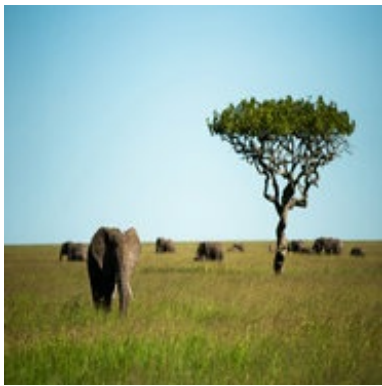


INTERNET

Four Seasons launches virtual safari to help guests predict visit

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Four Seasons Safari's Elephants

By NANCY BUCKLEY

Four Seasons Safari Lodge Serengeti, Tanzania, is encouraging fans to explore the Serengeti through a new interactive online safari experience.

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Luxury Daily

The "Into the Heart of Africa" online immersive tour permits guests to learn about Serengeti National Park via videos and photos. Prior to arriving at the resort it is now possible to have both a personal virtual tour of the safari, the lodge and the wildlife and gain valuable knowledge about the region.

"A safari is an especially unique experience and one that tends to draw guests who are in search for something memorable," said Taylor Rains, senior account executive at [Rawle Murdy Associates](#), Charleston, SC.

"An interactive site dedicated to the property is the perfect way to showcase that experience for prospects in a way that gets them excited to book a vacation for themselves," he said.

Mr. Rains is not affiliated with Four Seasons, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Four Seasons was unable to comment by press deadline.

The virtual Serengeti

Into the Heart of Africa offers videos of the hot air balloon ride, the elephant watering hole that is feet from the swimming pool and the view from the lodge's decks.

Guests are able to gain prior knowledge of the wild through the facts and numbers throughout the online immersive safari. For example, each year 200,000 zebras migrate 620 miles across the plains of the Serengeti.



Four Seasons' land cruiser

Wildlife roams freely in the Serengeti with very few human structures obstructing their path which creates a natural outlook of the region. In-person, guests are provided an aerial view of the 5,700 acres with a hot air balloon ride and an up-close and personal view in the property's land cruiser. Online, guests join the journey through the lens of a video camera and catch a glimpse of what waits at the Four Seasons.

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/MpRiyStlIP8](https://www.youtube.com/embed/MpRiyStlIP8)

Four Seasons Serengeti video

Guests can also develop a greater understanding of their future safari through the images and captions on the Web site. Some feature the local Maasai people while others offer glimpses at the artifacts, bones and fossils in the Discovery Centre at the resort.



Four Seasons' hot air balloon

Building loyalty

A hotel's Web presence can offer great value during the consumer experience prior to arrival at the destination.

From short videos, to behind-the-scenes glimpses, the interactivity and online presence of the safari enhances a guest's experience and loyalty.

Other brands have embarked on interactive marketing to offer consumers personalized virtual experiences.

Digital enabled marketers engage with target consumers on a personal level through microsites, branded hashtags and digital touch points. These experiential and educational tactics integrated consumers into what felt like the brand's inner circle, which ultimately drives brand loyalty ([see story](#)).

For example, Four Seasons has another Web-based campaign, "Pin. Pack. Go," that helps guests plan their trips through local travel suggestions on Pinterest. Through users' boards, Four Seasons is able to communicate virtually and personally with their guests.

Creating a platform for the brand to organically chronicle its properties will likely produce a gallery that clarifies remote aspects of travel and helps guests plan trips. The initiative takes Four Seasons' Pinterest mission of providing insightful tips to the next level by spurring travel ([see story](#)).

In this case, the virtually immersive aspects of Into the Heart of Africa provide consumers an exclusive glimpse of Four Seasons Safari Lodge Serengeti that may lead to bookings.

"The advantages of curating an interactive safari experience for prospects are simple but effective: driving excitement and conversation among customers," Mr. Rains said. "It is that excitement that leads to referrals.

"The challenge with defining an experience before a guest's arrival is just that – you are setting an expectation for what their stay will be like. It's then the responsibility of the property to deliver an experience that not only matches but surpasses what it is potential guests have prepared themselves for," he said.

Final Take

Nancy Buckley, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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