

IN-STORE

## Bentley strikes shot across bow with Starwood partnership

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By TRICIA CARR

Bentley and Starwood's St. Regis and The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts have entered into a global partnership that will allow the hotel chains to offer Bentley driving experiences to guests, giving the automaker a leg-up over competitors.

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Bentley vehicles will now be available at many hotel properties for guest use, the increased awareness of which will likely cause the automaker to benefit most from this partnership. Both brands hope to bring their affluent heritage to light through exclusive events, driving programs and house fleets at St. Regis and Luxury Collection flagship hotels worldwide.

"In looking at the luxury brand landscape, we have two unrivalled and pinnacle brands that complement each other in the luxury travel and hospitality sphere," Joe Ashworth, head of customer relations at [Bentley Motors](#), Crewe, England.

"With like-minded customers, we believe we are able to increase cross-marketing activities for the mutual benefit of our respective customer bases and our experiences to date tell us that luxury consumer see the fit," he said.

"We feel this relationship can increase awareness and consideration for Bentley while

bringing customers and media into contact with the highest levels of the hospitality industry and associate us with aspirational and exclusive destinations."

In the house

Bentley Continental Flying Spur models will now comprise the house fleet at St. Regis hotels around the world including St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort in Abu Dhabi and St. Regis flagship in New York.

These vehicles combine the traditional craftsmanship of Bentley with the power of the Continental GT, per the automaker.



*Bentley Continental Flying Spur*

The St. Regis and Luxury Collection properties entered into this partnership to provide guests with experiences that surpass their expectations, per Starwood.

Both companies will market the new partnership by extending invitations to exclusive events to past consumers.

Bentley will use its consumer magazine to expose happenings within the new partnership.



### *Bentley magazine*

In addition, each marketer will use its Web site and social media platforms for future promotions of partnership events.

These two seem to be a good marketing match due to their affluent consumer base. In fact, having access to a Bentley vehicle while traveling could make the most affluent consumer feel at home.

Bentley and Starwood both have something to gain with this new partnership, but Bentley may need it more, per Al Ries, chairman of marketing consultancy [Ries & Ries](#), Roswell, GA.

“There are only two ultra-luxury automotive brands and they are Bentley and Rolls-Royce,” Mr. Ries said. “This endorsement helps Bentley compete with its arch-rival Rolls-Royce.

“Most [guests] are probably leery of visiting a dealer and asking for a test drive,” he said. “As hotel guests, however, they can experience the ride and features of a Bentley vehicle.”

### Past to present

Bentley and Starwood have informally worked together on various packages and events during the past seven years, per Bentley.

These programs primarily took place in the United States, Britain, Europe and Asia.

Most recently, the Luxury Collection offered loyalists an exclusive experience to tour Austria in a Bentley Continental via an online auction.

The tour stopped at four Luxury Collection properties including the Hotel Imperial in Vienna and the Schloss Fuschl in Salzburg ([see story](#)).

Starwood is working to create future opportunities for its Starwood Preferred Guest members in partnership with Bentley, per the hotel brand.

In addition, Bentley chose the Marques de Riscal Luxury Collection Hotel in Ilciego,

Spain, as the venue to launch its Continental GT and GTC V8 models in February.

Last year, St. Regis Rome and St. Regis Florence hosted a personalized Italian driving tour for Bentley owners and hotel guests.

Many luxury hotel brands are leveraging in-house packages through exclusive partnerships.

For example, the St. Regis Aspen Resort will debut a concept restaurant to its affluent guests that was established through an exclusive licensing agreement with American Express Publishing's Food & Wine ([see story](#)).

In addition, Barneys New York and Mandarin Oriental partnered to market a new contest that gives a mother-daughter pair the chance to win a brand-oriented getaway package that will hopefully draw awareness to the retailer's products and the hotel's spa services ([see story](#)).

"We are going to see more of these luxury brand partnerships in the future, simply because these global luxury brands are targeting the exact same people, so why not team up with non-competitive brands that reflect positively on each other?" said Pam Danziger, president of [Unity Marketing](#), Stephens, PA.

"Bentley has a real cachet as an automobile brand," she said. "It is one that everybody knows and is highly recognizable, yet it is truly exclusive and limited to the very top tier of wealthy customers.

"By offering St. Regis guests a Bentley driving experience, they are probably giving a lot of people their first personal experience with the brand, truly in keeping with the level of service and hospitality that Starwood strives for."

Final Take

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