

MULTICHANNEL

Fairmont bolsters Smithsonian partnership via family package

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By TRICIA CARR

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts' Georgetown property in Washington is targeting affluent families with a new hotel package that incorporates its partnership with the local Smithsonian museums and galleries and is giving a portion of the proceeds to the institution's educational mission.

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The Smithsonian Experience package caters to families visiting the United States capital by encouraging visits to the nearby museums along with on-property benefits. In fact, quite a few properties of major luxury hotel brands have created packages that are localized and focus on personalized travel.

"People often think of the Smithsonian Institution when deciding to visit the nation's capital," said Mark S. Andrew, regional vice president and general manager at **Fairmont Washington, Georgetown**.

"It was a logical partnership that is attractive to families who are interested in education and history and a way to turn moments in to memories," he said.

Watch and learn

The Smithsonian Experience includes an overnight stay for a family of four, a \$50 food

and beverage credit, a copy of Smithsonian magazine and two tickets to the Smithsonian IMAX Theatres or Einstein Planetarium. Additional tickets can be purchased at the hotel's front desk.

Upon arrival, guests will receive a white- and dark-chocolate panda created by the hotel's pastry chef. It was inspired by the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park that is known for its giant pandas.

Also, Fairmont Washington will provide access to Smithsonian museums such as the Air and Space Museum, the American History Museum, the Natural History Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Zoo and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

In partnership with the institution, Fairmont will be donating \$10 per stay to the Smithsonian.

The package is offered through Dec. 31.

Fairmont Washington is using social media, its Web site and on-site promotions at Fairmont hotels in North America to raise awareness for the Smithsonian Experience package.

Meanwhile, the property's Juniper Restaurant is serving four Smithsonian-inspired dishes including the Hope Diamond dessert by pastry chef Rebecca Kinsella. Each meal comes with a card describing the item represented and where it can be found at one of the Smithsonian museums.

When purchased, the hotel will donate a portion of the proceeds from these menu items to the Smithsonian educational mission.



Juniper Restaurant

By incorporating landmarks only found in Washington, Fairmont is attracting families that are looking for authentic experiences, per the hotel.

"People are looking for authentically-local experiences while visiting a destination," Mr. Andrew said. "You cannot get too much more authentically-local in Washington than with the Smithsonian museums.

"For families who travel, this is a wonderful way to experience the city and much of what it has to offer," he said.

"The goal of the Smithsonian Experience package is to create lasting memories for families traveling to the nation's capital and, at the same time, build brand awareness for Fairmont Hotels & Resorts."

Local luster

Luxury hotel chains can likely benefit from localized packages as much as they can from whole brand campaigns.

Hotel-specific packages bolster the individual services of a property and are tailored for a destination. These packages would not work anywhere else but the single property.

In addition, broad campaigns as well as property-specific ones seem to have the same goal – to strengthen brand loyalty by offering personalized service.

Many hotel brands are marketing localized packages, especially during the busy summer travel season.

For instance, the Ritz-Carlton also concentrated on its Georgetown property by establishing a series of on-property summer events that include drive-in movie showings, yoga demonstrations and garden parties that are free of charge.

The property invited locals and visitors to the events as an alternative to other waterfront bars and restaurants on the harbor in the nation's capital, per the hotel ([see story](#)).

In London, Starwood Hotels & Resorts' St. Regis enticed its loyalty members interested in Queen Elizabeth II's 60th anniversary on the throne and local culture with a curated four-night experience ([see story](#)).

Also, Starwood's St. Regis Aspen Resort debuted a concept restaurant to its affluent guests that was established through an exclusive licensing agreement with American Express Publishing's Food & Wine.

The concept restaurant opening in June strategically coincided with Aspen's annual Food & Wine Classic and the completion of a \$40 million redesign of the resort ([see story](#)).

Fairmont Washington's Smithsonian package is a way for it to connect with a local attraction, but might not be the sole reason that guests travel to the property, per D.M. Banks, director of [DMB Public Relations](#), New York.

"It is good timing for this package, because it obviously appeals to the families traveling during the summer with the direct tie-in with the Smithsonian," Mr. Banks said. "Since admission to the Smithsonian museums is generally free, there is not a large value to the package, other than promoting the Smithsonian to the Fairmont's guests and having some itinerary options for guests."

"While I do not see this package attracting a large number of luxury consumers, I certainly see where many traveling to the Washington area enjoy visiting the Smithsonian museums and will appreciate knowing that a portion of their hotel expense is going to the organization," he said.

“Washington has so much to offer the luxury consumers today in terms of fantastic hotel and restaurant properties, but it will always be a political town with limited reasons for Washington to be a luxury destination.”

Final Take

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