

In The News 2013

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New York Times Travel Supplement February 2013

“We’re All Boomers Now”

By STEPHANIE ROSENBLOOM

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9 HEADS UP A visit to Madrid’s ever-expanding arts center.



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DISCOVERY | ADVENTURE | ESCAPE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2013

Travel

The New York Times



We’re All Boomers Now

From backpacking to glamping, the postwar generation has long determined travel options. This year it’s truer than ever.

By STEPHANIE ROSENBLOOM

Big font. Easy-to-print pages. Luxury hotels that can be sorted by amenities like cooking lessons and connecting suites. If you find yourself enjoying the carefully planned features on Preferredfamily.com, you have the baby boomer generation to thank.

From new hotel Web sites to shorter cruises to smaller tours, the travel in-

dustry is redoubling its efforts this year to win the hearts and wallets of people between the ages of 49 and 67.

It’s a generation that, given its size (about 26 percent of the population) and its collective wealth (it controls the lion’s share of the country’s disposable income), has been shaping the nation’s travel choices for decades. Your lost summer backpacking through Europe? Thank the boomers who in the 1960s and ’70s made

shoestring student trips to Europe de rigueur. Your naughty romp at Club Med? It was the boomers who propelled the singles resort scene to its apotheosis in the 1970s. Your posh room at the Copacabana Palace in the 1990s? Fueled by boomers’ appetite for luxury hotels.

Yet when the economy tanked in 2008, boomers began snapping their wallets shut and stowing their luggage in their closets instead of airplane bins, helping to

send the travel industry into a tailspin. Now, five years later, with the economy showing signs of recovery and the first wave of boomers retiring, many travel companies have declared a New Year’s resolution: seduce the boomer. (Again.)

Whether it’s a yen for Wi-Fi in the Serengeti or a disdain for bus tours, boomers’ latest needs, whims and aspirations are determining 2013’s large and small vaca-

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A Poet’s Place

One Hundred Miles From Kolkata, Tagore’s Dream Lives On.

BY ERIC WEINER, PAGE 5.

Off the Tourist Grid in the Bahamas

Island-hopping on mail boats, trading lido decks for local secrets.

By PORTER FOX

Waves rolled through the night, pitching the ship from side to side. From the bridge deck, the white sand beaches of the Exumas glowed blue-white under the starlight, and the rising moon spread a thin layer of silver over the sea. A few miles north, toward our destination in Nassau, lightning flickered.

I was on a freighter heading through the Bahamas. The sweeping view couldn’t have been more different from the one on deck: shrink-wrapped palettes cradled cinderblocks, baby diapers and bottled water



SARA MAYTT

obscured the bow; oiled two-by-eight planks concealed crates of produce, furniture and hardware stowed in the cargo hold. Amidships, a 70-foot crane was lashed to a steel boom crutch. Tucked away in private cabins behind the wheelhouse, two dozen passengers slept soundly.

The ship was one of 15 government-contracted mail boats that deliver provisions, passengers and a few adventurous tourists to the Out Islands, the hundreds of remote islands beyond the tourist and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

ISLAND IMMERSION Sunset over estuaries on the island of Andros, known for its abundance of bonefish.

In Travel, We're All Boomers Now



THE ELEPHANT IS GREAT, BUT IS THERE WI-FI?

AWAY FROM IT ALL? Left, an Abercrombie & Kent trip to East Africa; below, tented lodges at Sanbona Wildlife Reserve, South Africa; inside a tent at Shamwari Game Reserve, South Africa.



PREFERRED HOTEL GROUP



PREFERRED HOTEL GROUP

Continued from page 1

tion trends. Some are new. Others have been around but will become more prevalent. Having studied the predilections of people born between 1946 and 1964 as if they were a tribe recently discovered by anthropologists, travel companies are rolling out services designed to woo and recapture a generation of travelers.

Boomer or not, here's what all of us will be seeing more of in the months to come, and why.

SHORTER ITINERARIES

Bon voyage lengthy cruises and tours. Boomers are the most likely of all age groups to say that they have lost money on investments and that their household finances have worsened since the recession, according to Pew Research. Among boomers ages 50 to 61, 6 in 10 said they might have to postpone retirement. That has tour companies — which for decades have offered lengthy trips for retirees with time on their hands — making sweeping changes.

“Speaking from a boomer who feels like I’m going to be working until I’m 70,” said JoAnn Bell, vice president of programming for Road Scholar, a nonprofit organization that leads educational tours around the world, “we’re very conscious of the fact that so many more people are still working.”

To cater to boomers postponing retirement, Road Scholar has shortened the length of some tours. While the organization has international trips that can be 21 days or longer, “we have more and more programs that are 7 to 10 days,” Ms. Bell said. For instance, a traditional program is Road Scholar’s “Survey of France: Paris, Provence, the Wine Regions and more” — an 18-night tour. A new program for boomers? The seven-night “Allure of France: Paris and Normandy.”

With working boomers in mind, Road Scholar has also changed the days of the week that its tours begin and end. Its domestic programs used to begin on Sunday and conclude on Friday; now it’s scheduling programs that begin Thursday or Friday and end on Monday. For international trips, the company originally planned its 10-day programs with midweek flights because they are less expensive than weekend flights — but the schedule was not ideal for most working people. Now trips depart Friday or Thursday night and return on Sunday.

Cruise lines are also adjusting their schedules. Crystal Cruises, known for its cruises of 10 days or longer, has increased the number of shorter itineraries it is offering in 2013, making almost half of its cruises 10 days or less. Last year, only three of Crystal’s European cruises were shorter than 10 days. In 2013, 22 of its cruises in Europe are 10 days or less. Its Crystal Getaways, 5- to 11-day itineraries that it set up last year, have been so successful among time-strapped working boomers that this year the company is introducing 26 new segments for Europe.

EXOTIC LOCATIONS, MODERN AMENITIES

Boomers continue to be intrepid explorers, even as many express a desire for creature comforts.

Last month, I invited boomers to share their travel habits and plans on The New York Times Travel blog and Facebook page. A man from Seattle noted that he and his wife will go on a safari in Botswana this year and, in 2014, visit Hong Kong, Vietnam and Thailand. “Working on our bucket list,” he said. A couple in their 60s from Delaware said, “since we are not sure when our legs will give out, we enjoy active trips with companies such as Backroads.” Another couple, from New York, plan to climb Mount Kilimanjaro with their son for the first time this summer.

The research company Euromonitor International predicts that boomers will “lead the way” to places that were not always possible to visit, including Myanmar and Cuba. And American Express Travel Insiders said boomers are heading off to destinations like Machu Picchu and Pata-



ROAD SCHOLAR



MICHAEL BRANDS/BUMPS FOR BOOMERS



MARGUERITE HARVEY/ABERCROMBIE & KENT

gonia before they reach an age when they can’t handle the physical demands that may come with visiting such places.

