

Africa's Cape Verde Islands: a low-cost rival to the Caribbean

By Graham Norwood

Wednesday, 29 November 2006

The republic off the western coast of Africa comprises 18 islands that have been kept virtually secret - until now. The former Portuguese colony has lost the fight to keep its salt-mining and shipbuilding industries, and it is now turning to tourism to provide income for its 485,000 residents.

Developers are being welcomed with open arms and the charms of the islands are being paraded in adverts and on websites.

The climate runs from 25C to 35C, and on many islands there are only half a dozen rainy days per year. It is only an hour behind Britain, so visitors don't suffer from jet lag. Direct flights take less than six hours from London - an easy trip compared to the Caribbean.

"It was an obvious choice, although we hadn't heard of it before last year," says James Longton, an accountant from Maidenhead. Mr Longton has bought an off-plan, two-bedroom flat on Cape Verde where developments are being built. "The travel is easy, it's cheap and the country is charming and unspoilt," he says.