

IN-STORE

## Waldorf Astoria takes service up a notch with personal concierge program

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By TRICIA CARR

Hilton Hotels-owned Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts is enacting a new service that assigns a personal concierge to each guest to assist in all aspects of the travel experience, including before and after hotel stay.

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True Waldorf Service will begin this month and is based on the original values of the brand's iconic New York property and staff and guest feedback. Each guest will get a concierge as a primary contact throughout three stages of the travel process including the incentive-to-return stage that gives guests parting perks.

"We are constantly looking for ways to improve the overall Waldorf Hotels & Resorts experience and understand that guests have a choice when it comes to luxury accommodations," said John T.A. Vanderslice, global head of luxury and lifestyle brands at [Hilton Worldwide](#), McLean, VA.

"This program has been in development for the past two and a half years and is based on extensive research at the property level to deliver flawless experience for every Waldorf guest," he said. "True Waldorf Service furthers our longstanding commitment to legendary service by focusing on the totality of the guest experience by assigning a personal concierge for every guest."

“Our personal concierges work to intuitively meet guests’ needs, from providing activity recommendations that suit the traveler’s preferences before they even arrive to managing the details of a special occasion or milestone.”

**Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts** is owned by Hilton.

Personal assistant

There are three stages of the True Waldorf Service that take place before, during and after a hotel stay.

The welcome stage begins when guests receive an email to introduce them to their personal concierge. This email also gives information on booking transfer services and any special requests.

For instance, if a guest only drinks diet soda, housekeeping staff will stock their in-room refrigerator with those beverages.

Guests are greeted by their concierge when they arrive at the hotel.



*Waldorf Astoria, Chicago*

The second stage is the experience stage. The concierge starts by leading guests straight to their rooms without traditional check-in.

During the stay, the concierge is the primary contact for guests to voice their needs. The concierge then passes these requests to the staff.

If the concierge is unavailable during off-business hours, there are representatives that can service guests at all hours.

The last stage is the invitation to return. Guests receive parting services such as packing assistance, boxed lunches, home luggage delivery, transportation arrangements and expedited checkout, which is a bundle offered for the first time in the industry, per the brand.

Also, guests will receive a departure gift that represents the hotel's location.

The concierge will send a thank-you note after the trip.

Waldorf Astoria gave employees more than 150,000 combined hours of training on this

new service, per the brand.

True Waldorf Service will be offered at more than 20 properties this month. Guests who book through a third-party travel are not eligible.

Waldorf Astoria will mirror its new service initiative on its Facebook and Twitter pages to raise awareness.



*Edgewater Beach Hotel, a Waldorf Astoria hotel, Naples, FL*

“Although all aspects of True Waldorf Service set it apart from other luxury hotels, the invitation to return is a hotel industry first,” Mr. Vanderslice.

“We remove the hassle of traveling home, or to the next destination through departure services like packing, home luggage delivery, valet and even boxed lunches for the trip,” he said. “This allows guests to truly enjoy their last day of travel.”

At your service

Hotel brands that want to aim at affluent travelers often do so with increased service offerings and personalized packages.

Waldorf Astoria is using the service tactic to show consumers that it is attuned to the needs of its consumer base.

Once the brand has enacted the service at all or most of its properties, guests will likely feel that they have a seamless travel experience. The brand’s hotel in a different city will know their needs just as well as the hotel that they traveled to previously.

A few other hotel brands have been upping their service strategies lately, but with technology.

For instance, The Trump Hotel Collection aimed for customer retention by employing mobile devices at its Toronto property.

The main goal is customer relationship management by allowing the hotel to manage guest and owner relations not only in Toronto, but across the entire brand ([see story](#)).

In addition, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Ritz-Carlton and Baglioni Hotels are offering personalized concierge tips via mobile apps.

Waldorf Astoria chose a more traditional route with its service upgrades, which will probably attract older consumers.

“Affluent consumers will recognize and appreciate the personalization of service that this program offers,” said Ron Kurtz, president of [American Affluence Research Center](#), Atlanta. “The program will create buzz among the affluent as they share with their peers the benefits of being included in this program.

“The strategy for this program is one of offering truly personalized service across many activities to a group of frequent travelers who are very important to the Waldorf Astoria group of hotels,” he said. “The goal is to create an advantage over its competitors and thus to strengthen guest loyalty to the Waldorf Astoria brand.”

Final Take

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