Yet researchers also note that boomers do not want to rough it once they arrive. In a study of the impact of the economy on vacation travel among boomers, the market research company Mintel posited that boomers are “ideal candidates” for upscale camping, fondly referred to as glamping.

Glamping, for the uninitiated, is camping minus the sleeping bag and dome tent. Participants need not have the faintest idea of how to rig a tarp or build a fire. Rather, glampers enjoy gourmet food, private bathrooms, even “spa tents” in which the only knots discussed are those that can be worked out during a massage.

Michelle Woodley, senior vice president of distribution and revenue management for the Preferred Hotel Group, which created Preferredfamily.com with boomers in mind, said that one of its popular destinations is Sanbona Wildlife Reserve in South Africa, where guests sleep “in a nice, cozy bed” in “luxury tents” with minibars, electronic safes, showers, heating and air-conditioning, decks and plunge pools. There’s also Wi-Fi — for when you tire of observing the white lions and riverine rabbits.

While many vacationers strive to get away from e-mail and smartphones, tour operators say boomers are telling them they no longer want to be out of touch with their offices and families.

“The core of our business used to be the get-away-from-it-all and have no contact,” said Pamela Lassers, a spokeswoman for Abercrombie & Kent, which caters to more affluent travelers.

And now? “Safari lodges in Africa now are installing Internet connections,” she said. “They’re in the middle of the Serengeti,” she said of boomers, “and they want to update their Facebook page.”



JAMES TABOR/ROAD SCHOLAR

MULTIGENERATIONAL TRAVEL

Marketing studies have long purported that boomers, the “me generation,” have a fascination with themselves. And the travel industry is finding that this fascination extends to their families, fueling a surge in multigenerational travel. As boomers join the ranks of grandparents, many are financing vacations for their children and grandchildren. Preferred Family was designed to make booking those multigenerational trips to places like Morocco and India easier: users can search for hotels with amenities like connecting rooms, kitchenettes and storytelling for children.

Meanwhile at Road Scholar, families are chartering entire 16-person boats in the Galápagos that the company uses for its natural- and cultural-history group tours.

Of course, boomers are not strictly grandparents. Plenty are starting second or third families.

“They are grandparents even as they are parents,” said Art Webb, president and chief executive of the travel marketing agency BCF in Virginia Beach, Va., which uses the tag line, “boom your brand.” “The stereotypical progression of life stages goes out the window.”

Take, for example, what happened at Road Scholar, which offers specialized tours for grandparents and their grandchildren to places like Ireland and Grand Canyon National Park. In recent years, boomers have been calling to say, “I’m grandparent age, but my child is 16. Can I go on that program?”

But that would change the dynamic of the tour, said Ms. Bell. And so those parents were told they could not participate. Yet Road Scholar received so many of those calls that it ultimately created an “exception” tour for grandparent-age parents and their young children.

Still, even that was not enough. The number of people who wanted to participate in the “exception” tour kept growing.

“Now,” said Ms. Bell, “we have a whole series that was based on our exceptions.”

EMPHASIS ON LOCAL COLOR

“It used to be that when Americans were traveling abroad they were looking for something that they were familiar with,” Ms. Lassers of Abercrombie & Kent said.

To paraphrase the saying, familiarity can breed contempt. Today, Ms. Lassers said, boomers prefer an “authentic hotel that reflects the local character of the destination.”

Ms. Woodley of the Preferred Hotel Group agreed, explaining that many boomers have traveled extensively for work and slept in chain hotels that make one city feel indistinguishable from the next. “Now they’re looking for more unique experiences,” she said.

That not only applies to where they

sleep, but also to what they do. Industry professionals say boomers do not want to be isolated from the local culture. They want to practice digital photography in a Costa Rican rain forest, or to volunteer at a Haitian orphanage. Abercrombie & Kent’s new Connections tour, “East Africa: Tanzania and Kenya,” for instance, includes a visit to a local school, a meeting with a Maasai village elder and a dance performed by members of a local tribe.

CUSTOMIZED TRAVEL OPTIONS

If travel companies had to write a boomer operating manual, they would include this warning: do not herd them. As one boomer succinctly put it on The Times’s travel blog: “No interest in being with ‘a group.’”

Travel companies, in turn, are making their tours more intimate, which boomers say they prefer because there are fewer stragglers to slow them down and it’s easier to develop a relationship with the guide or lecturer.

“Most of our boomers are not really buying motor coach programs,” Ms. Bell of Road Scholar said.

This desire for enrichment that’s personalized led Road Scholar last year to introduce “flex programs”: international tours that provide travelers with free time to pursue their own interests. The company said the programs were so successful that this year it’s rolling them out domestically as well.

In Aspen, a ski program called Bumps for Boomers is thriving because it’s teaching skiers of a certain age how to escape crowded, groomed trails and ski moguls and off-piste terrain without exhaustion or knee pain. The program’s founder, Joe Nevin, does this by emphasizing balance and control instead of speed, fast reflexes and brute strength.

One takeaway from his surveys of boomer travelers: they don’t want to wear hats that say “Bumps for Boomers.” The company’s tag line — “ski for life” — on the other hand, goes over like a beautiful coat of snow. Mr. Nevin said that’s because “ski for life” sounds fun and broadcasts longevity, “as opposed to stereotyping me as an older boomer circling the drain.”

Plenty of travel professionals are invoking the word “boomer,” though. Last year, Denver’s convention and visitors bureau issued a news release entitled “Boomers do more in Denver,” while the Bermuda department of tourism heralded a spring break-for-grown-ups promotion with the words, “Calling all boomers!”

Whatever you call them, veteran marketers say the key to a successful seduction is never to stereotype boomer travelers, particularly when it comes to aging. After all, Mr. Webb said, “They may be rockers in a cover band that are just starting a new family and have new earrings dangling off their lobes.”

Hotel Business

August 2013

“Preferred Hotel Group revamps iPrefer to include points program”

By Danielle Dattolo

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The Montage Beverly Hills in California (above) and the Capitol Hill Tokyu (right) in Tokyo, are among the some 650 members of Preferred Hotel Group.

Preferred Hotel Group revamps iPrefer to include points program

By DANIELLE DATTOLO

CHICAGO—Since John and Gail Ueberroth purchased Preferred Hotel Group 10 years ago, one question has been asked ever since: How about a points program? On Aug. 15, Preferred Hotel Group—which provides sales, marketing and technology solutions for its more than 650 member hotels—will realize this goal with the newly revamped iPrefer, the first currency-based points program for a global collection of independent properties.

“For several years, our iPrefer program has been a soft benefits program,” said President Lindsey Ueberroth, with amenities including “complimentary Internet, upgrades based on availability, early check-in and late check-out—and it ranges from property to property. The way the program is changing now is the Internet; early check-in and late check-out will remain for all levels—but we’re adding a points system.”

