

# Are hotel buy-outs the next hottest trend?



With privacy and safety among the topmost considerations among travellers post pandemic, hotels are seeing opportunities in offering 'buy-outs' for entire floors or wings to capture the demand.

Kerry Healy, Chief Commercial Officer, Accor Southeast Asia, Japan & South Korea, said, "We are seeing an increase for hotel buy-outs with groups needing to isolate together for events, and who wish to enjoy a more exclusive holiday with their extended family or friends in a private environment."

Such demand already "existed in the past with ultra-wealthy guests, celebrities and royal families" who require top privacy, with resorts the likes of Raffles Maldives Meradhoo and Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua popular among this top-tier segments.

Post pandemic, Healy sees the trend picking up among "companies requesting buy-outs for their staff for events, or friends pooling their resources together to buy out a particular wing or floor of a property".

And while buy-outs used to be more commonplace at resorts, demand is now growing for city properties.

One recent booking was by ONE Esports for its Dota 2 Singapore Major between end March and early April. The entire group was hosted at Fairmont Singapore in a “travel bubble” with guests allowed to move about the hotel with a strict itinerary and in limited areas. The luxury hotel also hosted the Singapore leg of the HSBC Women's World Championship in end April.

Typical 'travel bubble' packages include private areas, food, butler service, activities for the children and more with flexible customisation, depending on needs, source market of the guests and the reason for buy out.



Agents are "crucial to the booking process" which is why Preferred Hotels & Resorts has opened a dedicated regional VIP desk for them, says VP of Global Sales, Carolyn Holmes.

## Crucial role of travel agents

At the end of June, Preferred Hotels & Resorts has rolled out the Where Next? Hotels Buy-Outs campaign, now offered by its 150-plus participating hotels including 22 in Asia Pacific.

The Preferred group has also opened a regional VIP Desk for the specific use of travel agents based in Asia Pacific, updating them with operational information to better respond to customer enquiries.

Travel agents continue to play a key role to play in securing hotel buy-outs and personalising requests for their wealthy clients, said Carolyn Holmes, Preferred's vice president of global sales – Asia Pacific.

“Bookings requiring multiple rooms can be complicated, and so the role of a travel agent is often crucial to the booking process,” she said.

Bookings through agents are commissionable at 12% and the Where Next? Hotels Buy-Outs campaign is valid until at least the end of the year.