

EVENTS/CAUSES

Bentley shares “extraordinary world” with experience-minded consumers

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Bentley Extraordinary World promotional image

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

British automaker Bentley Motors is introducing a handful of clients to the extraordinary world of South America.

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In September and October, Bentley will welcome just 40 guests to Bolivia and Chile, where on- and off-road adventures in some of the world's most stunning landscapes await. Consumers' interests have gravitated toward the experiential end of the spectrum, and automakers are responding with exclusive trips abroad.

"The experience itself isn't so much the opportunity as is the chance to capture their imaginations while expanding the product image of Bentley's brand," said Rob Frankel, **branding strategist & expert** at Frankel & Anderson, Los Angeles. "I'd bet that their research indicates most people perceive Bentley as an urban rich person's town car. They probably have no idea of Bentley's other models."

Mr. Frankel is not associated with Bentley, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Bentley was unable to comment by press deadline.

Extraordinary World

For its "Extraordinary World" initiative, Bentley will offer four different groups of 10 a six-day retreat into Chile and Bolivia. They will drive through the world's highest desert, through the Andes and to the volcanoes and geysers of the South American countries.

The price of the experience based on current exchange rates is approximately \$21,600. The price does not include airfare, visa fees or immunizations.



Andes

On the first day of the trip, participants will meet with each other and Bentley at El Loa Airport in Calama, a city in the Atacama Desert in Northern Chile. From there, consumers will drive in pairs to the San Pedro de Atacama oasis, nearly a mile-and-a-half above sea level.

After a night at the Tierra Atacama Hotel & Spa, attendees will journey across the Andes to see the Lincancabur Volcano, the geysers of Sol de Maana and the rock formations of the Siloli desert. The night will wind down at the Tayka del Deserto hotel in the Andean desert, granting a gorgeous view of the mountains.



The third day will take adventurers to the Salar de Uyuni salt flats in Bolivia. Expanding 4,000 square meters, it is the largest salt flat in the world, and it is more than two miles above sea level.

There, attendees will be able to see flamingos, the Culpeo fox, vizcachas (cousins of chinchillas), hillstar hummingbirds and Andean geese. The Luna Salada hotel, made entirely of salt, will provide accommodations for the night.

The next day will also be spent driving across the Salar de Uyuni, with stops at the Tunupa Volcano and the Salar Islands. After a night at a luxury desert campsite, they will spend the last full day back in Chile, in the sand dunes near Iquique.



Siloli desert rock formations

Although an automaker may have successfully convinced a customer recently to pick its product over that of its competitors, branded experiences increase loyalty and create a rapport between consumer and brand, tailoring a shared lifestyle. Given the habits of the new consumer, cultivating this loyalty in ways that go beyond product is an important step in staying ahead.

Asking for more

The promise of a beautifully crafted, high-performance automobile is no longer enough for some car enthusiasts. Automakers are now offering packages that focus on travel and exploration from the driver's seat, helping to establish a brand lifestyle.

For example, British automaker Aston Martin is offering adventurous consumers a taste of elegance.

Alongside travel retailer Elegant Resorts, the automaker is offering a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to tour Scotland, England and Italy in one of its sports cars. Such offerings are gaining popularity within the automotive sector because they introduce the brand to travelers and create ties to less tangible experiences ([see story](#)).

Even if an itinerant trip abroad is not offered, automakers are still augmenting vehicle purchases with the promise of something more.

German automaker Porsche is the latest to fall in line, ensuring that its U.S.-based consumers get more than just a

vehicle when they purchase a Porsche.

Porsche Cars North America is leveraging its experiential destination at One Porsche Drive in Atlanta to provide VIP treatment for those looking to test their new vehicle in style. Consumers today are looking for experiences, so tacking one on to a necessary product purchase will make Porsche look more attractive to consumers ([see story](#)).

"From what I can see, Bentley's pretty much going after the Range Rover market, which makes sense," Mr. Frankel said. "After all, the rich are always willing to spend more for luxury brands; average and poor people will never buy. So positioning themselves as 'the rich man's Range Rover' is probably a more realistic goal than attempting to go head to head with Range Rover."

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