Now, the new program is ready to launch. “We spent the last two or three years analyzing the best programs out there,” Ueberroth said, “and we finally came up with what we thought would be the best currency-based program for a global independent hotel company.” Points are accrued and redeemed for hard currency certificates. When a guest earns 2,500 points, that guest then receives a \$50 certificate, allowing for a faster redemption process. These certificates are available in denominations of \$50, \$100, \$250 and \$500.

The idea of a loyalty program piqued the interest of the hotel group, but one piece of the equation didn’t quite fit with bringing the rest of the program puzzle to life: accruing points in exchange for a free night. Ueberroth said that Preferred Hotel Group sought to avoid this, and “that’s how

we came up with this currency-based program,” she said. “You earn points and then redeem them for hard currency. It has a lot more flexibility than points just for a room night. It benefits the consumer and the hotel because it allows the consumers to redeem faster, with the flexibility to use their points regardless of whether they’re spending the night.” For example, a guest who lives locally can cash in the certificate at the hotel’s restaurant.

Guests played a large part in the development of iPrefer’s latest evolution. “When we looked across the board at what people were looking for, we saw that they wanted points, status and VIP perks,” Ueberroth remarked. “So when we were shaping this, we said, ‘We can create points. Let’s create the tiered status level that gives them recognition for the more loyal they are to us.’” Guests can be rewarded with three different membership levels: Silver, for those who accrue up to 4,999 points; Gold, which features a point range from 5,000 to 14,999 points; and Platinum, which is for those whose points amount to 15,000 or more. “If they hit platinum level, they’re going to get real VIP perks,” she noted.

Attracting travelers

Preferred Hotel Group, which includes several sub brands led by Preferred Hotels & Resorts, kept all types of travelers in mind when developing the program. While Ueberroth believes it will definitely attract leisure travelers, “the reality is that if you look at who is acquiring points, it does tend to be more of a corporate traveler,” she said. “The leisure guest is probably more inclined to care about status levels than points. If you’re a road warrior, you can probably redeem, but if you’re somebody who’s not traveling 100 nights a year, it can be frustrating

to wait that long to redeem.” With the hard currency program, that guest can use the reward certificate for other outlets or toward his room rate. And reward certificates never expire. While points are unusable after a two-year period of inactivity, once converted into hard currency, the reward certificates have a unique code that never expires.

Hotel demand and competition also factored greatly into fueling the creation of a points-based system. “Every major chain has a points-based program, and that’s one of their biggest selling points,” Ueberroth pointed out. “On top of it, if you look at Starwood and Marriott, they’ve both gotten into the independent sector with the Luxury Collection and Autograph Collection. They’ve been starting to evolve into this independent world and they had points-based programs. Now, we are competing with chains, as well.”

But, with iPrefer, “a key point is we think that this now is a key differentiator and makes us a major alternative to hotels to come and work with us instead of a chain or becoming part of a chain,” she said. “We have great confidence that this is going to be a very successful program that is going to help independent hotels increase revenue and talk to a new client base that may not have been interested.”

She continued, “Hotels like it because it creates a new reason for them to talk to existing and new guests.” In fact, hotels have been the ones seeking the program out. “They’ve been asking for it, saying, ‘How can we evolve this program to compete better?’ It’s a great way for hotels to acquire new clients at a much lower price line than paying through OTAs. And then it rewards their most loyal customers,” she said.

Preferred Hotel Group, with 651 properties in its portfolio, will see the participation of 500 hotels around the

world when the new program launches.

Still, Ueberroth conceded, “It’s taken us a long time to get to this point, to have every hotel understand how this program is going to work.” But the program can be challenging, especially when Preferred doesn’t own or manage any of the properties. “It’s like having 651 children who all have different tastes and requirements,” she said. “A one-size-fits-all approach wouldn’t work for a global group of independent hotels.”

She maintained that this point of contention wasn’t necessarily a problem as much as it was an inspiration. In the end, it comes down to: “It’s more about timing than whether or not we’ll get the other hotels to participate,” she said. Ueberroth noted that, within 12 months, she expects all 651 properties will be on board. “My goal is 100% participation,” she said. She cites its success at launch as a strong indicator for what will spur the remaining hotels’ involvement.

In addition to an expected increase in revenue, member hotels should see additional benefits. “Hotels pay a much lower commission for guests that are coming through the iPrefer channels than if they were working through an OTA,” she explained, adding, “We’re trying to get more direct business.”

While Preferred Hotel Group has “spent about one million to launch the program this year and our plan is to spend that, if not more, on an annual basis,” according to Ueberroth, she believes the costs will pay off—enough to meet the “very conservative, realistic goal” of a 10% increase in revenue.

“Before, loyalty programs were really big drivers for hotels owners and management groups; they knew the power of loyalty programs. Now, this gives us a new edge against the chains,” Ueberroth concluded. **HB**

HotelNewsNow.com

July 2013

“Exploring the profitability of soft brands”

By Jason Q. Freed

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Exploring the profitability of soft brands

31 Jul 2013

Myriad options exist when choosing whether to franchise or remain independent and look for marketing support. A cost-benefit analysis is a critical step.

Highlights

- The trick is finding the right approach for each individual asset.
- Taking a hard look at the asset is the first step.
- Determining an ROI for the various options is complicated.

By Jason Q. Freed News Editor

GLOBAL REPORT—Hotel owners have an increasing amount of options when it comes to finding sponsorship and operating support. The surface-level decision of whether to become part of a franchise or remain independent is only the first step.

Several franchisors—realizing there is a significant amount of travelers who aren't looking for the cookie-cutter experience—in recent years have introduced quasi-brand options, such as Marriott International's Autograph Collection and Choice Hotels International's Ascend Collection.

However, the soft brand strategy has been an option for quite some time. Representation companies like Preferred Hotel Group and Leading Hotels of the World offer sales-and-marketing support for a fraction of the cost of flying a flag.

There are several factors to consider when making these difficult decisions. The trick, experts said, is finding the right approach for each individual asset.

"There is a right approach for each property. Maybe more than one," said Eva Hill, president of Britannia Pacific Properties, which recently deflagged a Palm Beach, Florida, hotel from the Ritz-Carlton system and chose to remain independent as the Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa. "In certain situations it makes sense to have a brand, and in this particular case, when faced with the fact that we're going to be running the hotel, we decided independent was the best alternative."

The Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa later joined the Preferred Hotels & Resorts collection.

"What we found appealing about Preferred is the company that they keep," Hill said. "They provide marketing and soft branding for a number of luxurious hotels. They provide the flexibility for hotels with unique selling points to be marketed as well as provide strong standards to minimum levels of service and quality.

"Preferred has expertise in other countries as well, which we thought would be beneficial."

Britannia Pacific is part of a parent company based in the United Kingdom that owns 20 hotels, including three in the U.S. Other than the Eau Palm Beach, Britannia owns and operates an independent luxury boutique that is not part of any collection and also a franchised and branded property.

