

ADVERTISING

Ritz-Carlton rolls out loyalty program for affluent travelers

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By KAITLYN BONNEVILLE

The Ritz-Carlton is rolling out its Ritz-Carlton Rewards loyalty program, offering consumers a variety of incentives for frequently staying at its hotels.

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The luxury hotel chain is targeting affluent frequent travelers with the program, which is free to join. It was created in response to consumers' request for a program that extended beyond complimentary stays and airfare.

"Ritz has been looking at a loyalty program for years," said Laurie Goldstein, spokeswoman for Ritz-Carlton, Chevy Chase, MD. "It's something we evaluate every year."

Marriott International-owned **Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company** operates 73 hotels in the U.S. and internationally.

Puttin' on the ritz

The Ritz-Carlton teamed up with luxury travel provider **Abercrombie & Kent**, fashion designer **Vera Wang**, **National Geographic Expeditions** and high-end retailer **Neiman Marcus** to provide reward members exclusive offers.

Rewards include tours in China, Turkey and Egypt, personal shopping experiences at Neiman Marcus and **Bergdorf Goodman**, chances to win points toward bridal gowns and

other Vera Wang products, as well as four-day workshops with National Geographic photographers at Ritz-Carlton hotels in locations such as Miami and San Francisco.

Consumers can also earn and redeem points on 30 airlines and luxury cruise lines, such as Crystal Cruises and The Yachts of Seabourne and Silversea.

"Recently we've seen more of an acceptance among Ritz-Carlton guests for loyalty programs," Ms. Goldstein said. "Neiman Marcus has a loyalty program.

"It's just become something that's relevant in society, it seemed like a great time to launch a program," she said.

The hotel chain joined **Marriott Hotels'** rewards program, letting consumers earn Marriott Rewards points.

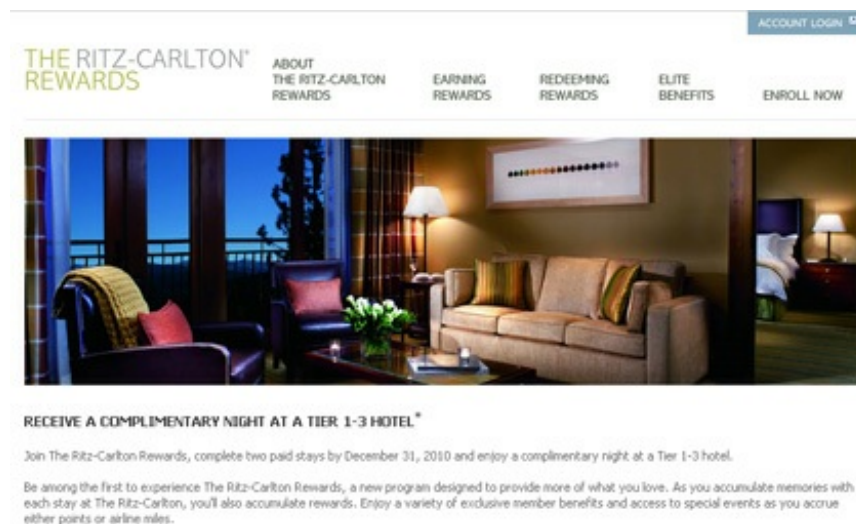
Ritz-Carlton Rewards members can earn points in over 3,400 Ritz-Carlton and Marriott hotels worldwide. Ten reward points are earned for every dollar spent.

Consumers can also earn elite status beginning at 10 nights a year for silver status, 50 nights for gold status and 75 nights for platinum.

Other benefits include high-speed internet and room upgrade options.

The Ritz-Carlton Rewards program is being promoted on the hotel's Web site at <http://www.ritzcarlton.com>.

Here is a screen grab from Ritz-Carlton's Web site:



Both Ritz-Carlton and Marriott have been further appealing to consumers by pushing business with their mobile sites. Marriott's site in 2008 generated \$1.25 million in revenue from mobile bookings (**see story**).

"There's a focus on really creating exceptional and extraordinary experiences for Ritz-Carlton guests," said Ms. Goldstein. "It's designed to give members access to experiences they wouldn't have otherwise."

Final Take

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