

INTERNET

Virgin Limited Edition goes with digital to market luxury safari experience

March 28, 2012



By TRICIA CARR

High-end travel group Virgin Limited Edition is using social media and a dedicated microsite to market its new luxury safari camp called Mahali Mzuri, an experience that offers exclusive excursions and opportunities to see African wildlife.

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The brand is marketing the new property called Mahali Mzuri via social media and a microsite that offers a detailed look at the expected offerings of the hotel and booking information. Guests can currently book rooms for the high-end property in Kenya that is scheduled to open in 2013.

"[Virgin Limited Edition] finds that we attract those who value excellent service, tailored experiences and non-traditional hotel settings," said Charlotte Tidball, public relations manager at Virgin Limited Edition, London.

"When choosing a property we need to be sure that the location of the property is just right and will incorporate the blending of local and indigenous style and culture with luxury and comfort," she said.

"Guests staying at Mahali Mzuri will be able to enjoy intimate and exclusive wildlife viewing opportunities with comfort in the knowledge that their stay in the conservancy is

directly contributing to the long-term conservation of the area and the local Maasai community."

Virgin Limited Edition consists of Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson's selection of retreat properties.

Room with a view

Mahali Mzuri is being marketed with a **microsite** dedicated to the property along with spreading awareness of the property through the Virgin Group's sister companies and travel trade partners, claims the brand.

Users can view different sections of the site with the navigation bar at the top of the screen.



Mahali Mzuri microsite

The site offers digital drawings of the prospective accommodations that are 12 high-end tent suites settled on platforms above the ground of the conservancy.

The "Things to do" tab gives information about game viewing, dining and activities such as walking safaris and full-day excursions.

Mahali Mzuri's microsite explains exactly how travelers can get to the property and shows its location on a map of Kenya.



Property location map

The map is likely a good move to attract luxury consumers who may be hesitant to fly a far distance from home.

The location section of the site also hosts more information about The Great Migration, a natural phenomenon beginning in late summer when the area sees up to two million animals pass through.

Consumers can book their stays by telephone or email with the information on the site.

A link to the Mahali Mzuri property is featured on the main [Virgin Limited Edition Web site](#).

Virgin Limited Edition shared the microsite for the new property on its [Facebook page](#) March 27.

The post said, “We’ve got some exciting news! We’re launching a new property, Mahali Mzuri in Kenya set to open in 2013.” It contained a link to <http://mahalimzuri.virgin.com>.



Virgin Limited Edition Facebook page

In addition, the hotel will use its sustainability standards that encourage conservation of the reserve and its support of Kenya's economy for future marketing of Mahali Mzuri, claims Ms. Tidball.

In fact, Virgin Limited Edition will support Motorogi and Olare Orok Conservancies in a

partnership with local communities and tourism partners, claims the company.

Virgin Group founder Mr. Branson has a personal interest in Kenya, so it was a natural next step, she said.

"Our key priorities are to make a minimal footprint on the land and to promote high-value, low-density tourism which creates less pressure on the environment and will be communicated in our marketing efforts," Ms. Tidball said.

"Apart from being located in one of the most beautiful spots in the world that we hope will be attractive to luxury consumers, we have seen an increasing demand for our South Africa property Ulusaba," she said.

"We felt it was a good opportunity to introduce another property offering a safari experience that provides guests with tailor-made experiences that complement our offering at Ulusaba."

Nature calls

Mahali Mzuri is being marketed as a luxury safari camp.

The property can hold 24 guests at a time. All-inclusive rates start at \$580 per person per night based on double occupancy.



Digital drawing of a tent suite

The animals often spotted where the property is set include wild elephants, zebra, lions, leopards, cheetah and giraffe. These animals can be viewed during twice daily game drives.

The limit on guests and the number of game vehicle excursions per day adds to the exclusivity of this experience, which luxury consumers seem to appreciate.

Fine dining and drink options, all included in the nightly price, round out the experience.

Other luxury hotel brands are utilizing sought-after locations to give luxury consumers exclusive experiences.

For example, Auberge Resorts invited guests to take part in new adventure-themed experiences at its properties in the United States and Mexico that are custom-tailored to each property's natural surroundings, culture and history ([see story](#)).

In addition, Mandarin Oriental will expand its presence in the Middle East with a new hotel and private residences located on the Turquoise Coast that will offer views over the Aegean Sea slated to open in 2014 ([see story](#)).

"There is a clear desire among luxury consumers for something new and interesting," said Taylor Rains, account coordinator at [Rawle Murdy Associates](#) Inc., Charleston, SC.

"At the same time, this audience is hyper-aware of current social and environmental issues," he said. "With Mahali Mzuri, Virgin Limited Edition is demonstrating a commitment to both satisfying consumer desires and minimizing its socio-cultural impact.

"There are certainly other Kenyan retreats that offer expeditions to their guests, but not quite in the same way. This property preserves the purity of the experience, making it something truly unique.

"It is the experience that makes luxury, not the other way around."

Final Take

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