

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Hospitality during the holidays compete for lasting memories

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*The team at The Biltmore prepares for Christmas. Image credit: The Biltmore*

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Hospitality and travel brands have a strong obligation to guests to create one-of-a-kind experiences to celebrate the holidays, and this year brands such as Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, Four Seasons and The Inn at the Biltmore in Asheville, NC stood out.

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Holiday dcor, festive feasts, special packages and Christmas activities are rampant this time of year at high-end hotels, with brands looking to make a special impact on the influx of travelers during the season. Life-sized gingerbread houses, elaborate displays, detailed Christmas-themed itineraries and charity initiatives are a few of the ways these brands are looking to make the holidays special this year, but no matter what, the key is to focus on the guest or location.

"Great holiday packages typically follow one of two directions: they either focus on the location or the guest," said Taylor Rains, managing partner at [Flugel Consulting](#), Charleston, South Carolina. "The Plaza, Four Seasons Prague and the Inn at the Biltmore are just a few examples of how a property can successfully focus on the location itself by offering guests a unique experience.

"On the other hand, properties can focus on the family unit for the holidays," he said. "Packages like these are aimed at replicating an at-home experience on property while offering all the luxury services guests could want.

"Something as simple as a well-planned meal and in-room holiday decorations can go a long way."

### Holidays in hospitality

The Inn at the Biltmore in North Carolina, Fairmont's New York Plaza hotel, The Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans and The Bellagio in Las Vegas are a few of the hotels known around the world for their elaborate Christmas decorations.

Fairmont's location in San Francisco built a 25-foot-tall gingerbread house that guests can actually enter and even dine inside. It also features a spinning Christmas tree on the second that passersby can see through a window, featured in the brand's time lapsed video of the house's construction.

Other hotel brands such as Rosewood, The Ritz-Carlton and Dorchester looked to special packages and activities for

guests to celebrate the holidays.

For instance, the Plaza Hotel aligned its property with kids and comedy by celebrating its famous appearance in a classic holiday film.

The Plaza Hotel in New York is a staple in the holiday classic, *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the film, Home Alone and The Plaza teamed up with a social media influencer in a comedic recreation ([see more](#)).

Rosewood Hotels & Resorts has made it possible for affluent family and friends to gift one-of-a-kind experiences that only its properties can offer for the holidays.

The "12 Days of Rosewood" is the hotel brand's collection of giftable travel experiences for this year's holiday season. A reflection of its name, the collection features 12 different unique experiences such as a bespoke cruise around the British Virgin Islands and a private training session on driving an Aston Martin ([see more](#)).

#### On-site festivities

Dorchester Hotel Eden in Rome's concierge team has created a list of activities in the area to celebrate Christmas, such as a day trip to the historic city of Viterbo's Caffeina Christmas Village.

The Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco looks to benefit Make-A-Wish with its Teddy Bear Tea in which children can enjoy hot chocolate, other Christmas themed treats and sandwiches while an elf and teddy bear provide an entertaining show. A teddy bear and photo with the life-sized teddy bear are available as gifts.

For every ticket sold, \$2 will be donated to the Make-A-Wish in the Greater Bay Area.



*The Ritz-Carlton's Teddy Bear tea*

Mandarin Hotel has a series of initiatives for the holidays at its locations around the world, like most brands, which it is documenting through the hashtag #MOholidays. For instance, its New York location features an option for guests to turn their rooms into winter wonderlands.

"Anytime a property can leverage something unique and solely theirs, it makes for a standout offer," Flugel Consulting's Mr. Rains said. "In my opinion, the Plaza's holiday packages are a prime example of this with their 'Home Alone 2' special.

"It's something unique to the property and strongly enmeshed in the holiday season," he said. "Other properties that have done a great job of leveraging their status as a holiday location for families are The Inn at the Biltmore and Four Seasons Prague.

"The Biltmore's Christmas decor is second-to-none, and the property offers guests the opportunity to experience that firsthand with a Christmas experience right out of a dream. Similarly, the Four Seasons Prague launched a holiday package that takes full advantage of the city's famous Christmas markets."