

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

The art of reopening: How hotels should get it right

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The Ritz-Carlton offers guests a gentle massage to ease their return. Image credit: Ritz Carlton

By DIANNA DILWORTH

As hotels around the world slowly reopen, these hospitality companies have had to transform what it means to stay at their properties.

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From wearing masks and offering hand sanitizer to cancelling room cleanings and offering contactless check-in, the hotel experience has been recreated for a world suffering from pandemic times.

"We all see the many things that hotel brands are doing to clean and sanitize everything which is great to see, and should continue beyond the pandemic but it is also more important than ever for the hospitality industry to provide a further elevated level of service," said Damon M. Banks, editor and managing partner at [LuxeGetaways](#), New York.

"This can be as simple as allowing for contactless check-in and limiting numbers of guests in the elevators," he said. "Understanding that anyone traveling is most likely on-edge already, hotels need to take this to heart from the moment guests arrive to the valet, to interactions with guest services and housekeeping.

"We are seeing some restaurants adding temporary walls or fabric walls between tables to make guests more comfortable, and the hospitality industry will continue to think out of the box to extend their safety offerings to guests."



The Four Seasons app lets guests check in digitally. Image credit: Four Seasons

Digital check-ins

Many consumers are still wary that they can catch the COVID-19 coronavirus and would prefer not to interact with anyone during a hotel stay.

For some consumers, this is not the year to stay in hotels.

The Ritz-Carlton, which has mainly been quiet on social media since lockdowns, is beginning to reopen its properties. But the company posted an Instagram message with a photo of a beachside property in Thailand, acknowledging that not everyone wants to travel.

Mandarin Oriental is promoting gift cards with no expiration date for future travel that can be used toward a future stay, spa treatments and dining experiences. The chain is also offering generous cancellation policies for consumers who get nervous last minute.

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has added new features to its app and chat platforms to give private residence homeowners and residents the ability to connect with their residential teams from their phones, tablets and computers.

The new residential digital experience, integrated with the Four Seasons App and [fourseasons.com](https://www.fourseasons.com), will help residents securely manage and maintain their home, connect with their designated Four Seasons team members, and request services with minimal effort.

Additionally, Four Seasons has created Lead with Care, a set of principles that build on the hotel brand's health and safety measures and guides employees on how to take care of guests, residents and each other.

This program includes a hygiene officer appointed at each property, kits in each guest room with masks, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes, daily disinfection and blacklight inspections. Contactless room service and extra cleaning in public areas is also on the agenda to help keep public spaces safe.

"While guests will see many of the enhanced Lead With Care procedures, behind-the-scenes measures will also take place through employee training, additional food handling protocols, and enhancements to ventilation systems and other back-of-the-house operations," said Christian Clerc, president for global operations at **Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts**, Toronto.



True Luxury Travel is promoting staycation experiences instead of luxury hotel stays. Image courtesy of True Luxury Travel

Staycation promotions

Staycations are on the marketing menu as hotel and travel brands look to connect with locals in their area or within driving distance.

The Hong Kong-based Rosewood Hotels & Resorts chain has developed five packages Summer at Rosewood, Family Time, Suite and Villa Sojourn, Rosewood Reset and More Rosewood geared to guests whose travel patterns have shifted to more local and domestic locations in the COVID-19 era.

Coming on top of phased hotel re-openings with enhanced safety precautions, the effort is also a nod to traveler concerns over catching the COVID-19 coronavirus that is still active worldwide ([see story](#)).

Mandarin Oriental also offers highly flexible [policies for changing or canceling](#) individual reservations at all its hotels worldwide so guests can book with confidence.

"When you're ready to travel, we'll be ready to welcome you," the company said. "Until then, we'll continue to inspire life's most meaningful journeys, one perfect view at a time."

Specialist luxury travel operator [True Luxury Travel](#), which would normally promote trips to luxury hotels, has focused on marketing U.K. staycations. These include recording a song at the famous Abbey Road Studios, taking a sporting masterclass from a legendary British athlete, a sea kayaking safari on the Jurassic Coast, private dining experiences cooked by award-winning chefs and foraging for wild food among the great British outdoors.

"With the international travel restrictions over recent months, many of our clients have rescheduled their trips abroad to next year, and are looking for an easy way to escape the city for a week or two in the summer," said Henry Morley, founder/CEO of True Luxury Travel, London.

"Traveling here in the U.K. is the simplest way to get away even at short notice and using your own car is a preferred way of getting around for many," he said.

The company found that 76 percent of clients would be interested in culinary experiences, 70 percent are looking for activities outdoors and ways to get "back to nature" and 53 percent looking for experiences with private access.

"There has also been a renewed interest in supporting local businesses here in the U.K., appreciating the beauty that we have right on our doorstep, and joining guides and wildlife experts to learn more about the neighborhoods that we live in," Mr. Morley said.