

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Ritz-Carlton hosts week of fundraising activities for children in medical need

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Ritz-Carlton's Smile Asia Week begins May 7. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton

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The Ritz-Carlton is bringing its Asian hotels together for a number of new initiatives aimed at raising money to offer medical assistance to children in need.

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Ritz-Carlton will be tapping its significant reach throughout Asia, particularly in China, to raise money for the annual fundraiser Smile Asia Week 2018. Smile Asia will then use that money to fund medical assistance and treatment for people, mainly children, living in medically inaccessible areas.

"The Ritz-Carlton Community Footprints program mobilizes the resources and skills-based volunteer efforts by the Ladies and Gentlemen of Ritz-Carlton hotels around the world to make a difference in issues that are important to their communities," said Rainer Burkle, area vice president of luxury in Greater China at [Marriott International](#), Beijing. "With Smile Asia Week 2018, we are glad to once again share our skills and resources to help this very worthwhile cause, and at the same time inspire our customers to join us in our efforts to make the world a happier place."

Smile Asia

Five years ago, Smile Asia began the annual Smile Asia Week to raise money for its collection of charities around the world.

Smile Asia is an alliance of independent charities throughout the Asia Pacific region, including China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and many more.

These charities share the goal of bringing medical care to impoverished people and children, especially those who live in areas where adequate medical care is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain.



Smile Asia Week helps individuals who struggle to get medical care. Image courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton

Ritz-Carlton has already raised \$1.8 million for the charity and is hoping to bring even more over the course of this year's project.

Beginning May 7 and running until May 13, 10,000 people at 25 Ritz-Carlton locations across Asia will participate in fundraising activities for the Smile Asia alliance.

As part of its efforts, the brand will sell cakes baked by Wendy Bai, pastry chef at The Ritz-Carlton Beijing, to benefit Smile Asia.

This partnership is part of Ritz-Carlton's Community Footprints program, the brand's collective effort to improve the communities where its hotels are located. As in past years, Ritz-Carlton will offer non-medical volunteer assistance to Smile Asia missions to impoverished areas.

Funding charity

Late last month, Marriott International began bringing together Marriott Rewards, The Ritz-Carlton Rewards and Starwood Preferred Guest into one unified loyalty program with standardized benefits.

Following Marriott's acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts in 2016, the company had allowed SPG members to merge their points, but to-date SPG has remained an independent program. As of August, the hospitality company is rolling out a new fully combined program with a single format for earning and using points ([see story](#)).

In terms of its recent marketing, The Ritz-Carlton is launching a new take on unique experiences with a global initiative to bring travelers the kinds of unique memories they will want to remember and share into the future.



Marriott's merger with Starwood turned it into the largest hotel group. Image credit: Marriott

The #RC Memories initiative sees the hotel chain bringing in collaborators and guests from across the world to all of its locations in an attempt to create unique, exciting experiences for customers, who will share those experiences online. In this way, The Ritz-Carlton is hoping to create a self-perpetuating marketing model in which one customer's experience serves as advertising to bring in more customers ([see story](#)).

Ritz-Carlton is also not the only luxury brand to be working with charities at the moment. Auction house Phillips, in association with Bacs & Russo, is putting a rare Rolex timepiece up for sale for a cause.

A vintage white gold Rolex Cosmograph Daytona, reference 6265, will headline Phillips' "Daytona Ultimatum" sale on May 12 with the proceeds going to Children's Action. The watch is the only known timepiece of its kind, making this sale the first time most will have seen it in person ([see story](#)).

As Smile Asia Week approaches, The Ritz-Carlton is looking to make a contribution back to the countries and communities where its hotels are located in an effort to improve its brand image and make a positive change in the world.

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