Weighing options

Taking a hard look at the asset is the first step in determining the right fit, sources said. Location is important. Also key is evaluating the attributes of available brands in the particular segment and determining whether one would complement the asset.

In addition, owners and managers should identify the hotel's target traveler.

"It really does start with the owner and ownership and what their intent is," said Robert Van Ness, executive VP of the Americas at Preferred Hotel Group. "It depends what they want and how much they want to participate (in the operations)."

Van Ness said some owners look at hotels as real estate investments while others want to get their hands dirty and be involved in the hospitality component of the business. He said brands can limit the amount of creativity an owner can have.

"Not everyone wants to be told what to do and instead wants be more involved and more entrepreneurial," he said. "That's someone who might enjoy an affiliation and partnership as opposed to be hard-flagged."

Joining a large hotel franchisor does detract from a property's independence and dilutes creativity, said Philip Truelove, GM of The Greenwich Hotel, actor Robert De Niro's 88-room independent hotel in the Tribeca neighborhood of New York. The Greenwich is part of the Leading Hotels of the World collection.

When The Greenwich opened five years ago, Tribeca wasn't as popular a destination for travelers as it is today. Therefore, introducing an independent hotel to the market would be harder than it would be for a branded property, Truelove said. With a sales-and-marketing background, Truelove said he and De Niro wanted to "introduce our hotel and Tribeca to the whole world."

"We needed a support network to do that; we felt that we needed to put a standard on the hotel and introduce ourselves," he said. "While we certainly considered the other groups, I knew Leading Hotels and we felt it was a good fit. What it has done for us, as well as stamping a seal of approval and setting a certain standard, it also has opened a large sales-and-marketing world."

Data-driven decisions

Savvy hotel owners should use a cost-benefit analysis to determine the right fit for their property. On average, joining a soft brand tends to cost a bit less. Preferred, for example, charges 3.7% of rooms revenue, Van Ness said, while major hotels chains charge anywhere from 4% to 14%, [according to HVS's U.S. Hotel Franchise Fee Guide](#).

However, determining a return on investment for the various options is complicated.

According to data collected by STR Analytics, sister company of Hotel News Now, branded hotels in general report a higher occupancy, while independent hotels garner a higher average daily rate and revenue per available room.

STR Analytics recently evaluated a large sample of data from its HOST Almanac report regarding U.S. hotels (about 180,000 rooms) in the upper-upscale segment and was able to compare certain metrics for branded and independent properties. For the full year 2012, occupancy at the chain-affiliated hotels was 70.7%; ADR was \$140.89 and RevPAR was \$99.57. The independent sample reported 64.8% occupancy; \$171.91 ADR and \$111.47 RevPAR.

The chain-affiliated hotels reported spending 7.8% of their operating expense budget on marketing and an additional 3.4% on franchise fees. Independent hotels on average spent 7.1% of their operating expense budget on marketing fees and were able to avoid franchisee fees.

House profit (departmental expenses and operational expenses subtracted from revenue) at the chain-affiliated hotels was 31.9% compared with 30.4% at the independent properties.

STR Analytics' sample size of chain-affiliated hotels (163,262 rooms) was more robust than the independent sample size (22,117 rooms). Also, STR Analytics did not break out independent hotels affiliated with soft brands versus those that weren't.

"Independent hotels generally have lower occupancies since they lack the marketing power of brands, but they often compensate with higher ADRs," said Steve Hennis, director at STR Analytics. "However, different management approaches could have an even bigger effect than branding when comparing two hotels."

2012 key metrics: brand vs. independent		
	Branded upper upscale	Independent upper upscale
Sample size (# of rooms)	163,262	22,117
Total occupancy	70.7%	64.8%
Average rate	\$140.89	\$171.91
RevPAR	\$99.57	\$111.47
Total revenue	\$8 billion	\$1.4 billion
Revenue per occupied room	\$190.76	\$273.97
Total departmental expenses	\$3.1 billion (38.4%)	\$605.7 million (42.6%)
Total operating expenses	\$2.4 billion (29.7%)	\$383.2 million (27%)
- Marketing	\$626.3 million (7.8%)	\$100.7 million (7.1%)
- Franchise fees	\$273.13 million (3.4%)	\$0
House profit	\$2.6 billion (31.9%)	\$431.8 million (30.4%)

Source: STR Analytics (HOST)

"Chain properties are really taking a hard look at the ROI (of joining a brand) and determining what else is out there," Van Ness said. "Can I do better running this property as an independent? Owners are having more and more of those types of conversations."

Measuring ROI

When evaluating the ROI of each option, the most obvious measurement is how much demand is being driven through those particular channels.

Britannia's Hill said ownership will measure the value of joining Preferred by way of exposure through sales and booking channels. "And exposure in new markets—geographic as well as customer demographics," she said.

The fact that representation companies have strong ties to other travel associations, such as American Express Travel and Virtuoso, is a positive for sales-and-marketing efforts.

"The most obvious (measurement tool) is to see how many reservations are coming through the system," Truelove said. "We can measure how much traffic comes from their office and their website, especially from different parts of the world. Certainly every year we look at those numbers."

Van Ness said owners ultimately have the option of joining a brand that's going to tell them how to operate their property or—on the other end of the spectrum—just connect to travel agents through a global distribution system and hope to drive enough demand on their own.

Soft brands "fit nicely in the middle," he said. "Ours is much more of a partnership. Our fees are performance based, and our contracts are three to five years in length."

Hotels Magazine

February 2013

“HOTELS Exclusive: Preferred's hard currency loyalty program”

By Jeff Weinstein

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HOTELS Exclusive: Preferred's hard currency loyalty program

By Jeff Weinstein on 7/3/2013

On August 15, Preferred Hotel Group will launch an enhanced iPrefer loyalty program, which will allow its independent hotel members to access the benefits of a points-based system with hard currency rewards for its guests. Preferred believes the

program will reduce the cost of customer acquisition, encourage repeat business and drive incremental spend. An enhanced consumer-facing iPrefer website will launch in November.



In an exclusive HOTELS interview, Preferred President Lindsey Ueberroth stressed this program is a relaunch of an existing loyalty program with 1.3 million existing members, who will now earn one point per dollar spent on rooms. Hotels can elect to award points on resort fees, food and beverage, spa and other areas of guest spend.

Points can be redeemed for reward certificates with a hard currency value that can be used toward expenditures anywhere in a Preferred hotel, even if members are not staying at the hotel. Rewards certificates will be available in U.S. dollars, euros and British pounds in denominations of 50, 100, 250 and 500. Reward certificates are only valid for one transaction.

"It is more transparent, and it doesn't act to drag down the room rate," Ueberroth said. "It also gives member hotels another reason to communicate with existing and new guests."

There are no fees for members, and the program has a tiered status with thresholds for silver, gold and platinum members. For example, all iPrefer members receive complimentary Wi-Fi, early check-in and late checkout; Gold members get a complimentary welcome amenity; and Platinum members can accrue points faster.

