



The Fullerton Hotel Singapore runs year-long room packages for stays on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays at rates that are only available to Singapore residents. PHOTO: FULLERTONHOTEL.SINGAPORE

Some hotels are going the extra mile to make staycations enjoyable for locals

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SINGAPORE—Early this year, Mr Shawn Chan of Wanderlust hotel spent almost two days buying roses and balloons, and going online to learn how to make swan-shaped napkins from video tutorials uploaded on YouTube. All this, to help a Singaporean guest create the perfect surprise wedding proposal.

As staycations become increasingly popular among locals, some hotels here are making extra effort to meet their needs — which differ from those of the typical tourist or business traveller — such as with special concierge services like Mr Chan's, or special weekend promotional rates offered only to residents here.

According to the results of the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore for the third quarter released last month, the tourism sector scored a high of 74.5 points — a significant improvement from 70 points last year. The score for the hotels sub-sector improved from 70.1 points last year to 77.5 points this year. However, locals were found to be less satisfied compared with tourists, who gave the tourism sector a score of 80.1 points, while the score from locals was 71.5 points. The survey is done by the Institute of Service Excellence at the Singapore Management University.

Assistant Professor of Marketing (Practice) and ISES Academic Director Marcus Lee said of the results: "While tourist satisfaction has improved year-on-year, businesses should strive to keep up with the ever-

'A UNIQUE CONCEPT'

A memorable holiday in their own backyard

evolving expectations of their target customers, regardless whether they are residents or overseas visitors."

Unlike tourists who are here to explore the country, staycationers TODAY spoke to said they spend more time in the hotel to escape from the humdrum of daily life. The occasions cited for staycations ranged from birthday celebrations to wedding proposals and anniversaries.

Marketing analyst Lim Jau Jiin, 34, said she looks for a "unique concept" when considering staycation options. Recalling her stay at Capella Singapore, she said: "We could view the outside greenery from the rooms which were spacious. It took us away from the busy life ... and the minimalistic design was luxurious but in an understated way."

The size of the rooms was also a recurring point brought up by customers TODAY spoke to. Mr Soo Jun Zon, 21, a full-time National Serviceman, said spacious rooms like those offered at Capella Singapore would be appropriate for large parties. "Alternatively, if I wanted to hang out with only a few of my friends, I prefer M Hotel for its cool loft-style room design," he said. Others mentioned features such as pillow menus, beds, room designs and architecture as plus points.

For 29-year-old pastor Felicia Ong, the two-day-one-night staycation on Aug 9 this year was a time to "relax and soak in the National Day Parade

festivities" with her husband. "We decided on Fullerton Bay because it had a guaranteed fireworks view," she added. The National Day-themed box of chocolates and food provided a nice touch, while the Bvlgari toiletries made her feel especially "pampered".

Hotels TODAY contacted said they have seen a rise in the number of locals booking rooms in their hotels. Occasions such as Christmas, Valentine's Day and National Day have encouraged more locals to check into hotels like The Fullerton Hotel Singapore and The Fullerton Bay Hotel Singapore, said Mr Giovanni Viterale, General Manager of The Fullerton Heritage group. "At our strategic locations, our hotels have amazing, unobstructed views of the Marina Bay fireworks on several of these occasions," he added.

The Fullerton Hotel Singapore runs year-long room packages for stays on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays at rates that are only available to Singapore residents. For example, the hotel offers a "Weekend Escape" Room package at S\$318++ including a dining credit of S\$88 nett daily for locals. In comparison, for all other guests, the hotel offers a similar "Weekend Special" Room package priced at S\$358, and does not offer dining credit.

Similarly, The Club Hotel runs a "Weekend Staycation" promotion offering its Club rooms at S\$210++ and Signature rooms at S\$240++ for Sin-

*** CSISG 2013 Q3: WHAT CUSTOMERS CARE ABOUT AT HOTELS**

- Ease of getting to the hotel
- Check-in process
- Staff courtesy
- Directions clarity
- Cleanliness

SOURCE: ISES

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Ms Lim Jau Jiin
 MARKETING ANALYST,
 RECALLING HER STAY AT
 CAPELLA SINGAPORE

gaporeans and permanent residents.

At Wanderlust hotel, local guests made up just 20 per cent of its guests in 2010; this rose to 70 per cent this year. Local and foreign guests, they noted, have different needs and the hotel does its best to cater to them creatively.

For example, last year, one of its Guest Ambassadors brought a German guest who wanted to learn to cook a local dish to the home of a friend's aunt. They spent the day learning how to cook herbal chicken in a claypot. "How much more authentic can you get with cooking at a local's house? The things we do for our guests can be quite funny sometimes," said Ms Mae Noor, Head of Branding of Communications for Unlisted Collection, which manages the hotel.

In contrast, requests from locals often involve decorating the rooms for special occasions like birthdays, which Mr Chan, one of the Guest Ambassadors at Wanderlust, takes charge of. The hotel charges a fee of S\$20 for the service, on top of costs incurred from the decorations. Said Ms Mae: "We don't mind doing little things like learning (how to make) swans out of napkins or buying balloons for our guests ... what's important is they remember the experience and they remember us."

This report is a collaborative project between TODAY and the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore.