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Visa woos affluent cardholders via enhanced travel rewards program

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By PETER FINOCCHIARO

Visa Inc. is expanding the scope of its Luxury Hotel Collection that offers travel benefits to its Visa Signature, Infinite and Platinum rewards program members.

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The credit card provider has expanded the program's benefits, which include better rates, room upgrades and VIP guest status, to cardholders in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, Kiwi Collection, which powers the program, is remodeling its Web experience.

"Travel benefits consistently rank at the top of Visa premium cardholders' lists of preferred perks," said Kate Mulhearn, spokeswoman at Visa, San Francisco. "The Visa Luxury Hotel Collection enhances Visa's ability to meet the lifestyles of today's affluent cardholder with access to the travel parks they value most."

Visa's premium credit cards offer holders a range of benefits such as complimentary concierge services, warranty manager service and other special offers such as the Luxury Hotel Collection.

Premium travel

The Collection lets members research and book accommodations at participating luxury

hotels.

Visa claims its portfolio of hotels is carefully selected.

“Gathered together by invitation and appraised annually, all properties, from boutique gems to world-famous hotels, provide guests an exclusive, unique collection of benefits, specially designed to offer an unparalleled experience,” Ms. Mulhearn said.

The collection is available to cardholders in the United States, Canada, Latin America and now Asia-Pacific and the United Arab Emirates.

Perks include:

- Preferred rates
- Automatic room upgrade, when available
- Complimentary continental breakfast
- 3pm checkout, when available
- VIP Guest status, which includes amenities such as spa credits, bottles of wine, rounds of golf and other elevated services
- Free in-room Internet
- Valet parking

Visa’s Signature program is promoting the Collection through its Web site at

<http://www.visasignaturehotels.com>.

Powered by Kiwi

Vancouver-based **Kiwi Collection** is the driving force behind the Collection’s Web site.

“Kiwi Collection manages one of the world’s largest, comprehensive and trusted collections of premium properties,” Ms. Mulhearn said. “Properties are invited individually, are evaluated annually, and member properties do not have to pay to be part of the program.”

Web users can search for hotels by name, city, country or key word, or filter their options by travel date and number of guests.

Kiwi Collection partnered with Web site optimizer **Strangeloop** to create a faster, easier user experience at Visa Signature Hotels, as well as on its online travel gateway at

<http://www.kiwicollection.com>.

Kiwi Collection executives have been pleased so far with the improvement to the site’s functionality.

The optimizations reduced average page load times by half – and more in some regions such as Asia and Europe.

Average page load times under the new system is 6.4 seconds, per Strangeloop.

Here is a screen grab of Visa Signature Hotels' Web site, powered by Kiwi Collection:

The screenshot displays the website for The Chedi Muscat. At the top, the hotel name is prominently featured. Below it, a large image shows a beach with lounge chairs and umbrellas. The page includes a navigation menu, a current local time of 01:16 on 04th Sep 1998, 2010, and a score of 85. The main content area is divided into sections for room details, amenities, and a booking widget. The booking widget includes fields for check-in and check-out dates, a dropdown for the number of adults, and a 'CHECK AVAILABILITY' button. To the right of the booking widget, there is a list of 'EXCLUSIVE CARDHOLDERS BENEFITS' such as Room Upgrade, Early check-in, and 24h concierge.

Business from wanderlust

Brands have often used travel perks as a way of luring in new business.

Luxury hotel Ritz-Carlton introduced in new loyalty program to attract wealthy consumers ([see story](#)).

Visa indicated that it will further refine its rewards programs to build and maintain relationships with affluent consumers worldwide.

“Visa continues to build upon its knowledge of the affluent consumer to create offerings that allow premium Visa card issuers to further differentiate and strengthen the experiential benefits they provide to new and existing premium cardholders,” Ms. Mulhearn said.

Final Take

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