

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Tourism bureaus spotlight unique offerings, leverage partnerships to reach affluent

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Puerto Rico has many luxury hotels for affluent visitors. Image credit: The Ritz-Carlton

By SARAH RAMIREZ

As affluent become more engaged with travel and look to diversify their destinations, tourism bureaus are employing different strategies to attract visitors with luxury expectations.

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Outside of well-traveled cities such as New York and San Francisco, smaller or emerging destinations in the United States need to increase travelers' awareness of their upscale offerings. Today's destination marketing organizations (DMOs) use tactics including hospitality partnerships, media campaigns and special packages to reach affluent audiences.

"We know that the more experiences you provide to potential visitors, the more likely they are to visit," said Jeff Guaracino, president and CEO of [Visit Philadelphia](#). "Although they are not our core audience per se, we promote places that would appeal to affluent travelers such as our world-class museums and galleries, our rising food scene filled with James Beard award-winning restaurants and chefs and our internationally-acclaimed Philadelphia Orchestra."

Tourism tactics

The ultimate goal of destination marketing organizations is to attract as many visitors as possible, including targeting affluent travelers to varying degrees.

Collaborating with luxury hospitality brands that have a local presence is one way DMOs can reach affluent travelers.



Visit Bucks County encourages affluents to explore the Pennsylvania countryside. Image credit: Visit Bucks County

Visit Philadelphia promotes an overnight hotel package, encouraging travelers to book at the city's premium and high-end hotels, including the Ritz-Carlton. The organization is also working with the Four Seasons on the launch of a new hotel in Center City, Philadelphia opening this summer.

"We partner with luxury brands that we have in the city to leverage their brand names and the quality experiences associated with each to attract visitors," Mr. Guaracino said.

While Discover Puerto's first campaign in five years, "Have We Met Yet?" is geared towards all travelers, it does include luxury offerings on the island such as St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort and Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.

Not all destinations have a strong presence of luxury hospitality brands, however.

Visit Bucks County, a county in southeastern Pennsylvania that neighbors Philadelphia, instead promotes upscale bed and breakfasts through social media and programmatic advertising.

Aside from sharing luxury lodging options, organizations look to promote upscale experiences that resonate with consumers looking for more experiential travel.

"When we talk about Puerto Rico's luxury offerings, this goes beyond a stay at a luxury hotel and we want travelers to know that," said Leah Chandler, chief marketing officer of [Discover Puerto Rico](#). "From renting a private luxury catamaran or yacht, to a wide range of upscale dining options, we want to keep all of these experiences top of mind for travelers looking for a luxurious vacation.

"From indulgent spas to premium golf courses to our rich history, visitors who get a chance to experience the Island always find themselves wanting to come back," she said. "In addition to this, travelers can head down to Mall of San Juan and shop world-renowned brands such as Tory Burch, Versace, Carolina Herrera, Louis Vuitton, Jimmy Choo, among others."

Planned travel itineraries such as "Wellness Weekend" and "Girlfriend Getaways" can appeal to affluent travelers, according to Paul Bencivengo, vice president of [Visit Bucks County](#). The region has also found success positioning itself as a wedding destination.

"We also market a lot towards affluent brides and grooms looking for a countryside chic, luxury wedding in Bucks County," Mr. Bencivengo said. "Bucks County has several castles including Fonthill Castle which is a beautiful, fairytale-like wedding space and Sand Castle Winery, which has breathtaking views of the Delaware River."

In the southwest U.S., state of Arizona has plenty opportunities for travelers to unwind or explore. According to [Visit Arizona](#), the state has the highest concentration of luxury spas in North America and promotes its warm winter weather in markets such as Chicago and New York.

To target affluent travelers, tourism organizations also advertise with publications serving similar audiences.

In an effort to reach travelers looking for culinary-centered experiences, Visit Arizona and Visit Philadelphia have both advertised in *Travel & Leisure*. The organizations have also placed ads in publications such as *Bon Appetite* and *Food & Wine* to reach this segment.

Leveraging its proximity to Mexico, Visit Arizona worked with *Travesías* magazine for a campaign that included an insertion of a Spanish-language travel guide.

Outside of the hospitality sector, bureaus are also working with other brands that reach affluent audiences.

Visit Arizona partners with outdoor retailer REI to host in-store workshops to help prepare travelers looking to hike Arizona's famous trails, including the Grand Canyon.

Discover Puerto Rico has launched a new campaign

Similarly, Discover Puerto Rico has partnered with the PGA Tour for more than a decade by sponsoring the Puerto Rico Open. The island currently has 17 state-of-the-art golf courses.

"This February, the Puerto Rico Open celebrated its 12th anniversary at Coco Beach Golf & Country Club and generated an economic impact of \$10 million," Discover Puerto's Ms. Chandler said. "Given that golf is such a popular sport among affluent travelers, this partnership further shows how our offerings cater to them, and we are excited to welcome them again at the Puerto Rico Open 2020."

Travel narratives

Tourism bureaus and DMOs often highlight travel trends in wider-reaching campaigns.

For a citywide campaign in 2017, Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau gathered hospitality locations and restaurants to provide special offerings in relation to wellness in tourism. The campaign also included celebrity spokespeople, a wellness forum, hotel packages and healthy menu options ([see story](#)).

In other instances, these organizations have looked to change the narrative of their respective destinations following tragedy.

Following fatal terror attacks in November 2015, Paris' influx of tourists dwindled, but the city's government and key business players invested 2 million euro, or about \$2.250 million, into a recovery plan.

Paris is looking to increase its tourism numbers with a promotional film that tours the multifaceted city through the eyes of locals and visitors. The film was screened in Galleries Lafayette stores in Paris, Berlin and Beijing, as well as on Air France flights and screens in international cities ([see story](#)).

Discover Puerto also launched major campaign to get more travelers interested in vacationing to the island by highlighting the major progress that has been made in the year since Hurricane Maria.

Discover Puerto Rico is hoping to bring back tourism by encouraging media outlets to cover the progress that has been made towards rebuilding the island and making it an appealing destination for tourists. Numerous luxury hotels across the island have renovated and updated their properties in an effort to encourage more tourism ([see story](#)).

"The luxury travel sector is a competitive one, especially in the Caribbean," Discover Puerto's Ms. Chandler said. "Nonetheless, Puerto Rico is a luxury vacation destination and we continue developing high-end offerings for affluent travelers."