

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Marriott Bonvoy connects travel-happy consumers with Italy's hotspots

August 18, 2023



The brand is embracing "Euro Summer" through a luxury lens, highlighting four cities in the Mediterranean nation. Image credit: Marriott Bonvoy

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Hotel group Marriott International's Bonvoy rewards program is bringing a popular tourist destination a little closer to global guests.

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Just as the last month of "Euro Summer" hits its halfway point, the brand is putting the spotlight on four of Italy's most hyped-up cities. Florence, Venice, Milan and Rome are all explored in a new advertising campaign as Marriott showcases the company's luxury establishments that sit in the heart of each.

"From a marketing perspective it's smart that they are packaging hotels in the destination, giving travelers a view of what their vacation could look like," said Melanie Klausner, executive vice president at **Red Havas**, New York.

"Luxury travelers have likely seen some of the best hotels in the world and most travelers aren't going to a city solely for a particular hotel," Ms. Klausner said. "What this campaign does is show why you want to go to that destination with Marriott at the center of it all.

"Marriott has essentially packaged the trip for the traveler with this campaign and it will likely prove to be successful for the brand."

Ms. Klausner is not affiliated with Marriott International, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Summer surges

After the long-term closures of the COVID-19 pandemic that swept up the industry, reopenings have sparked profits.

With appreciation for exploration revived, exploding numbers of global visitors are overwhelming countries around the world, particularly in Europe. According to a recent joint study by software companies Rategain and Eviivo, Italy is the third most-booked European country based on flights, with Rome and Milan included in the top ten cities of the continent.

Historical Sites and Vibrant Street Life: Rome, Italy

There are a few reasons behind the specific interest in the nation, with experts pointing to the influence of TV shows

and social media.

"Marriott likely focused on Italy because of its presence in today's culture," said Ms. Klausner.

"The popularity of White Lotus' was a cultural lightning rod for Sicily and the Kardashians' weddings both showed the destination's fabulousness," she said. "Though Italy is always high on people's lists, these cultural influences followed by social feeds flooding with images of Italy made it a desirable and fashionable destination.

"Pop culture is such a big driver in motivating people to travel to Italy, in part thanks to the White Lotus effect,' but also because of other shows like Stanley Tucci's Searching for Italy' and luxury influencers spending their summers down in the Amalfi Coast."

Marriott seems privy to this widespread desire to visit the country, showing off the ways that it can bring forth Instagram-worthy vacations.



Rome, home to some of the most Instagrammed sites in the world, is explored in Marriott's latest visual series. Image credit: Marriott Bonvoy

Rome is the first Italian location to be celebrated, with local art, food and literature put in a prominent spot. The "Eternal City" and its 2,500 years of history are laid out, the scenes spliced with images of the brand's luxury hotels in the area.

Appealing to business and leisure travelers, the bustle and the slowed-down pace of the ancient streets are given equal focus. Eateries, boutiques, designer outlets, museums, monuments and sites found all over social media feeds drive the narrative forward.

Milan is celebrated next for its handle on style and its relationship to luxury.

High fashion is specifically brought up amidst flashes of Marriott's many stays in the area. Guests are shown toasting in rose-studded gardens, splashing in sparkling pools and enjoying meals.

Buzzing Vibes and Trendy Culture: Milan, Italy

Venice marks the third of the four cities, its popularity with couples sitting at the heart of the push.

Pairs of travelers are shown speeding through canals on glistening boats, wandering over myth-laden bridges and enjoying romantic nights at the brand's resorts.

Like the other two locales, the region's art and culinary scene are also given reflection.

In 2024, Italian getaways will get more complicated.

Next year, American tourists will be required to pay for a visa to enter Europe, making this the last official summer where travelers can as easily move throughout the continent. Whether or not this adds to the frenzy of flights to Italy, the fact remains that U.S. vacationers continue to pour in.



Venice is framed by Marriott as a romantic getaway, following couples along in a slot as they ride gondolas and drink sparkling cocktails around the water-crossed city. Image credit: Marriott Bonvoy

"I do think Italy will remain super high on people's travel lists according to booking data from our client GetYourGuide, Rome is regularly the number one international destination for U.S. travelers who book experiences, and other Italian cities [at] the top include Florence, Venice and Milan," said Ms. Klausner.

"There's currently a desire for luxury consumers to get under the surface of destinations and seek authentic experiences, get off the beaten path and find more exclusive experiences," she said. "Italy, with the history, art, food, culture and resort properties it has, is the ideal place for luxury travelers who are searching for this."

Florence is fourth

The last city Marriott spotlights is Florence, a favorite of luxury fashion labels homaging the Renaissance ([see story](#)), exclusive tour providers ([see story](#)) and conglomerate-led restoration efforts alike ([see story](#)).

Despite 2022's political turmoil ([see story](#)) and this year's catastrophic flooding ([see story](#)), Italy's tourism economy continues to thrive as "Euro Summer" ([see story](#)) comes to a close.

Inspiring Art and Amazing Food: Florence, Italy

While preservation ([see story](#)) and five-star tour efforts ([see story](#)) abound in Italy for now, it is not yet determined which country will benefit from the autumn season. However, experts are beginning to speculate as it draws closer.

"I think France, Paris specifically, is another big destination for travelers," said Ms. Klausner.

"The Olympics will be held there next year, and many shows have also popularized the destination even more than it already was think 'Emily in Paris' for example," she said. "Egypt and the Middle East have also been high on people's list for luxury, in part thanks to the World Cup, and in Egypt, tons of new luxury cruises down the Nile have been popping up and the Grand Egyptian Museum just opened this year creating even more of a draw for travelers.

"Archaeologists that have been on the search for Cleopatra's tomb also feel like they are very close to finding it, and luxury travel agencies such as The Luminaire which caters to luxury travelers and very exclusive experiences are capitalizing on this, just launching an experience where travelers can participate in the search and visit other sites such as the Library of Alexandria."