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Luxury hotels build experiences for couples this Valentine's Day

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Peninsula chocolates

By NANCY BUCKLEY

Valentine's Day is a weekend affair this year and with President's Day in the United States on the following Monday, many couples will be traveling for the long weekend.

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Luxury hotels are looking to accommodate guests' short trips for the holiday with different packages, menus and special events within their properties. Taking advantage of a dual holiday weekend with interesting guest options will likely allow hotel brands to create a relationship with couples at one location that may carry over to other properties during future trips.

"We host Valentine's Day events to help our guests celebrate the important moments of their lives," said Sheila Foley, general manager at the Arizona Biltmore, a Waldorf Astoria resort, Phoenix. "On Valentine's Day, couples are actively seeking a truly special experience – and what could be more special than a romantic visit to a legendary resort?"

Love is in the air

Couples taking the extended weekend, or even just the night, to be away from home and indulge in hotel offerings are looking for a relaxing and romantic experience. The

experiences created allow guests to temporarily escape from their daily lives with their significant other.

Valentine's Day packages range from special menus at the dining options to spa packages. Some hotels gear up for locals to have a staycation while others welcome guest from around the world for an extended stay.

For instance, at The Ritz-Carlton San Francisco, the in-house restaurant features a menu that includes a five course tasting menu and wine pairing options. This special typically attracts local residents looking for a special evening.

"This night is all about relaxing and creating special time with your loved ones, so allow us to worry about details and ensure everything is pure perfection," said Ryan Stetins, general manager of The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco's Parallel 37 and Level 2 Sommelier. "Our ladies and gentlemen will make the experience so memorable you will come back every year."

Other experiences include room packages like at the Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong where guests will be welcomed with Champagne and chocolates and hotel credit to the restaurants on the property.

At the Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach, United Arab Emirates, couples can choose from several options including the "Only You" package that includes exclusive access to the day villas, chauffeured service in a Mercedes-Benz or Bentley, Champagne and dinner with chocolate dessert as an opera singer performs.

Four Seasons, Dubai

"At the Four Seasons Resort we see the Valentine's celebration as a time to appreciate and acknowledge loved ones," said a representative from Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach. "The resort accommodates for a plethora of needs such as those on business trips, those enjoying family holidays and those who are escaping on a quiet couple's retreat. It therefore seems clear to us that all of our guests and visitors should indulge in the festivities. Moreover our team strives to surpass the needs and expectations of the client, by recognizing Valentine's we are accommodating to the wishes of local

residents and hotel guest."

The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas appeals to local island vibes with a sailing option on a 53-foot catamaran that sails at sunset as couples sip Champagne. Guests can also spend their days at the hotel in a seaside cabana receiving a massage or other spa treatments.

Ritz-Carlton St. Thomas

Waldorf Astoria's Arizona Biltmore is focusing on food for the weekend with two restaurant dinner options, an in-room dinner service, a brunch and an afternoon tea option for guests.

New York's The Mark Hotel is calling on lovebirds this Valentine's Day with several meals and relaxing options for couples.

Chef of The Mark Resturant by Jean-Georges, Jacques Grange will indulge guests in a breakfast, and after aroma relaxation and bubble baths, couples will be treated to a five course meal. The Mark Hotel will likely intrigue local guests to treat themselves and their significant others to a relaxing staycation (see story).

In addition, The Peninsula Hotels is sending its own Cupid around Hong Kong this Valentine's Day to locally spread love.

A Mini Cooper is traveling throughout the city with red heart balloons encouraging Hong Kong locals to snap photos with the vehicle and share their love story on social media. Local events help hotels form relationships with neighbors likely creating a trust that will translate over to vacations (see story).

It's all about the experience

Engaging a consumer requires luxury brands to create unforgettable experiences in an authentic and empowering manner, according to executives from Four Seasons and Bang & Olufsen at The New York Times International Luxury Conference Dec. 3.

Creating luxury for a guest or consumer requires the brand to be authentic, but not fake, to create an emotional response, but not to intrude on the consumer's privacy. Balancing these lines can be difficult, but with the right information and interest, the consumer can

have a life changing experience that will deepen their alliance to the brand (see story).

Creating an unforgettable experience requires hotels to take into consideration their guests' wishes and create packages and events around that.

"Our goal at The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas is to help create memories and unique experiences for travelers, memories and special moments that we hope will stay with them long after they leave our island," said Cliff Brutus, director of sales and marketing at The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas.

"With winter in full swing, St. Thomas provides an ideal escape for Valentine's Day for travelers looking to get away for some relaxation and romance," he said. "We hope that our unique Valentine's Day events offer experiences that guests will always remember."

Final Take

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