

IN-STORE

Starwood targets tennis lovers via exclusive US Open experiences

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By JEN KING

Starwood Hotels & Resorts is anticipating guest interest in the 2013 U.S. Open tennis championships by building on its exclusive experiences for Starwood Preferred Guest members by auctioning off court side tickets, exclusive tours and tennis clinics.

The experiences are being auctioned off through SPG Moments, which allows members to bid on the U.S. Open offers set to happen Aug. 26 through Sept. 9 in New York. SPG's partnership with the US Open is likely to attract and encourage tennis fans to sign up for SPG to avoid missing out on their exclusive offerings for members.

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Luxury Daily

“We make a point of knowing our guests well,” said Mark Vondrasek, senior vice president of distribution, loyalty and partnerships for [Starwood Hotels & Resorts](#), Stamford, CT.

“As such, we recognize that sports is deep passion for them and the US Open is one of the most premier sporting events in the world.

“So popular, in fact, that last year’s US Open Men’s Final was the SPG Moment with the highest bid auction of 370,500 Starpoints for courtside seats.

“We want to ensure we continue offering our guests access to the most coveted events,”

he said.

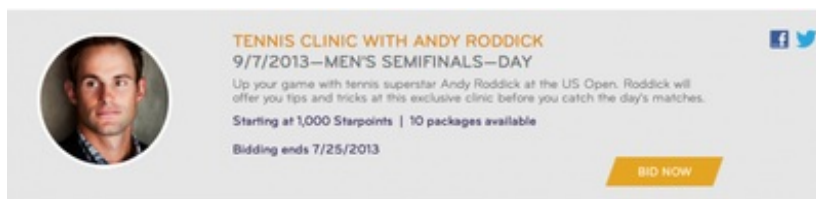
Match and Set

After the 2012 U.S. Open became the most highly bid on SPG Moment experience, Starwood has set out to give tennis fans another year of memorable experiences.

Members with a love for tennis will gain firsthand access to the 2013 US Open through 65 offers.

The SPG Moments program is an auction using Starwood's point program called Starpoints. Starting bids begin 1,000 Starpoints, while the most exclusive events have bids beginning at 35,000 Starpoints.

The top tier of SPG Moment's 2013 US Open initiative will be the chance to play with Andy Roddick, winner of the 2003 U.S. Open.



The 10 winning bidders will participate in a one-hour clinic instructed by Mr. Roddick.

After the clinic, winning members are invited to watch the men's singles semifinals in the SPG Luxury Suite.

Starwood Preferred Guest is using its Facebook page to spread the word about the SPG Moment with Mr. Roddick.

Other SPG Moments to bid on include, court side seats at Arthur Ashe Stadium, access to view a match from the SPG Luxury Suite at center court, breakfast for two in the exclusive Player's Dining Room, a day-long tennis event focusing on children and a behind the scene tour of Arthur Ashe Stadium.

A full list of SPG Moments at the US Open can be found at spg.com/USOpen.

Bidding closes July 25- 26. A select few have closing bids on July 29.

Starwood is also using Twitter for tri-state (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut) members to win court side seats by using the hashtag #BringMeSPG.

Now serving

Certain sporting events have a large following of affluent fans.

By including an affluent sports fan in the action of their favorite sport, the brands can create loyalty through these experiences. At the same time, the brand is creating once-in-a-lifetime memories for their guest.

Starwood has created similar offers in the past.

Starwood's St. Regis San Francisco bolstered its position as the official hotel of the 2013 Annual America's Cup with bespoke services for guests designed to mesh with the world

of sailing.

The 2013 Annual America's Cup Summer of Racing marked the return of the event to the U.S. after 18 years. The legacy afforded by the race entwined with St. Regis' sailing history may have appealed to luxury travelers who sought a truly exclusive experience ([see story](#)).

Other hotels have created similar experiences.

For example, Four Seasons Resort and Club Dallas at Las Colinas gave guests the chance to step on the golf course through a special package before the annual Professional Golfers' Association Tour's HP Byron Nelson Championship.

The HP Bryron Nelson Championship May 13-19 took place at the Tournament Players Club Four Seasons Las Colinas course. The unlimited golf package catered to those who enjoy the sport by allowing them to get on the course either immediately before or after the professionals ([see story](#)).

By offering these types of privileged experiences, hotel brands create a bond with affluent travelers who are willing to travel far and wide for their favorite sporting events.

"SPG Moments deepens our relationship with our guests," Mr. Vondrasek said.

"By providing access to events and experiences, we make our guests the hero for their family," he said. "Additionally, the robust experiences we've offered our SPG members can be shown by increased occupancy.

"More than 50 percent of the guests in our hotels each night are SPG members."

Final take

Jen King, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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