

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Marriott to offer unique experiential excursions with new investment

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Starwood's The Luxury Collection is now controlled by Marriott International. Image: Hotel Imperial Vienna

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Hospitality brand Marriott International, Inc. is working to curate more one-of-a-kind experiences and activities for customers while traveling with a new acquisition.

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PlacePass is a technological platform that curates a series of activities for consumers to book while on vacation, which the hospitality conglomerate will now be investing in. Marriott will be integrating these special experiences into its own platforms for booking with Marriott or its Starwood brands.

"With PlacePass' extensive global coverage, serving more than 800 locations worldwide across 177 countries, the investment will allow Marriott to leverage data to provide more personalized experiences to travelers looking to pursue their passions i.e., a person who's taken advantage of Marriott Rewards' sports partnerships could be offered the chance get an inside look at the Los Angeles Lakers locker room with an NBA scout through PlacePass," said Stephanie Linnartz, global chief commercial officer at Marriott International. "The number of experiences Marriott will now be able to offer is unprecedented by any other hospitality or sharing economy company."

Luxury experiences

Guests of The Ritz-Carlton or another hotel chain within the group will be able to discover and book tours curated by PlacePass but on Marriott or Starwood's SPG digital platforms. Users can search for once-in-a-lifetime activities on the mobile applications of all Marriott Starwood brands, which now number more than 30 brands.



Downton Abbey castle that Marriott customers will be able to tour

PlacePass provides a series of activities that users can browse and book based on their destinations. For instance, guests staying at the Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco can book experiences such as a Vista Grande Helicopter Tour and a day-trip to see the Red Woods in Sausalito, CA.

The investment will provide Marriott with an additional 100,000 local experiences for guests, booked directly through the hospitality brand. PlacePass includes activities at more than 800 destinations.

Activities range in type, from city tours to outdoor experiences as well as music, performances, culinary and sports events.



Dogsledding in Norway

Marriott is hoping to provide its guests and rewards members with whatever experience they are looking for, which the investment into PlacePass is likely to build up.

Unique experiences that are part of the partnership include a VIP Downton Abbey tour of London, wrestling with a retired Sumo wrestler in Japan, a camel tour of Dubai's dunes in the United Arab Emirates, mountain biking tour of Cambodia, private viewing of the crown jewels in London and authentic cooking lessons in Italy.

Marriott and Starwood

Marriott International expanded further into the world of luxury hospitality after its merger with Starwood, opening 30 new luxury destinations within 2017.

Now that established luxury brands such as St. Regis and The Ritz-Carlton are under the Marriott umbrella, the hotel conglomerate is hoping to bring that level of luxury guest experience to its existing locations. To support this progress into luxury, Marriott opened a wide range of new luxury locations in many different countries in the hopes to appeal to the affluent global traveler ([see more](#)).

Since forming the world's largest hospitality brand in fall 2016, Marriott International continued to add significantly to its luxury portfolio and has additional high-end properties in the pipeline.

On March 1, Marriott held a luncheon to discuss its merger with Starwood Hotels & Resorts, an acquisition that was the industry's biggest news of 2016 and a significant milestone for Marriott in its 90-year history. Now that Starwood brands are under the Marriott umbrella, the latter hotelier counts The St. Regis, The Luxury Collection, W Hotels and others within its stable ([see more](#)).

"We do know that guests will be able to book tours and activities offered by PlacePass, through Marriott channels before or during their trip," Mr. Linnartz said. "Additionally, concierges at each of our hotels will be able to book guests' activities.

"Many of the other aspects of the user experience are being developed at this time," she said.

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