Ueberroth said, not surprisingly, that Preferred is aiming for 100% participation among its member hotels, and is launching the enhanced program with 500 hotels —about 85% of its system. At the same time, she said she would like to see iPrefer membership double in the first year of this new program.

Participating hotels will pay an additional commission for reservations made with an iPrefer number, and the rate of commission varies by booking channel. For a price comparison, Preferred said the commissions charged for iPrefer bookings are significantly less expensive than a booking that would come from an OTA.

When a guest redeems a reward certificate, hotels enter that reward certificate number into the iPrefer system and are then reimbursed for that certificate in the form of cash value back from Preferred.

Ueberroth expects the program to lower and control the cost of customer acquisition, as guests will want to avoid using OTAs, where no points are rewarded. "Hotels have been asking for this for a long time," Ueberroth said. "It is a low-cost model, and Preferred is investing a lot of money on the technology and marketing. This year we will spend about US\$1 million on the technology, and on an ongoing basis, a lot will go toward marketing the program. We are the first independent group to do this, which positions us as a leader in the space."

Ueberroth also expects the program to drive substantial incremental income to member hotels and wants to see a 10% lift in the first year. "Corporate RFP season is coming, and we see more and more customers making this a key item," she added.

The new program is also expected to drive unit growth, as Ueberroth said having a points-based loyalty program helped convince four branded owners to switch flags to Preferred. "More owners are considering us as they see loyalty programs as cornerstones to business," she said.

Huffpost Travel
June 2013

“Hotels Offering LGBT Pride Packages”

By Emi Boscamp

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Hotels Offering LGBT Pride Packages

The Huffington Post | By Emi Boscamp

Posted: 06/26/2013 6:03 pm EDT | Updated: 06/26/2013 10:28 pm EDT

The Supreme Court of the United States issued an important pair of rulings today, effectively deeming unconstitutional the Defense of Marriage Act, a law from 1996 denying federal rights to married same-sex couples, and dismissing the appeal to Proposition 8, allowing same-sex marriage to resume in California.

So, where does one stay in order to celebrate this monumental day in history?

Many hotels are now offering special "pride packages" in honor of LGBT Pride (and not just in June!). Here are some to check out:

Preferred Hotel Group: The hotel collection's Preferred Pride program is in its third year with over 120 participating locations around the globe. This year's Preferred Pride package features the best available rate and a property-specific amenity, ranging from a massage to free WiFi and a bottle of wine. The package is available through December 31, 2013.

New York City

Out NYC: Unfortunately, its special Out NYC Pride Package, which included a nightly rate of \$399 (with a 3-night minimum), a "Nice Package" gift bag, and free WiFi, has already expired (it was available from June 20–25), but is still a great place to consider. As the self-described "straight-friendly" hotel, every day is LGBT Pride.

Ink48: The hotel has extended its Summer of Pride Weekend Offer --15% on best available rates from Thursdays through Sundays (including Pride weekend) -- through September 2! Plus receive a Pride welcome gift and two daily cocktails.

Millennium Broadway Hotel: This Pride Package -- 15% off its best nightly rates -- just sold out!

Morgans Hotel Group: The hotel collection is not only an official Pride NYC sponsor, but also a sponsor of Matinee New York, the Spanish import coming to Governors Island on June 23 and of one of the craziest parties of the year. Its special Pride rates (available June 15–26!) apply to all four hotels -- the Hudson, Mondrian, Morgans, and Royalton.

W Hotels New York: The "Primped and Pumped for Pride" package is (bummer alert!) already sold out, but included a suite at any of the New York locations (East Side, Downtown, Times Square and Union Square) starting at \$449, 2 complimentary cocktails, a week-long membership to David Barton Gym, in-room tanning, 2 VIP tickets to WORK! Party at Roseland Ballroom, and late check-out. However, due to

the chain's long-standing partnership with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the "HRC Pride 365" package is still available across the US and Canada. Aside from a great room, it includes: triple starpoints to use toward future stays, a one-year membership to the HRC, and a \$10 donation to HRC to support equality. In light of this morning's Supreme Court DOMA ruling, tonight W Hotels Worldwide is welcoming guests to their Living Rooms around the country to celebrate today's milestone court decision. Mention #WHRC, and a portion of all cocktail proceeds will benefit the HRC.

San Francisco

Joie de Vivre Hotels: 20% off best available rate available throughout 2013. Book with promo code PRIDESF.

CLIFT: From \$205 per night, it includes two complimentary signature cocktails in the Redwood Room. Be sure to mention the "Pride Rate" when booking.

W San Francisco: The "HRC Pride 365" package is available. See above "W Hotels New York" for description.

San Francisco Marriott Marquis: \$189 a night USD excluding taxes. Rooms have either one king bed or two double beds.

Hilton Hotels & Resorts: Enjoy high-speed Internet, one year-digital subscription to OUT, two welcome beverages, and late checkout at any of the five Hilton locations in the San Francisco Bay Area. According to Hotel Chatter, the Hilton in the Financial District is available for \$254 a night and the Union Square property is \$384, but the Fisherman's Wharf property is sold-out. Book by December 31, 2013.

Hotel Zetta: Receive an exclusive discount of 15% off the best available rate throughout 2013. Book using the promo code PRIDE.

Hotel Whitcomb: Prices start at \$209 and go up from there. For "pride" rates, call 1 (800) 227-4747.

The Handlery Union Square Hotel: Enjoy deluxe accommodations, free overnight parking for one car and two Grandstand tickets while supplies last.

Washington, D.C.

The Ritz-Carlton: The OUT in DC Pride Package includes: overnight deluxe room accommodations, a donation made in your honor to the HRC, two welcome cocktails, a Pride Weekend "Survival Kit", an American breakfast for two, overnight valet parking, complimentary internet and access to Sports Club/LA fitness center connected to the hotel. Rates start at \$354 a night and the package is available through August 31st.

Hilton Hotels & Resorts: Enjoy high-speed Internet, a free one-year digital subscription to OUT magazine, two free welcome beverages, and late checkout. Book by December 31, 2013.

