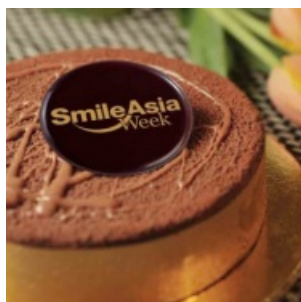


EVENTS/CAUSES

## Ritz-Carlton bakes a cake, shares a smile with charity initiative

May 2, 2016



*Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong Smile Asia Week cake*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

The Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts, Asia-Pacific is putting a smile on the faces of those in need.

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The chain's hotels in the region have teamed up to raise funds for Smile Asia, a global alliance of independent charities that offers free surgeries to children with cleft lip, palate and similar deformities. Repeating a charitable endeavor across the portfolio authenticates the brand's regard for the cause, further inscribing activism into the brand DNA.

"The Ritz-Carlton has always had a cornerstone guiding principle of striving to make a difference in the communities where we operate," said Victor Clavell, vice president of **The Ritz-Carlton** Asia-Pacific. "Smile Asia Week is an annual signature event and just one way our ladies and gentlemen proudly share their skills and knowledge to lift up communities in Asia and inspire our guests to join us in this sustainable effort.

"I am delighted that Smile Asia is able to change so many lives with our contribution."

### Smiles for Asia

Smile Asia Week will run from May 2-8, with specially crafted cakes sold to raise funds for Smile Asia. All 24 Ritz-Carlton hotels are participating in the initiative, which is in its third year and will cross the \$1 million mark for raised funds this year.

Each Ritz-Carlton pastry chef will hone a recipe for the Smile Asia Week signature cake, each made with chocolate and banana as the key flavors. The cakes can be purchased on [saw2016.smileasia.org](http://saw2016.smileasia.org) for delivery all around Asia, with proceeds going toward Smile Asia.

The initiative runs through May 8, which is also Mother's Day. As a result, Ritz-Carlton is encouraging consumers to buy cakes for delivery that Sunday.

Funds raised from the initiative will be used to send medical volunteers on surgical missions in Asia, helping those with cleft lips and similar ailments.

In addition, The Ritz-Carlton is working with local schools, and employees can volunteer to participate in mission trips in seven different countries to witness firsthand the difference Smile Asia has made. Volunteers will also settle mobile surgery stations, patent registrations and partake in various other tasks to aid Smile Asia.

By instituting the initiative across all its platforms and participating for the third year, Ritz-Carlton is telling consumers that it cares deeply about the causes in which it partakes. Luxury brands are expected to give back to their communities and be responsible role models, and philanthropy is a major part of what many consumers look for.

Charity on my mind

The Ritz-Carlton has made charity contributions a part of its brand identity.

In another instance, The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, invited guests to participate in its "Do Good, Feel Good" package this fall to give back to the communities surrounding the hotel.

The package acquaints guests with the DC Central Kitchen, a community kitchen that helps feed low-income and at-risk neighborhoods of Washington. Luxury hotels have been responding to the growing interest in philanthropy travel with packages that include charity aspects ([see story](#)).

More generally, all hotels must make an effort to go the extra mile on service, with larger social causes being as important as customer satisfaction.

Traveling is an increasingly popular way for people to give back, and hotel brands must stay on top of the trend to maintain their status as the best in the business.

A [recent study by Tours.com](#) found that an astonishing 55 percent of America-based travelers partook in volunteer work during a vacation within the past two years, with almost three quarters calling their charitable donations or philanthropic endeavors "important," "very important" or "extremely important." As "voluntourism" becomes increasingly common, brands must show that they care equally and assist travelers in partaking in volunteer work or gifting to maintain status and image ([see story](#)).