

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Four Seasons promotes worldwide Ramadan programming

March 23, 2023



Four Seasons is celebrating Ramadan according to the cultural practices of resort regions, offering a look into respectful tourism. Image credit: Four Seasons

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Hospitality group **Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts** is joining people across the globe in celebrating Ramadan.

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Multiple locations across the brand's portfolio are presenting specialty experiences in honor of the holy month, tailoring the observances according to local traditions. The wealth of offerings signals a powerful shift towards "glocalization" a localized, boutique approach to global tourism that is taking on the hospitality industry.

"It is incredibly important for the tourism industry to honor the month of Ramadan where locals are celebrating," said Cyrus Zargar, Al-Ghazali Distinguished Professor of Religion and Cultural Studies at University of Central Florida, Orlando.

"The month of Ramadan tends to be a festive time for observant Muslims, bringing out culturally diverse displays of spiritual joy," Dr. Zargar said. "This can create memorable experiences for everyone, whether they participate in the month or not."

Meaningful moments

Tourists are increasingly wanting more meaningful ways to spend money, including when it comes to their vacations.

This has resulted in philosophies such as mindfulness and sustainability taking on the luxury market, as well as concepts such as slow travel and locally-led tours in the travel sector ([see story](#)). Today's luxury traveler tends to want an intimate look at the destination that they are exploring, seeking out an exclusive and truly local experience ([see story](#)).



Finding ways to respectfully celebrate local customs has proven to be difficult for global tourism in the past, signaling the importance of Four Seasons' locally-led festivities. Image credit: Four Seasons

The challenge has been to find ways to honor local customs without appropriating them.

"Sometimes a little acknowledgment goes a long way," Dr. Zargar said.

Four Seasons has been working to combat appropriation in Maui, Hawaii with locally-led tours and educational programs for children ([see story](#)). As the brand expands in the Middle East ([see story](#)), the region's resorts are also finding ways to respectfully participate in local culture, drawing on portfolio successes such as that in Maui.

Unveiling a slew of Ramadan celebrations and offerings, Four Seasons is also posting to social media to spread awareness and excitement, reaching both those who are excitedly celebrating another Ramadan, and those who do not know much about the historic holiday that nearly 1.6 billion Muslims observe each year.

This Ramadan, let us help you interpret the true meaning of the season. Come and join us in cherishing the gift of togetherness at Four Seasons.

Learn more: <https://t.co/HPy6EOPNrQ#Ramadan2023> [#LoveFourSeasons](#)
pic.twitter.com/R1XYOunKqe

FourSeasonsAbuDhabi (@FSAbuDhabi) [March 13, 2023](#)

"The month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar," Dr. Zargar said.

"It is a time of reflection, worship, charity, and, of course, fasting," he said. "Those who are able fast for the entire month from dawn until sunset, which involves abstaining from food and drink, among other things."

To participate in the festivities, Four Seasons is looking to the local culture of the locations, following the lead of those who call it home.

Welcome the holy month of Ramadan at [@FSCairoNP](#), where our doors are always open to revive Ramadan traditions and celebrate the warm glow of lanterns with your loved ones. Ramadan Kareem! pic.twitter.com/NBPAQNmvPo

Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at Nile Plaza (@FSCairoNP) [March 22, 2023](#)

Regional cuisine, twinkling lights, local musicians, late-night buffets filled with traditional dishes and wellness offerings to provide maximum comfort during fasting are just a few of Four Seasons' Ramadan features this month.

Many locations, such as the Istanbul resort at Sultanahmet, Turkey, center the festivities around the food and *iftar* the meal eaten after sunset to break the fast. Large spreads of food are made available, and various luxury dining locations are specially shaped around warmth and gathering, as many Muslim people choose to break their fast with their families.



With views of the sea, Four Seasons guests can feast on iftar cuisine with their loved ones in luxury. Image credit: Four Seasons

In Casablanca, Morocco, Four Seasons is focusing on offering ideal views to be enjoyed with *iftar*, offering sweeping views of the sea to go with late-night feasting.

Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay is offering an especially lavish Ramadan celebration, featuring an exclusive, outdoor dining Ramadan Tent. Decorated with traditional Arabic motifs, filled with authentic Lebanese and Bahraini food and the music of award-winning Egyptian bands, the offering stands out even among the brand's long list of celebrations.

Alexandria, Egypt is also especially lavish, tailored to the most affluent celebrators of Ramadan, and those who want to get a true feel for the historic seaside.

"Alexandria is well-known for its magical sunsets over the Mediterranean that capture the heart and soul," said Nihat Yucel, general manager of Four Seasons Hotel Alexandria at San Stefano.

"The sound of the waves while watching the sun go down in the Mediterranean is truly one of the most enchanting experiences during Ramadan to reflect and connect in a serene and calm atmosphere," Mr. Yucel said. "At Four Seasons Hotel Alexandria at San Stefano we take Ramadan planning very seriously to allow our guests to celebrate with their families and friends with comfortable stays and sunset Iftars, to relaxing treatments at the Spa curated by expert wellness specialists while enjoying this charming city."

No matter the location, each resort is tailoring the festivities specifically to the local traditions whether that means Nile-side dining under the stars, luxurious spa days or glittering Ramadan lanterns spread across the property.



Istanbul's resort Ramadan celebrations include authentic cuisine, Arabian decor and fanous, or traditional Ramadan lanterns. Image credit: Four Seasons

While not all Four Seasons locations around the world are officially celebrating Ramadan, as it seems to be kept to the Middle East and southern Asia, there are ways that the resorts, regardless of region, can make appropriate nods to the holy month.

"Merely by acknowledging the fact that some are fasting, respecting their beliefs and practices with a display or a banner, we can create a sense that we all belong to a larger human community," Dr. Zargar said.

"Also, it helps to be thoughtful of the energy levels, hunger, and thirst of Muslim employees."

Looking local

Four Seasons has long been a proponent of the localized approach to globalized tourism, centering locations in the

local traditions of the region.

In Costa Rica, the Peninsula Papagayo resort pays homage to the indigenous culture of the area, allowing tourists to connect with those that steward the biodiverse land around them ([see story](#)). The resort offers classes and experiences that are locally-led, keeping vacations grounded in authenticity a key characteristic of the "glocalization" movement.

In Jackson Hole, Four Seasons has been allowing tourists to get to know the wildlife and outdoorsman culture of the area. Through expert-led tours, the resort provides ways for guests to have respectful encounters with gray wolves ([see story](#)).



Four Seasons is proving to be thoughtful about Ramadan, including fanous lanterns and accurately timing meals to line up with fasting. Image credit: Four Seasons

With the lineup of Ramadan celebrations and the history of honoring regional traditions and cultures, it is clear that the brand has a handle on crafting authentic experiences, letting locals lead the way.

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