

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Luxury hotels bring upscale touch to Thanksgiving celebrations

November 21, 2018



Image courtesy of Tribute Portfolio

By SARAH RAMIREZ

While retailers have been preparing for holiday shopping to hit full swing on Black Friday, luxury hospitality brands are instead focused on providing their guests with special Thanksgiving experiences.

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From the Four Seasons to Marriott's Tribute Portfolio properties, hoteliers are emphasizing community building and local touches this holiday season. Affluent travelers have become more concerned with personalized and authentic experiences than other traditional markers of luxury.

"We think we have struck a chord with travelers, who have an insatiable appetite to collect independent experiences and connect with local communities," said Jennifer Connell, vice president of brand marketing and management at Tribute Portfolio Hotels, Washington, D.C. "[Our] Friendsgiving is meant to bring a sense of community to our hotels, whether among locals or friends and family traveling together."

Fall celebrations

This fall, Tribute Portfolio introduced "Friendsgiving" packages at participating United States locations.

Friendsgiving, a dinner with many staples of Thanksgiving meals but celebrated among friends, has become a popular tradition among millennials in recent years. By choosing to offer Friendsgiving instead of the traditional Thanksgiving, Tribute shows it understands its younger audience.



Friendsgiving dinner menu. Image courtesy of Tribute Portfolio

Tribute Portfolio's Friendsgiving special, which runs through Dec. 1, includes a Thanksgiving-inspired breakfast and a communal culinary experience.

Each hotel will include locally-sourced ingredients on its menu, such as Noelle's whipped sweet potatoes with brle marshmallow fluff in Nashville and heirloom tomato goat cheese tarts at The Wick in upstate New York. Specialty cocktails will also be served.

"Friendsgiving is a light-hearted way to showcase our hotels' captivating design, vibrant social spaces and sincere service in a way that brings together travelers and locals as well as friends and family," Ms. Connell said. "It serves a way to not only connect locals and travelers, but also connect our hotels to each other."



Image credit: Four Seasons

Hospitality group Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts is also helping its guests celebrate Thanksgiving, both in the U.S. and abroad.

Four Seasons locations in Jakarta and Singapore will be offering special Thanksgiving dinners, with menus pairing local cuisine alongside traditional American fall dishes. Reflecting Miami's more relaxed atmosphere, Four Seasons Hotel at The Surf Club will be serving a Thanksgiving brunch while Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North will be offering take out service with its usual Thanksgiving buffet and three-course dinner.

Since the holiday is an opportunity to give thanks, Four Seasons Hotel Washington, D.C. will continue its tradition of serving the city's public servants aboard a 53-foot Mayflower truck. The menu includes more than 100 assorted pies, maple-roasted butternut squash soup, cornbread sage stuffing and green bean casserole.

Marriott's St. Regis is also bringing Thanksgiving celebrations to locations around the globe, including Singapore. In addition to a four-course meal, the St. Regis San Francisco will also be hosting a Nutcracker-themed afternoon tea.

Special moments

While authenticity has been a leading focus for heritage hospitality and travel brands, ultra-personalized experiences are set to overtake it, according to a new report from Virtuoso.

For affluent travelers, these personalization requests go beyond upscale accommodations and events and instead include specific meals and personal photographers. Social media continues to play a major role in travel planning, from inspiring some adventurers and motivating others to seek out under-the-radar experiences ([see story](#)).

Luxury hotel groups are also preparing to offer unique experiences as Christmas and New Years approach.

Marriott's luxury hospitality brand, The Ritz-Carlton, is welcoming guests of its Charleston location into a winter wonderland to celebrate the season, with a tasty twist. The Ritz-Carlton's Holiday Wonderland will feature seasonal decor from Nov. 22 to Dec. 27.

Three trees will feature almost 9,500 glittering macaroons as ornaments to welcome guests into the lobby. Underneath the trees will be donated teddy bears, to be given to the local children's hospital ([see story](#)).

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