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Development

Hotels provide safer selfie spots

Long dismissed as a symptom of social media, the selfie has become big business for the hotel industry.

Most obviously are those hotels with stunning natural beauty, such as the Hotel Villa Honegg in Switzerland.

But even properties without such natural beauty have found a way to court selfie tourists. In 2014, the Mandarin Oriental in Paris launched a “Selfie in Paris” package tour of the French capital, costing more than \$1,135 per person.

The service featured a chauffeur-driven Mercedes tour around the French capital, with stops at the city’s biggest selfie spots.

In Athens, the hotel Grand Bretagne has even designated a “selfie spot” on its roof, with the Acropolis in the background.

The Marriot Desert Springs Resort in California – set in the middle of a National Park – offers guests hotel-branded selfie sticks.

Source: Esquire Middle East



Adrian Pelliccia

The hashtag #blueboathouse has tens of thousands of Instagram posts. Visitors line up along a narrow footpath waiting their turn at taking a photo or walk the jetty.

Social media can be ‘free’ promotion but there can be unintended expenses

Social media have quickly become a vital part of tourism promotion, but they can come with costs.

Here are four examples:

Toilet costs: \$400,000

The hashtag #blueboathouse has tens of thousands of Instagram posts and has turned a family’s 90-year old refurbished boathouse into a selfie sensation for Asian tourists visiting Perth, Australia.

The owner of the Crawley Edge Boatshed, Tom Nattrass, said his grandparents paid five pounds for the structure in 1944.

Malaysian tourist Casey Koo said she first saw the boathouse on a popular Chinese blog and traveled to Perth specifically to take a photo with it.

“The view is so perfect and it’s so relaxing and calm,” she said.

Edith Cowan University digital marketing researcher Violetta Wilk has used the boathouse as a case study for her research into online brand advocacy and organic social

media marketing.

“Hotspots like this tend to happen organically — trends arise in social media through the engagement, the likes, shares and comments,” Dr. Wilk said.

“We fuel those trends and they spread like wildfire on social media.” The City of Perth recently announced it would spend \$400,000 on a toilet block to cater to tourists visiting the nearby boathouse.

Dr. Wilk said it was a small price to pay for the tourism dollars it attracted to the state.

“This global destination brand awareness that’s being created by the blue boathouse is just priceless,” she said.

Shortcut costs: \$800,000

Red Rock Canyon visitor numbers have skyrocketed in recent years, topping 3 million in 2018. Before 2013, the Nevada attraction had never logged 2 million in a year.

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Unintended costs include road paving and rescues by first responders

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The area offers hiking trails and rock-climbing routes amid 3,000-foot (914-meter) red and white sandstone cliffs, shade-sheltered canyons with waterfalls, Native American petroglyphs and a geologic feature called the Keystone Thrust Fault.

Federal land managers are considering several ways to address overcrowding at the scenic natural area about a 30-minute drive from the Las Vegas Strip.

Entrance fee station upgrades, a dedicated entrance and exit for taxis and ride-hailing services and a cutoff road to return motorists to the visitor center without driving an entire 13-mile (21-kilometer) one-way loop are among options being studied, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported.

Crowds prompt closures of the 13-mile Scenic Drive almost every weekend when the weather is good, parking lots fill and traffic at fee gates backs up to state Route 159, Bureau of Land Management spokesman John Asselin said.

Officials say the proposed 2.5-mile (4-kilometer) shortcut would improve Scenic Drive traffic flow and provide better emergency vehicle access. The cost was estimated several years ago at about \$800,000.

Paving costs: \$400,000

Tourists interested in a tasty milkshake have an easier drive to Calder Dairy and Farm thanks to \$400,000 spent on paving a former gravel road leading to the attraction. Exeter Township, Mich., and Monroe County officials approved the expenditures to help the business

attract visitors.

Calder is a working farm, tourist attraction and one of the few dairies in the country that still home delivers, said Exeter Supervisor Bob Queen. He said many visitors to the ice cream store are glad to see the gravel road upgraded.

“It was in pretty bad shape,” Queen said. “This is one of the biggest attractions and a destination point for a lot of tourists. This was a long-needed improvement.”

Matt Zook, executive director of the tourism bureau, said agriculture-tourism is one of the key components that draws people to the county.

Rescues: \$100,000 each

Caretakers for beautiful locales, like Tamolitch Falls (Blue Pool) in Oregon, struggle to maintain safety and pristine landscapes with flocks of people seeking their “Instagram moment”.

“It has been a social media frenzy for a couple of years,” said Christiana Rainbow Plews, chief of the Upper McKenzie Rural Fire Protection District in Blue River.

In the real world, Blue Pool’s

popularity creates headaches for search and rescue teams, other emergency responders and trail managers. Plews’ district is the closest to the remote destination in the Willamette National Forest. More than 1,000 visitors will swarm the pool on a hot day.

More visitors means more rescues.

There’s already been three rescues since March, said Lt. Zach Lincoln of the Sweet Home Fire & Ambulance District, which also responds regularly to rescue calls at Blue Pool. The district responded to three rescues in 2017 and five in 2018. Rescues are usually successful, but in recent years there have been two deaths.

Agencies didn’t readily have rescue costs available.

But each individual rescue is expensive, with about five agencies typically sharing the costs of a combined response.

“I would definitely say upwards of \$100,000 (per rescue),” said Lincoln, the Sweet Home Fire official.

Sources: abc.net.au/news, AP via ctpost.com, dailyreporter.com, registerguard.com.



Some people promote Blue Pool as a place for cliff jumping and swimming. Visitors often hike in wearing flip flops and carrying floaties — not prepared for the ruggedness of the trail and surroundings of the pool.