

MOBILE

Starwood bets on Google Glass with new SPG app

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SPG app for Google Glass

By JOE MCCARTHY

Starwood Hotels and Resorts is anticipating the potential surge in consumer interest for wearables with a new Starwood Preferred Guest application for Google Glass.

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Luxury Daily

Designed by the conglomerate's in-house team, the app leverages Google Glass's functionality while carrying over basic components of its conventional SPG app. Starwood will likely be applauded by the growing number of wearable advocates who are pushing to make Google Glass and similar items more mainstream.

"Innovation didn't stop with the release of the smart phone or the tablet," said Chris Holdren, senior vice president for SPG and digital at [Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide](#), New York. "Glass complements our digital offerings from apps to mobile web.

"The new app illustrates Starwood's commitment to explore new technology and learn," he said. "Glass lets us in on the ground floor of the new wearable technology movement.

"The app is designed to assist travelers in each stage of their journey, from imaginative destination exploration to practical logistics planning before, during, and after a visit, all

within a quick, easy, and streamlined format valued by on-the-go users of wearable technology."

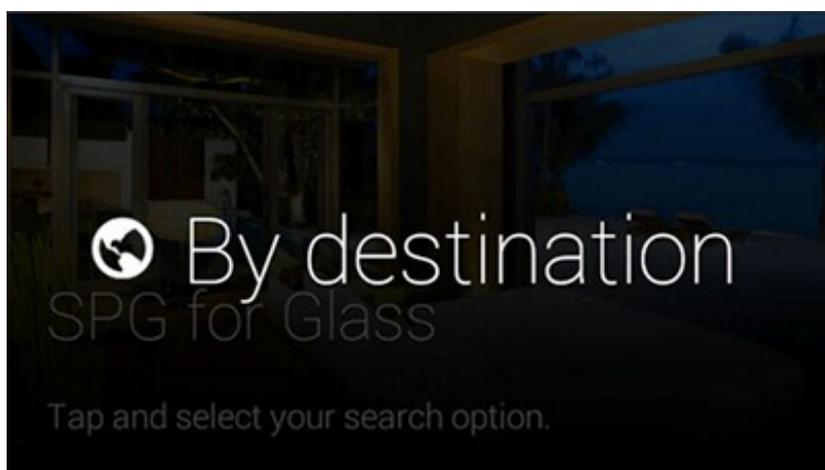
On the go

Starwood's portfolio covers the gamut of price points, reaching up to luxury brands such as St. Regis and Luxury Collection. Guests of the enterprise's nine brands who are interested in the Google Glass development can install the SPG app [here](#).



SPG for Google Glass promotional image

The Google Glass version of the app lets guests take care of a number of travel matters. For instance, guests can search and book rooms at Starwood's nearly 1,200 properties by destination or airport code. Photos from hotels and nearby areas can also be viewed.



SPG for Google Glass

Guests can access information about upcoming stays and their general SPG account. Perhaps most apt for Google Glass, users will be able to get turn-by-turn directions to

properties. The team at Starwood took advantage of Glass's voice command and geo-location functions for this capability.



SPG app for Google Glass

The app for Google Glass is currently in beta mode and Starwood will make improvements as consumers make suggestions and Google Glass adds more features.



Example of SPG account

In a new [report on wearable devices](#) by L2 and Intel, data provided by ABI Research suggests that "Smart Glass" adoption will grow by 400 percent between 2013 and 2018. Starwood's decision to insert itself into the Google Glass trend early will likely pay off.

Made to improve

Starwood continually refreshes SPG offers to ensure that guests actively use the rewards program.

For instance, late last year Starwood's digital design team took advantage of the iPad's capacity for high-resolution images to create an editorial-like experience on the app ([see story](#)).

Also, the conglomerate introduced the SPG Hot Escapes flash sale travel site that features exclusive offers with a minimum of 20 percent savings.

The SPG Hot Escapes Web site replenishes deals and destinations every Wednesday and supplants the company's previous Beat the Clock and StarPicks products ([see story](#)).

SPG for Google Glass evinces Starwood's increasingly pioneering approach to technology.

"Mobile is already having a huge effect on our business, mobile bookings are growing five times faster than web bookings did 10 years ago," Mr. Holdren said. "As consumers begin to use a wider variety of mobile platforms, particularly wearable technology like Google Glass, we expect this trend to continue.

"It's our goal to leverage the latest technology to give our guests great experiences," he said. "We know mobile and emerging technologies will impact virtually every aspect of our business. Mobile is the only technology used throughout the entire travel experience from search through stay.

"Our guests are by definition in motion so they need their mobile devices to stay connected during their travels. Being the first in the hospitality industry to introduce an app for Google Glass illustrates our larger strategy to be the industry leader in digital innovation.

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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