

IN-STORE

St. Regis ups exclusivity with Jean Paul Gaultier package

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By TRICIA CARR

Starwood Hotels & Resorts' St. Regis brand is giving its loyalty members the chance to attend a private Bastille Day event to honor French fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier.

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The St. Regis Aficionado package can be reserved for July 13 at St. Regis, San Francisco, and guests will attend a one-night fashion event at the de Young Museum, where an exhibit dedicated to designer Mr. Gaultier is on show. The brand is upping the exclusivity factor in this package to appeal to its affluent members while possibly attracting new consumers to its Aficionado program.

"By restricting participation, the offer makes Aficionado membership special by giving members access to a unique experience with limited availability," said Ron Kurtz, president of [American Affluence Research Center](#), Atlanta. "I think the guests who buy this package will enjoy it and be happy that they were part of an exclusive event.

"This is an appealing offer to attract weekend business for a hotel that probably gets much of its volume from business travelers," he said. "I think this is a good move that rewards its top clients.

"The hotel seems to have covered everything in the offer, and I assume it will try to sell

extra nights to those who purchase this package."

Mr. Kurtz is not affiliated with St. Regis, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

St. Regis was not available for comment before press deadline.

French affair

The occasion for the hotel package is the French National Day called Bastille Day in the United States. It is celebrated on July 14.

St. Regis Aficionado members who purchase the package will celebrate one day early. On July 13, the brand is inviting its members to a party at the **de Young Museum**, San Francisco, that honors the works of French designer Mr. Gaultier.

Guests will be transported to and from the fashion-themed event in private cars.

The package includes two VIP tickets to the event, a one-night stay in a Metropolitan Suite at the St. Regis, San Francisco, and locally-sourced breakfast for two on July 14 at the property's Vitrine restaurant. It can be purchased for \$2,500.



Vitrine restaurant

The Metropolitan Suite features a living area and king-size bed and includes St. Regis' butler service.

This museum event coincides with the The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier exhibit currently on show at the de Young Museum. It shows the designer's progression from his first collection in 1976, to the foundation of his couture house in 1997, to present.

Embedded Video: <http://player.vimeo.com/video/40347379>

Gaultier exhibit video

St. Regis is raising awareness for its Bastille Day package via social media and its Web site and likely via email, since it has a list of its members who are interested in fashion.

Experience awaits

Affluent travelers likely seek out brands that can provide exclusive experiences, which is

the reasoning behind hotel packages that focus on invitation-only events.

St. Regis Aficionado uses this tactic often to tap its affluent members.

Timed with Queen Elizabeth II's 60th anniversary on the throne, for example, the brand created a Diamond Jubilee Aficionado package June 2-5.

Guests had the chance to experience many British traditions including an exclusive viewing of the Royal Carriage Procession to St. Paul's Cathedral from a hospitality suite ([see story](#)).

Tying hotel promotions to events and emphasizing indulgence and luxury are ways that brands can use packages to their advantage, but some make the mistake of slashing prices in an attempt to hook guests, a tactic that could dilute a brand's integrity ([see story](#)).

A few other high-end travel brands are aligning with special events to offer exclusive experiences to guests.

For instance, Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London, created the illusion of exclusivity for the brand through a sponsorship of a polo tournament team and by playing host to an invitation-only preview event ([see story](#)).

In addition, St. Regis' parent company Starwood Hotels & Resorts entered into a three-year partnership with the Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One racing team to position its properties as premiere accommodations for Grand Prix race attendees and offer members-only travel packages ([see story](#)).

Furthermore, by incorporating a French holiday and fashion icon, the St. Regis, San Francisco, is tapping those U.S.-based members that want a cultural experience without the hassle of traveling out of the country.

The fashion and arts tie-ins hint that St. Regis' Aficionado members are patrons of the arts and consumers of luxury labels.

"With the Bastille Day package, St. Regis is differentiating itself from other luxury hotel brands," said Taylor Rains, account coordinator at [Rawle Murdy Associates Inc.](#), Charleston, SC. "In essence, the value from this strategy comes from brand loyalty it promotes more than packages purchased.

"Consumers will realize that being part of the St. Regis community means that they gain access to some truly unique opportunities," he said. "Furthermore, Bastille Day is an interesting choice for this package.

"First of all, it links a U.S. property with something distinctly European and demonstrates the brand's global presence, and secondly, it fills the void left following the Independence Day holiday."

Final Take

Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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