the Government of Anguilla, insomuch as there is word of a new Alien Landholding Licence and MOU in the making.

“It certainly takes away the thought about the resort being closed”, said Mr. Hickox. “Hopefully we can now move forward to get what is needed in the way of work permits and so forth. I think we are the only resort on the island operating without any work permits at all.”



Beach front view of CapJuluca Villas

Besides its sterling contribution as a popular tourist haven, the resort has immediate plans to further enhance its guest services. It is also a major employer with an Anguillian staff of 260 despite the prevailing economic situation. The state of the economy and closure of four and a half villas, owned by parties related to the Adam Aron ownership group, are blamed for the reduction of the number of employees from about 310 to the current number.



Juluca Star

Mr and Mrs Hickox have been in Anguilla over the past several days for the reopening of the resort. Charles Hickox, accompanied by Mr Carlos Lopes, gave an interview to *The Anguillian* on the reopening day of the hotel. “First of all, we are glad that we are open on time on November 1st and our first guests

are arriving today,” Mr Hickox said. “We have completed a further substantial refurbishment of the hotel both in the rooms and in the public areas. “



Mr. & Mrs. Charles Hickox

The recent refurbishment work at Cap Juluca, of which Mr Hickox spoke, was further explained by Mr Lopes of the California-based Unique Hotels and Resorts Company which has been closely involved with Mr and Mrs Hickox in Anguilla since 1993. “This year, in particular, a very significant investment was put back into Cap Juluca’s rooms,” he reported. “The air conditioning systems are new; at the back of the house, what you don’t see, everything—from kitchens, refrigeration, plumbing and electrical—has been redone because the property is 25 years old. There have been more renovations in the rooms, with new furniture, bedding and high-quality linen. We are going to enhance *PIMMS* – the signature restaurant, with new fabrics and lighting.”

Mr Lopes spoke proudly about the new look of the refurbished villas: “When it comes to improving the quality of the villas, they are fabulous, with the interiors welcoming and in different colours,” he remarked. He praised Mrs Hickox for her hands-on approach to ensure the high quality of the rooms and the elegant standard of the resort in general.

Mr Lopes went on to say: “We are also adding a basketball court to the property. Our guests have been asking for one since last year, so they are going to get their own professional basketball court, and this is really very important for them.

“The most exciting thing of all is that we have worked with our culinary team, many of whom won gold awards year after year, and we are very proud of them. The team has come up with wonderful new menus for Pimms and Spice Restaurants and a new menu and barbecue for Blue Restaurant. There has been a lot of focus to improve the property.

“The owners have made a large investment in three different areas. Firstly, there was a reorganisation to ensure that we had the best management team. Secondly, they invested heavily in marketing. We have a New York sales office which deals with the primary market base for our guests; we have sales offices in London and Italy; and we have hired a public relations agency in the United States to heighten the awareness of the property. Thirdly, we have invested over \$100 K in training and re-training the staff.

“Cap Juluca’s repeat guest factor is still over 60%, but last year we attracted about 30% new guests directly to the property who had never been to Anguilla before. A lot of that had to do with social media. Despite the rumours and innuendoes, the hotel did exceptionally well. We had a very good year last year; and we are going to have an even better year 2013/2014. One of the things we have here – for which Mr and Mrs Hickox have been the inspiration – is the support and the service of the staff.”

Mr Hickox said he and his wife were delighted to have chosen Anguilla for creating Cap Juluca more than twenty-five years ago. “We are proud to be here, and the reason we chose Anguilla to build this resort was because of the people,” he pointed out. “They are so friendly...They have a very natural, spontaneous smile that you don’t always find on other islands.”

He was asked what further plans he had for the development of Cap Juluca and what some of his concerns were. “I think our main approach right now is to get those four and a half beachfront villas back into the rental pool,” he responded. “They have been sitting locked up here for over a year. They haven’t contributed one dollar of business for Anguilla, one dollar of service charge for the Julucans, one dollar of revenue for the Anguilla Government, in the way of Accommodation Tax or anything else. They are just wasting and are not being maintained. When they are brought up to the quality standard that we have set for Cap Juluca, further development, depending upon market demand, is anticipated.”

Mr Lopes, speaking at the invitation of Mr Hickox, said there was also an important need for a General Manager, and a Food and Beverage Manager to manage the resort’s three restaurants, as well as an Executive Chef. “We do need to fill these three very important positions,” he continued. “What we have been able to do in the meantime is to work with people who were here for a long time but have been trained and re-trained.

“So we have great people, but still need to get leadership at the head to develop them, to take them to a new plateau of service that we want for this hotel. The point is that we are doing these managers an injustice by not having the persons that are five star category leaders to continue to develop them because training and development is not something that you do once or twice a year. It is something that you do everyday. This is why it is so important for the future of the resort.”

As Cap Juluca continues to meet the needs of its guests, attention is also being paid to the resort’s two boats – the *Juluca Star* and the *Juluca Pride*. “We believe that many of our clients, when they come here, wish to visit other islands like St Barths and St Martin/St Maarten,” Mr Lopes observed. “This year the two boats, which are being operated by *Fun Time*, have been totally renovated and restored. One will take up to 20 passengers and the other up to 14 and will be available to our guests on charter. This is an important amenity for our guests providing sunset cruises, fishing and snorkelling trips – and it also promotes other services on the island.”

Mr Hickox had this response to a question about restoring Cap Juluca to its former glory: “The glory is already there because getting that “#1 Beach Resort in the World Award” is something that Cap Juluca has never had before. The subscribers of *Andrew Harper’s Hideaway Report* wrote in and chose us. It was the readers’ choice award – so I think, as far as our glory is concerned, we are already there. However, we will keep doing the things that further improve and enhance the reputation of Cap Juluca and Anguilla as a premier resort destination.”

*The Anguillian* interview concluded with a final statement from Mr Lopes: “As we market Cap Juluca, the strength of the name is incredible,” he stated. “It is really one of the most iconic properties in the world. It is iconic because of the architecture; because the beach is one of the most beautiful beaches in the world; and the thirdly, because of the very friendly staff. So the name has become iconic in the travel industry because of that very high recognition.”