

EVENTS / CAUSES

Washington's Willard Hotel targets history enthusiasts via upscale "Lincoln" screening

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By TRICIA CARR

InterContinental's The Willard Hotel, Washington, DC, is tapping its presidential roots through a one-night film screening event dedicated to Steven Spielberg's "Lincoln."

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The "Lincoln at the Willard Hotel" package is based on a one-night weekend stay for two guests in a Deluxe King Room that corresponds with an exclusive film screening. The Willard is looking to leverage its status as a hotel where Abraham Lincoln stayed in 1861 before taking up residence in the White House.

"We wanted to create an 'In the Know' event, which connects our present-day guests to the historical significance of the property through one of our most famous guests, President Lincoln," said James Ryan, manager at [Willard InterContinental](#), Washington.

"In our experience, many affluent travelers enjoy having experiences that are exclusive, not off the shelf, which are local to the hotel and destination," he said.

"The goal of this and other efforts like this, which are both personalized and local, is to create a great hotel that our guests love while bringing more awareness to our history for the sophisticated traveler."

From the archives

Guests who buy the package have access to a private screening of Lincoln March 2 at The Willard.

Following the screening is a cocktail reception and question-and-answer session with Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer.

Guests get a signed copy of Mr. Holzer's "Lincoln: How Abraham Lincoln Ended Slavery in America." The book is meant to be a companion to the feature film.

Also, guests will receive a themed room amenity.



Deluxe room

The hotel is opening its history gallery that displays memorabilia from Mr. Lincoln's 1861 hotel stay for the occasion. The collection includes a copy of the hotel bill of \$773.75.

The package also includes a tour of the Lincoln Cottage where the president resided at times during the Civil War and from where he commuted to the White House. Round-trip transportation is provided to the tour.

The Lincoln at the Willard Hotel package is available March 2-3 for \$371 including breakfast at on-site eatery Café du Parc.

The hotel is promoting the package via partnerships with presidential history experts and associations, traditional and social media and direct outreach to stakeholders and previous guests.

Presidential treatment

The Willard often leverages its status in the Washington metro area through presidential-themed events.

For the holiday season, the hotel displayed the entire White House Christmas Ornaments collection on a tree in its lobby.

The Willard partnered with the White House Historical Association to show the display on-site starting Nov. 28.

The tradition of the White House Ornament began in 1981 from the White House Historical Association. Each ornament marks a president's term or special event at the White House.

A new ornament is offered each year. For instance, the 2012 ornament celebrated the country's 27th president William Howard Taft who served 1909-1913 ([see story](#)).

Displays or events of significance to the local audience are one way for luxury hotels to garner foot traffic in addition to attracting faraway consumers through packages.

"The story of Lincoln and his influence over the history in the District is so popular to such a wide variety of people, regardless of their age, location or affluence," said D.M. Banks, director at [DMB Public Relations](#), New York. "The film has certainly gathered a lot of momentum going into the Oscars and providing an exclusive package such as this paired with a historical treasure like The Willard makes for a great combination.

"People are attracted to history, and having so many locations and amenities directly tied to the history of Lincoln makes for a desirable weekend getaway," he said.

Final Take

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