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Five-star hotel coming to Cuba

24/06/2014



Cuba's government said Friday that an estimated \$350 million hotel and tourism project was coming to the island.

The five-star project is called the Carbonera Club, and it would be located near the island's famous Varadero Beach.

The property would be a combination hotel, spa, tennis club, golf course and residential development, among other features.

It is the product of a partnership between British firm Esencia Hotels and Cuban firm Palmares SA, something that would be the first of its kind since Cuba enacted its new foreign investment law earlier this year.

The company said on its Web site that it had been working on plans with Palmares for three years.

According to Esencia, the project was designed by architectural studios Rafael De La Hoz, Conran & Partners and One Works, along with golf course designer PGADC, among others.

Cuba said it currently had 64 hotel management contracts with 20 international brands, with plans to expand that number to 70 by the end of 2014.

Cuba's Tourism Ministry said the island had received just under 1.3 million tourists in the first quarter, a 5 percent improvement over the same period in 2013.