Lodging Magazine

August 2013

“The Soft Sell”

By Megan Sullivan

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HOTEL'S TURF [PAGE 31]

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The Soft Sell

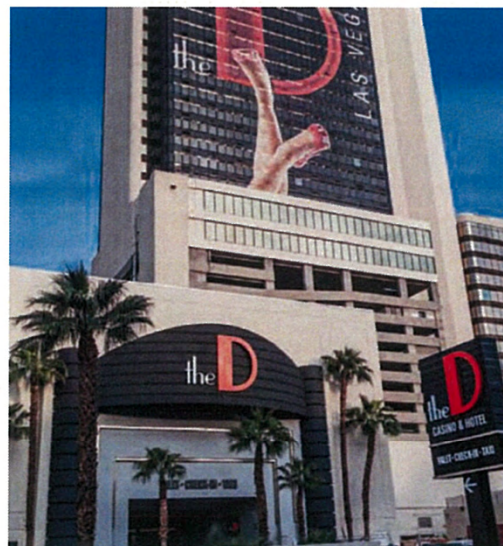
WITH SOFT BRANDING, INDEPENDENTS CAN ACT LIKE A CHAIN WHEN IT MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE **BY MEGAN SULLIVAN**

INDEPENDENT HOTELS ENJOY THEIR FREEDOM and individuality but the convenience and efficiency of robust systems and programs offered by major brands can be tempting. That's why many indy hoteliers are opting for the best of both worlds by becoming members of soft brand collections. Think of it like outsourcing. Companies like Preferred Hotel Group, Leading Hotels of the World, and Small Luxury Hotels of the World have an infrastructure in place to support hotels that want to maintain their independence while leveraging the expertise and support services of a global brand.

"We look at it as a partnership," says Lindsey Ueberroth, president of Preferred Hotel Group, which represents 650 properties. "It's our job to be an extension of what they're doing on property and be more consultative whereas with a hard chain it's very mandated, strict, and rigid."

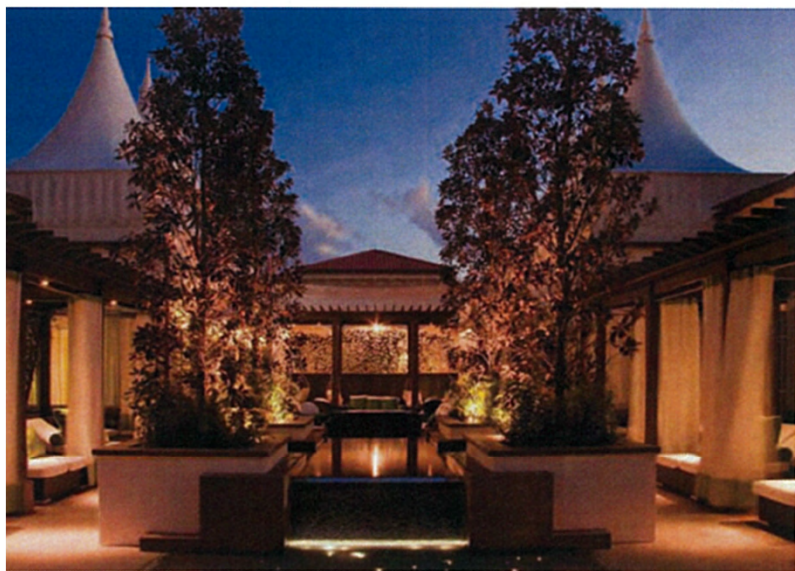
Hotels in soft brand partnerships may receive support with revenue management, reservation management, sales and

marketing, branding, rewards programs, quality assurance, and purchasing. Ueberroth says Preferred members are also attracted to flexible contract terms and lower fees. (The cost for a Preferred Hotel Group affiliation is 3.7 percent of gross rooms revenue and average contract length is five years.) To help members compete with larger chains, Preferred is launching an enhanced loyalty program this month that features a points-based system with hard currency rewards for guests. "It's changed the way we're able to compete with something that the hard flags have that we didn't have in the past," Ueberroth says. Meanwhile major hotel companies are trying to compete



BUSINESS PARTNERS

Lexington Legacy recently added the D Las Vegas (above) and the Eau Palm Beach Resort (right) joined Preferred Hotel Group in July after de-flagging from Ritz-Carlton.



OWNER'S MANUAL»»

with groups like Preferred by introducing their own soft brands. "I think the chains realized we were on to something—consumers really like the independent concept," Ueberroth says. In 2008, Choice introduced the Ascend Collection, a network for historic, boutique, and unique hotels that has reached 108 properties. Marriott has 46 independent luxury hotels in its Autograph Collection, which launched in 2010. "There's more competition in the marketplace," Ueberroth says. "It's reinforcing that there's a demand." Earlier this year, Red Lion added the Leo Hotel Collection and Vantage Hospitality Group launched the Lexington Legacy soft brand.

Successful soft brands complement a hotel operation without interfering with the direction of the ownership. Roger Bloss, president and CEO of Vantage, says that involves solid relationship communication between partners. "You have to really know the strengths and weaknesses of a property if you're going to soft brand it," he says.

The D Las Vegas Casino Hotel joined Lexington Legacy in April to reap the benefits of Vantage's global distribution, frequent traveler program, and back-of-house services. The new owners had recently completed a \$22 million renovation and rebranding of the former Fitzgeralds casino and hotel and wanted to expand its reach. At the same time, they wanted to maintain control of food and beverage and casino operations.

"They spent a large amount of investment dollars reinventing that hotel and introducing a new name, and that's what they want to have as their identity," Bloss says. "Yet they realize they're in the casino business not the hotel business. It was important for them to have a hotelier they could turn to."

When deciding between branded or independent, many hoteliers often express concerns about financing. Lenders like facts and figures, which Ueberroth says the chains have always been better at providing. By partnering with a soft brand company that has an established reputation, indy owners can demonstrate more credibility to lenders. "If you want to go independent but align with a company like ours," she says, "we're providing that seal of approval and global infrastructure that gives lending partners a lot more confidence."

The Wall Street Journal: Market Watch July 2013

“Beyond Disney World: 8 great family
getaways”

By Catey Hill

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July 10, 2013, 6:01 a.m. EDT

Beyond Disney World: 8 great family getaways

By Catey Hill

According to a recent survey by the Preferred Hotel Group, a consortium of 650 independent hotels and resorts, multigenerational travel—defined as a trip of parties belonging to three or more generations—is one of the biggest trends in the travel industry. Nearly 21 million Americans—40% of all U.S. leisure travelers—have taken a multigenerational trip in the last 12 months. Grandparents make up 26% of all leisure travelers in America, and a third of them had taken a multigenerational trip within the last year, the survey revealed.

The multigenerational trend is being driven by travelers like 65-year-old Christine Tibbetts, a journalist in Tifton, Ga. Tibbetts has six children, 13 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, and she's traveled with members of that pack to places as close by as Georgia's St. Simons Island, and as far-flung as Paris and Alaska.

While she admits that you "need flexibility" to make these kinds of trips work, she adds that traveling en masse is ultimately a rewarding experience. "Traveling together equalizes a family, puts us all on an even playing field," she says.

Hotels, resorts and travel agents are expanding their offerings for the multigenerational market. Nonprofit educational travel company Road Scholar began offering multigenerational trips in 2012 (before that, its family-oriented trips were intergenerational, limited to grandparents traveling with grandkids).

