

Business And Pleasure? Attracting (And Converting) The Bleisure Traveler

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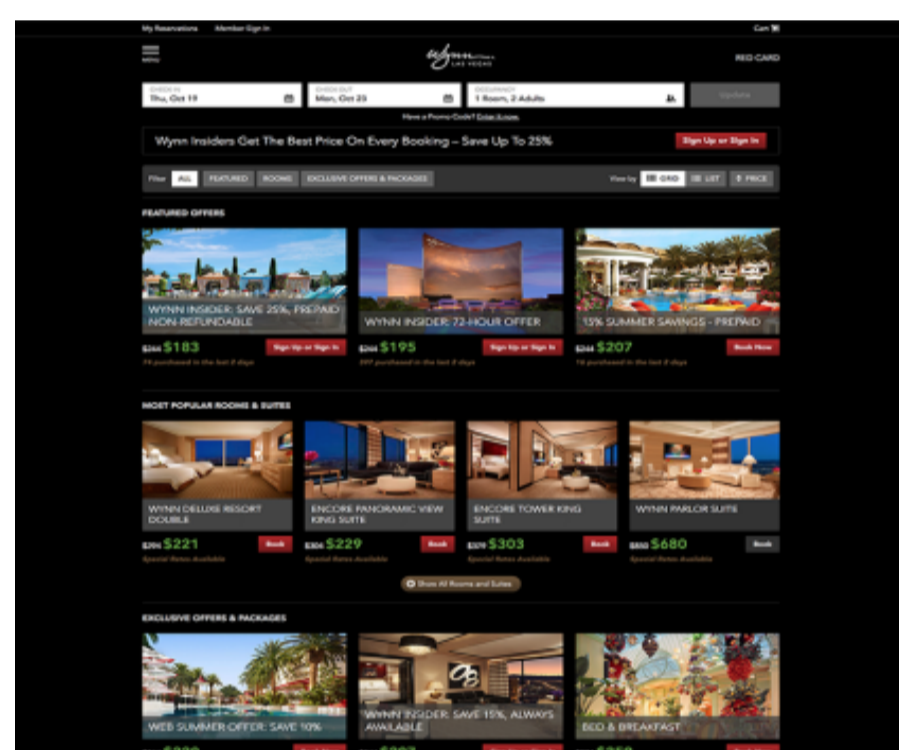


Natasha, 32, is going to her company’s annual tech conference in Florida, all expenses paid. Her husband is joining her, with the couple paying for and staying three extra days at the same hotel, adding a mini “cabana vacation.” Bob, 34, is being sent to attend a sales meeting in New York on a Friday, and has decided to hang around for the weekend to check out a Yankee’s game. Once considered uncommon, the **bleisure traveler**, a guest who blends business trips with their own personal leisure experience, is now more the rule than the exception, with an in-depth [study by Expedia](#) this year showing that a whopping 43% of all U.S. business trips are now bleisure trips. And the trend is steadily growing. [Travel Weekly’s 2016 Consumer Trends](#) reports the percentage of leisure trips that have a business component went from 11% in 2012, to 14% in 2015, jumping to 17 percent in 2016. How can your hotel benefit from this trend? First, you need to understand where this new traveler is coming from (logistically and mentally), and what matters to them.

How Does Bleisure Happen?

In the past, most business travelers were happy with chalking up big chain loyalty points, saving them for separate, dedicated vacations. Bleisures, however, like to chalk up experiences. One reason for this is that many of them, like our couple, are Millennials, the leading global demographic for spending—period. Another reason is that there are a huge number of people across all age groups, 60% according to the Expedia study, who do not take regular vacations anymore. These travelers find that blending business and pleasure is sometimes the only way—and a very attractive way—they can strike a better work-life balance.

An interesting [study out this year by Egencia](#), a leading global travel management company, uncovered some surprising facts about the decision-making process. Destination location was by far the biggest factor in determining whether or not to take a bleisure trip, with 30% of North American business travelers prioritizing this metric. Employer perception also played a part, though. Out of the 9,000 respondents, 20% said they had did not add leisure to their trips because of how it might look to their employer. Of those who did go for it, less than 2% globally billed back bleisure expenses to their companies. Considering that the majority of Millennials have reported feeling comfortable [planning entire vacations](#) on their phones, having matching flexibility in their work travel expectations has become a work perk for them. Smart employers who want to attract top talent are taking notice, and encouraging bleisure in the work place. Happy associates equals more productivity—and perhaps also less lengthy, traditional vacation absences.



