

IN-STORE

Starwood targets baseball enthusiasts via Chicago Cubs partnership

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By ERIN SHEA

Starwood Hotels & Resorts is targeting baseball enthusiasts through a new partnership that makes it the official hotel of the Chicago Cubs.



Starwood announced Jan. 17 that the hotel group, which has nine brands including the St. Regis and The Luxury Collection, will be the official hotel and resort partner of the Chicago Cubs, Wrigley Field, Chicago Cubs Spring Training, Cubs Destinations and Chicago Cubs Charities. The hotel chain is also planning to build a new hotel across the street from Wrigley Field.

"This partnership allows SPG to tap into our members' passion for sports and create unique and memorable experiences with the Chicago Cubs," said Mark Vondrasek, senior vice president of distribution, loyalty and partnership marketing for **Starwood Preferred Guest**.

"Through SPG Moments, we strive to deliver unforgettable moments for our members and are thrilled to be able to do so at one of the top tourist attractions in Chicago," he said.

"An enhanced presence at Wrigley Field is an important platform for Starwood to continue delivering unforgettable moments for our members and Chicago Cubs fans at

one of the top tourist attractions in Chicago."

Home run

Chicago Cubs fans can now book Starwood hotels for Cubs home and away games through both Starwood's Web site and the Chicago Cubs' Web site. The Starpoints earned by Starwood Preferred Guests during these stays can be used for Cubs experiences through SPG Moments.

Also, SPG members will be offered exclusive access to a number of Chicago Cubs experiences throughout the 2013 season as part of the partnership.

Some special offers include "Surprise and Delight" seat upgrades during every home game at Wrigley Field, VIP experiences with players and team management such as serving as honorary team manager for a day, access to the SPG luxury suite behind home plate and opportunities to bid for VIP access to Cubs Spring Training and Cubs Destination trips.

In addition, Starwood is planning to develop a boutique hotel across the street from Wrigley Field.



Wrigley Field

The new hotel's exterior design and decorum will fit into the local neighborhood, per Starwood.

This partnership could help Starwood gain more customers who are loyal sports fans.

"By demonstrating a commitment to the Chicago Cubs, Starwood is, in effect, demonstrating a commitment to the team's loyal fans as well," said Taylor Rains, account coordinator at [Rawle Murdy Associates](#), Charleston, SC. "I would not be surprised if the fans returned the favor.

"By partnering with a sports team, a hotel has the opportunity to leverage that affiliation in the hope of translating it to the brand as well," he said.

Plenty of partners

Starwood has partnered with a number of other companies to offer its guests a multitude of experiences.

Bentley Motors and Starwood's St. Regis and The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts entered into a global partnership that allows the hotel chains to offer Bentley driving

experiences to guests.

Bentley vehicles are available at many hotel properties for guest use. Both brands brought their affluent heritage to light through exclusive events, driving programs and house fleets at St. Regis and Luxury Collection flagship hotels worldwide ([see story](#)).

The hotel brand has also worked with luxury brands such as Christian Dior and Tiffany & Co. to create designer suites for affluent guests.

Furthermore, the St. Regis named Jason Wu as the second St. Regis Connoisseur in 2011, which involves joint digital projects and multiple experiences for the hotel's guests ([see story](#)).

Partner brands must align with Starwood's values for them to be successful.

The partnership with the Chicago Cubs could enhance the brand by allowing it to offer VIP experiences for fans.

"Any affiliation with a major public institution, such as a sports team, is a surefire way to increase visibility and coverage," Mr. Rains said. "Also, there is the opportunity for new acquisitions."

Final take

Erin Shea, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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