The company's new international destinations include Italy, Spain, France and the Galápagos Islands, with more being added this year. **A little over a year ago, Preferred Hotel Group launched PreferredFamily.com, a site dedicated to multigenerational travel where users can search and filter locations by the ages of family members, activities, amenities and interests.** Travel company Thomson Family Adventures launched a partnership with The Smithsonian in 2012 to create multigenerational adventures in Peru, China, Costa Rica and Panama, and plans to add more in the coming years.

This kind of travel isn't everybody's cup of tea, of course. It can be hard to coordinate the logistics of a trip with a big group, and traveling with that many people isn't cheap. It's often hard to agree on a destination, as not everyone's idea of fun involves Mickey and Minnie. Affluent boomers, after all, tend to be pretty well traveled, and are often looking for somewhere new or more culturally stimulating, but that kind of novelty often isn't a top priority for the school-age set.

With all this in mind, MarketWatch asked travel experts for their advice about destinations that are conducive to multigenerational travel, with activities and attractions that the whole family will be likely to enjoy. Some of the destinations we found are relatively accessible for U.S. travelers; others are a little more off the beaten path and out-of-the-ordinary. Here are eight of our favorites:

1. Alaska Cruise

Many vacationers have found that cruises offer a relatively inviting way to travel with the whole family. Parents can let their kids roam free on many ships, and there's usually a broad range of entertainment and excursion choices aimed at each age group. Often, grandparents can find ways to spend some quality one-on-one time with each grandkid, says Kim Orlando, the founder of travel website TravelingMom.com.



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Christine Tibbetts recommends a cruise to Alaska—she cites the scenery, which can encompass glaciers, whales and brown bears, and the excursions, which include salmon fishing and dog-sledding. Many cruises include viewings of Glacier Bay National Park, known for its striking glacier-carved terrain, roughly 70 species of mammals including grizzlies and lynx, and more than 250 species of birds; and visits to coastal cities like Juneau and Ketchikan. Passengers who are up for a longer excursion away from the ship can visit Denali National Park, home to Mount McKinley, the tallest mountain in North America.

When to go/what you'll pay: The most popular time to go is in the summer, but if you can stand a little nip in the air you can find better deals and fewer crowds in May and September. Seven-day cruises in September onboard Holland America and Royal Caribbean, two of the popular lines for Alaskan cruises, typically start at about \$600 or \$700 per person.

2. Turks & Caicos

Caribbean beach vacations typically offer activities for the active (think snorkeling or parasailing) and the sedentary (sunbathing!), and most major beach destinations have all-inclusive resorts that host entertainment for people of all ages. That, plus the fact that it's relatively close to the U.S., makes the region a draw for multigenerational travelers: In fact, 56% of people who were considering such travel reported an interest in visiting the Caribbean in the next two years, according to the Preferred Hotel Group survey.



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For those thinking about this kind of trip, Marcy Gelber, a travel agent based in Northbrook, Ill., recommends Turks & Caicos. Its beaches are some of the best in the area, she says, and it's typically less crowded than bigger destinations like Jamaica and the Bahamas. You could head to a resort that specializes in family trips: Gelber recommends the all-inclusive Beaches Turks & Caicos, which sits on a 12-mile-long beach, hosts a 45,000-square foot water park, and offers activities for the kids that range from an Xbox play lounge to a teen disco to Sesame Street characters on site. For a more private experience, Gelber suggests renting a house where the family can stay together.

When to go/what you'll pay: The high season for the Caribbean is from roughly mid-December through mid-April, so you can expect to find higher prices then. In November, late April and early May, the temperatures average between about 75 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit, and visitors can avoid the hottest summer temperatures while still scoring off-season deals. Beaches Turks &

Caicos is currently offering deals starting at \$319 per adult per night and \$54 per child per night. There are direct flights from the U.S.; from New York, the flight takes about three hours. Round-trip airfare from New York typically runs about \$450.

3. African Safari

The spectacle of a safari game drive, where tourists can catch a glimpse of Africa's "Big 5"—elephants, lions, leopards, buffalo and rhinos—can appeal to just about every age group. South Africa is one of the more popular safari destinations for families because it has a better infrastructure than many other African countries, says Lindsey Ueberroth, president of Preferred Hotel Group. Krüger National Park is probably the most popular South African park for safaris, but there are hundreds of other public areas and private game reserves that are less crowded.



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An increasing number of resorts and hotels in safari country cater to multigenerational travel, says Ueberroth. At Gondwana Game Reserve hotel in Mossel Bay, South Africa, for example, there's year-round Big 5 viewing and five-star cuisine, plus a "junior ranger program" that teaches children about African wildlife and nature, using sightseeing trips and other activities. The hotel also has children's menus and on-site baby sitting.

When to go/what you'll pay: Your best bet for a South African safari is between June and September, the Southern Hemisphere's winter, when it's not too hot and less likely to be rainy. (The lack of rain also means the trees are less leafy, which can make it easier to spot wildlife.) You can go on safari at a wide range of price points from a few hundred dollars to thousands per person per night. Airfare isn't typically included, and that can easily add more than \$1,000 per person to the cost. It also adds a couple of days to the trip: The flight from New York to Cape Town typically requires one stop and will take around 19 hours.

4. The Outer Banks

The Outer Banks, a series of long, narrow barrier islands off the coast of North Carolina, grace many publications' "best beaches" lists, and visitors here can quickly see why. You can drive for long stretches of the two-lane highway that bisects these islands and see only swaying sea oats, dark blue waters and windswept sand dunes. On the east side of the islands, the Atlantic Ocean has a steady but usually manageable surf; on the west side lie the calm waters of a variety of sounds and bays. Fishing is big here, and there are seven coastal golf courses, as well as kid-friendly activities like paddle boarding, horseback riding and private helicopter tours.



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Among the many towns in the Outer Banks where travelers can stay, TravelingMom.com's Orlando recommends Duck. In this town of just 500 year-round residents, the private beaches are wide and

great for seashell-hunting, and you can rent a large home right on the ocean, so “you basically own your own piece of the beach,” says Orlando.

When to go/what you’ll pay: Summer is the best time to go, especially if the grandkids will want to play in the ocean. Large beachfront homes in Duck run about \$3,000 and up for a week during the summer.

5. Argentina

Philippe Brown, the founder of custom travel company Brown + Hudson, says that he’s seeing more families booking multigenerational trips to Argentina. “Argentina is a great place for families because there’s lots of culture, a diverse landscape and a good infrastructure,” he explains.

Many families opt to start with the culinary, shopping and historic attractions of Buenos Aires. Many visitors check out the Recoleta (Evita Peron is buried in this old cemetery) and grab a steak (an Argentine specialty) at one of the many sidewalk cafes. Families then often switch gears and head to the Patagonia region, where they can fish and boat or ride horses over mountains and lush grassland terrain.