Using Your Tech to Entice

According to the Expedia study, the path to booking is short at only 1-4 weeks, especially the inspiration and research stage. In addition, most researchers visit several websites, with event sites leading the search categories at 47%. Both of these facts mean that you need to get and use the most Responsive Booking Engine tech you can to make sure your potential guests understand that your hotel is in the hot spot they’ve been looking for, no matter what device they choose to explore on. Once the bleisures land on your site, having the **right features** in your booking software can make all the difference when it comes to personalizing guest offerings and standing out. One popular feature is *Add-Ons*. These are an easy way to boost revenue and improve your bleisure guests’ experience at the same time. Don’t overthink them, though, because they can consist of virtually any hotel-sponsored products, i.e. shuttles, bicycle rentals, special room prep, foods, etc., all geared to help them make the most of the event or experience they are planning their trip around. Also, utilize a feature like Persuasive Messaging, which shows strike-through pricing and immediate savings on-screen. Price is always an issue no matter how attractive the potential experience.

What happens when your guests find the perfect room and are on the threshold of clicking “book?” Just like blending business and leisure forms a powerful combination, **blending rates** can form a powerful tool to prevent booking abandonment, filling the gaps between rates with a master rate, so guests can continue to book on their preferred stay dates, with all of this blending done behind the scenes. Invisible and seamless to the guest, any promotion is simply blended into their selection to create one rate for the entire stay, allowing rate managers to create not only a more positive response, but one that reflects true room availability.

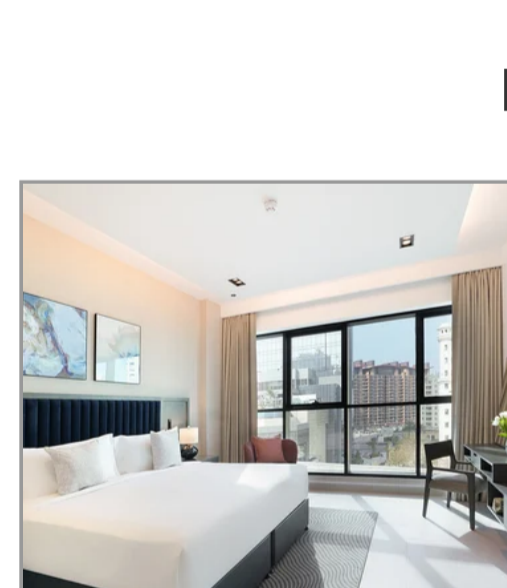
Assuring with Social Proof

Since bleisure travelers are all about the event or experience, they need solid social proof that your hotel and location can deliver. So, make sure you are using booking technology that is geared toward multiple, popular social sites when building your hotel brand. Instagram and Snapchat are taking center stage the world over now. Why? Because they are more video and image-based than any other platforms, and bleisure trips make excellent opportunities to generate highly coveted loves and likes, plus plenty of sharing. As proof of this, hospitality companies own some of the most popular pages, with TripAdvisor boasting 1.4 million Instagram followers and counting. In the very near future, you will even be able to **book a trip directly** from a business’s social account.

The Bottom Line

Fun fact? Bleisure trips are also a big 2018 resolution. According to the Egencia study, 37% of Asian business travelers, 25% of Europeans, and 20% of North Americans put it on their short list. Make it your resolution to get to know the bleisure traveler now to ride this growing trend to more and better bookings and brand-building for years to come.

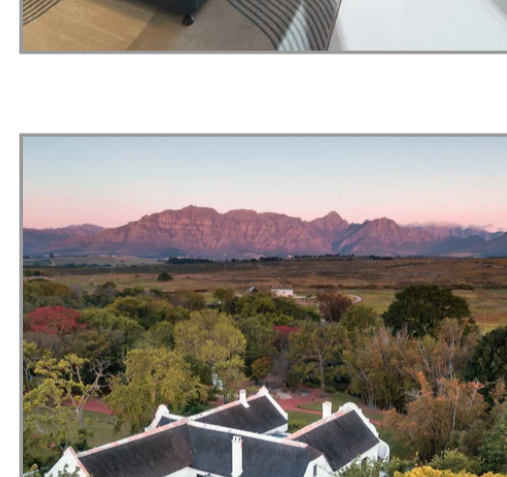
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