

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Starwood security breach damage is less than expected

January 4, 2019



*Marriott's merger with Starwood has made the two rewards programs one of the most successful*

By STAFF REPORTS

Hospitality brand Marriott has released an update on its security breach for its Starwood Hotels, believing its original estimation of the impact to be higher than actuality.

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Starwood's reservation system recently saw a security hit in which guests' passport information and payment cards were compromised. While the hospitality group previously announced that the incident involved up to 500 million guests, further investigation has led Marriott to believe that only 383 million customers had their information stolen.

"We want to provide our customers and partners with updates based on our ongoing work to address this incident as we try to understand as much as we possibly can about what happened," said Arne Sorenson, president and CEO of Marriott, in a statement. "As we near the end of the cyber forensics and data analytics work, we will continue to work hard to address our customers' concerns and meet the standard of excellence our customers deserve and expect from Marriott."

### Security breach

An internal investigations team within the Marriott company has worked on the breach, determining that an estimated 5.25 million unencrypted passport numbers were included in the information accessed by an unauthorized third party.

The hospitality group has also stated that 20.3 million encrypted passport numbers were included in the information accessed by the unauthorized party.

However, there is no evidence that the guilty party accessed the master encryption key needed to decrypt the encrypted passport numbers.

Marriott has instated additional customer service means for guests to determine whether or not their information was involved in the incident. A dedicated call center will assist guests, and additional information will be available on its Web site.

About 8.6 million encrypted payment cards are believed to be involved in the incident.

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A post shared by Starwood Preferred Guest (@spg) on Jan 3, 2019 at 1:00pm PST

### *Starwood Instagram*

Similarly, Two Le Mridien hotels were among the 20 affected properties in a payment card security incident within HEI Hotels & Resorts.

Malicious software was installed at point-of-sale terminals in places such as dining establishments within hotels HEI operates, leaving personal information of guests vulnerable to hackers. Maintaining transparency with its clients, HEI Hotels issued statements about its immediate actions and its plans to enhance security ([see story](#)).

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