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When to go/what you’ll pay: While Patagonia is best seen in the Southern Hemisphere’s spring and summer months (November through April), the beginning and end of that period are the times it’s least likely to be hot in Buenos Aires. One of the best ways to tackle Argentina is by booking a custom guided tour. A 14-day trek through Argentina, which takes visitors to Buenos Aires, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego National Park and more, costs \$5,425 per person through travel company Journeys for Families. Round-trip airfare from New York to Buenos Aires—a roughly 10 hour flight—starts at around \$1,000 per person.

6. Glacier National Park

Families that like fresh air and wide-open spaces might gravitate toward Montana’s Glacier National Park, a million-plus acre park with more than 700 miles of hiking trails and 760 lakes. This trip “makes sense for every age group,” says Tibbetts. For the more adventurous, there’s hiking, horseback riding, river rafting and kayaking; for someone seeking something more serene, there are scenic boat cruises across alpine lakes, bird-watching, golfing and fishing.

It’s worth spending a day in the nearby town of Whitefish—a town with an Old West feel, where the main drag is lined with locally owned restaurants and shops—before driving up to the park itself. Tibbetts recommends renting a home that the whole family can stay in: “There are lodges in the park that were built in the early 1920s and ‘30s,” she says. “They’ll bring back memories for the eldest generation.” Families can also charter one of the park’s vintage 1930s red buses for a private tour of the park.



Tylerc083/Wikipedia

When to go/what you'll pay: Go between late May and early September when the temperatures are mild. There are dozens of options for accommodations, ranging from single hotel rooms to cabins; rates are very reasonable with many hotel or cabin rooms for under \$100 and even deluxe multi-bedroom accommodations for well under \$1,000 a night.

7. Costa Rica

Jim Kackley, the general manager of Thomson Family Adventures, says that Costa Rica is consistently one of the most-booked multigenerational destinations. It's a popular eco-tourism spot, offering a variety of terrain, including beaches and rain forest, as well as myriad activities that range from wildlife-watching to surfing to zip lining; it also has a reputation for being relatively safe.

Kackley recommends families visit the Tortuguero and Manuel Antonio national parks. In Tortuguero, you can take small boats through canals (an activity popular with older people and small children) or walk along the beaches; visitors can see a variety of exotic wildlife, including endangered sea turtles. Manuel Antonio, which boasts a lush rain forest and sits next to the Pacific Ocean, also caters to both the adventurous and less adventurous. It has a famous canopy zip line and quality surfing (it's a great place for a beginner to learn, says Kackley), and it hosts a variety of resorts, many of which have expansive white-sand beaches.



Jarno Gonzalez Zarraonandia/Shutterstock.com

When to go/what you'll pay: Costa Rica's dry season runs from December through April, and as you might expect, this tends to also be the priciest time to go, especially toward the Christmas holiday. To save money, go during the rainy season from May to November—it mostly rains in the afternoon, so there will be dry time during which to see the sights. The Arenas Del Mar Beachfront and Rainforest Resort in Manuel Antonio, which employs its own naturalist to guide visitors through the area, gets high ratings on FamilyVacationCritic.com and TripAdvisor.com; rates for an April trip can be found for under \$200 per night. Round-trip flights from New York to San Jose, Costa Rica's capital, start at about \$380 during the rainy season; the flight takes about five hours.

8. Paris

Sixty percent of people who were considering multigenerational travel reported an interest in visiting Europe in the next two years (the highest percentage for an international destination), according to the Preferred Hotel Group survey. One of the most popular European destinations for families is Paris, says Natasha Palmroth, the director of international program development for Road Scholar.

The attractions of Paris—shopping, museums, culinary delights—hardly need listing here. But now there are more family-focused guided trips, to help parents and grandparents entertain kids each day without exhausting themselves (or their patience); there are also more Parisian hotels catering to the entire family, with on-site baby-sitting and kid-friendly activities. One new Road Scholar trip, for example, offers a program that is geared



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for three generations, and includes tailored guided tours through Paris that include visits to big sites like the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower (where there's a behind-the-scenes tour), French language lessons and dinner with a Parisian host family.

When to go/what you'll pay: The best months to visit Paris are April and May or September and October, when the weather is relatively mild, and fewer tourists are in the streets. Most of the new multigenerational travel offerings are clustered in the more crowded summer months. The Road Scholar trip to Paris costs \$2,429 per adult and per child for travel for eight nights in July. Round-trip flights from New York to Paris start at about \$1,100.

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Travel+Leisure

June 2013

“Trip Doctor: Hotels Celebrate Supreme Court's Gay Marriage Rulings Just in Time for Pride”

By Peter Schlesinger

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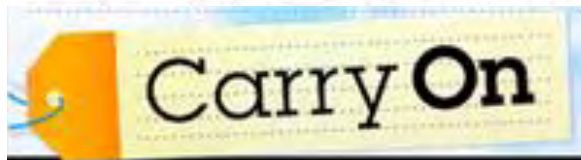
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06.26.13

Trip Doctor: Hotels Celebrate Supreme Court's Gay Marriage Rulings Just in Time for Pride

By Peter Schlesinger

Today's Supreme Court rulings—[striking down DOMA and essentially paving the way for same-sex marriage in California](#)—have helped make this Pride month prouder than ever. A number of hotels are sharing in the celebrations by offering special promotions geared for LGBT guests, their allies, and their causes.



Here, T+L takes a quick look at a few of them:

- The [JW Marriott San Francisco Union Square](#) has announced its “[Love is Love is Love](#)” package—featuring a dinner for two at Chef Ben Mattman’s Level III Restaurant, two custom-made, eco-friendly “Love is Love is Love” bathrobes (to keep!), and a one night stay at the hotel in downtown San Fran.
- Also in the City by the Bay, the [Mandarin Oriental, San Francisco](#) is welcoming partners (of all orientations) to proclaim their love with their [Proposal and Wedding packages](#). Guests making use of the proposal package are allowed access to the 40th floor skydeck for one hour at sunset, which can be decorated with roses. After the lucky ladies and lads (hopefully) say yes, the new fiancés can also receive a bottle of champagne and a couples massage at the hotel’s spa.
- [The Preferred Pride collection](#) is a group of 130 independent hotels and resorts that have either been specifically TAG-approved (an organization that selects gay-friendly properties) or joined the [International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association](#). Its Preferred Pride package ensures the best available room-rate, along with offering a property-specific amenity, such as as a bottle of Champagne, couples hydrotherapy treatments, or a river cruise down the Seine.
- Partnering with the [Human Rights Campaign](#) (the largest US organization devoted to LGBT equality), über-sceney [W hotel brand](#) now offers the [HRC Pride 365 package](#). It comes with a one year HRC membership, a \$10 donation to the HRC, and triple Starpoints for use on future stays. Plus an amazing room at any W hotel in the US and Canada of course.

Did we miss any?

Don't forget to check out [T+L's guide to Twin Cities Pride](#), as well as a roundup of other events this weekend.

Peter Schlesinger is a research assistant at Travel + Leisure and a member of the Trip Doctor News Team.