


Forbes

Small, But Mighty—How ‘I Prefer Hotel Rewards’ Program Adds Value Without Hassle



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Travel



Grand Hotel Tremezzo on Italy's Lake Como, a member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts since 2013.

Preferred Hotels & Resorts is well-known for its boutique luxury properties around the world including bucket list destinations like [Grand Hotel Tremezzo](#) on Italy's Lake Como, [Grand Velas Los Cabos](#) in Mexico, and [Wynn Las Vegas](#) and [Encore](#).

While its hotels often get the most attention, the *I Prefer* Hotel Rewards loyalty program has been growing its membership and property portfolio over the years. Jeri Salazar, vice president, loyalty for Preferred Hotels & Resorts, explains how a small program can still offer great value, especially for those not interested in counting points and searching for award space.



Jeri Salazar, vice president, loyalty for Preferred Hotels & Resorts | PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

How does *I Prefer* compare to a larger loyalty program and does it offer similar value?

I Prefer removes some of the hurdles for using points at luxury hotels because it's a much simpler program. There are no fine print stipulations, blackout dates, or dynamic award chart pricing to get caught up in like with bigger programs.

A big program aims to please a broad base of guests across multiple brands, from select service to luxury. *I Prefer* Hotel Rewards has a more defined member base

and a portfolio of more than 700 participating distinctive hotels, resorts, and residences across 85 countries. *I Prefer* offers the benefits of a robust points-based loyalty program without the formulaic approach of a larger one.



Dromoland Castle in County Clare, Ireland, a member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts since 2013. PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

Do members accrue and redeem points from I Prefer like other programs?

As the world's largest point-based program for independent hotels, it is focused on flexibility for members. Instead of redeeming a set amount of points for a free night, members redeem points for a cash-value reward certificate to use toward the room rate or other on-property expenses at any member hotel.

Members earn 10 points for every eligible dollar they spend at our hotels, unless they have Elite status, which provides 50% more points earning. This means they don't need to search for award availability. Members redeem points for certificates to use like cash at any hotel, on any night, at any rate when booked through Preferred Hotels & Resorts. A \$25 gift certificate, valid at any of our

hotels, costs 12,500 points; a \$250 gift certificate costs 125,000 points. There are several different monetary value certificates for which guests can use their points. This method takes away the need for standard room availability or other stipulations that come with larger programs.



The Biltmore Resort in Coral Gables, Florida joined Preferred Hotels & Resorts in June. PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

Do you have different status tiers in the program?

Yes, there are two: Insider and Elite. Insider benefits include priority early check-in and late check-out, complimentary room upgrades, and free Internet. New members start with Insider status the moment they join, which instantly unlocks those key benefits.

Elite tier-status members receive those benefits plus a welcome amenity and 50 percent bonus on points (15 points per eligible dollar spent rather than 10 points for Insider members).

To earn Elite status, members must earn 50,000 points within one year of your membership joining date. There are no minimum night or stay requirements.



Inns of Aurora in New York's Finger Lakes region PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

Due to Covid-19, did you extend point expiration and status for members?

We were among the first to extend the expiration of points and status as travel restrictions were put in place. Our [Flexible Member Rate](#) gives members at least 10% off their room rate when booking through the program, and we have noticed, during the last few months, that this member rate was the fastest to rebound. It seems our members are ready to travel again.



The new Hotel Effie Sandestin in South Walton, Florida is a member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts. PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

Domestic travel and “staycations” are especially popular this year. Can I Prefer members benefit?

Yes, we launched the “Loving Local” program, which comprises luxury hotel experiences across 21 regional markets. It is valid for bookings made by September 2, 2020 for stays of two nights or more through December 31, 2020 and comes with daily breakfast for two and a stay credit ranging from \$25-\$70 to use at the hotel.

Through this rate, members also get instant Elite status during their stay. This is a great way for members who have not yet achieved Elite status to sample the perks as well as receive 2,500 bonus points. For those that already have Elite status, we launched the Elite Platinum Offer, which gives Elite members extra benefits like daily breakfast for two and a resort credit of US\$100 per stay at more than 170 participating properties. This extra bonus is available through December 31, 2020 for *I Prefer* members booking through eligible channels.



Alma Resort in Cam Ranh, Vietnam joined Preferred Hotels & Resorts this year. ALMA RESORT

Where can I Prefer members redeem their points?

While it's been an incredibly trying year for all industries, we are seeing more independent hotels turning to Preferred and the *I Prefer* program. More than 30 member hotels have joined our global portfolio so far in 2020. These include the notable Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables, Florida and the soon-to-debut Montage Healdsburg in Sonoma County, California. There are more than 700 hotels in 85 countries.



The First Roma Dolce in Rome | PREFERRED HOTELS & RESORTS

Is there an option for those that want to travel now, but have complete privacy?

This year, we have placed an even greater focus on expanding our Preferred Residences collection, understanding the new travel landscape and travelers' desire to practice social distancing. This collection combines the space, privacy, and flexibility of a private home with the luxuries and convenience of a hotel stay. Making up approximately 100 properties across key resort and city-center destinations around the globe, they include beachfront bungalows, contemporary urban apartments, and countryside cottages where members can still earn and redeem *I Prefer* points.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ramseygubein/2020/07/26/small-but-mighty-how-i-prefer-hotel-rewards-program-adds-value-without-hassle/#74cd938974e1>