

BW To Roll Out "Virtual Tours"

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BEST WESTERN TO ROLL OUT 360-DEGREE "VIRTUAL TOURS" FOR 2,400 NORTH AMERICAN HOTELS ON BESTWESTERN.COM

All U.S., Canadian and Caribbean properties to Include Online Feature by Q2 2006

Best Western International, the world's largest hotel chain, has launched a comprehensive initiative to roll out 360-degree "virtual tours" for each of its 2,400 North American properties by next spring.

In time for the 2006 summer travel season, consumers booking at www.bestwestern.com will be able to view five distinct virtual tours for every Best Western hotel in the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean. Each property will feature a 360-degree display of the hotel's exterior, a standard guest room, and a deluxe room/suite, in addition to two other areas representative of the property, such as a pool, meeting room or restaurant.

Best Western's extensive investment in this virtual tour initiative, which will take approximately 10-to-11 months to complete, signals the growing importance of visuals — still photos or video — as a factor in the decision-making process for consumers booking travel online. According to research by Yesawich, Pepperrine, Brown & Russell and Yankelovich Partners, 57 percent of leisure travelers and 46 percent of business travelers called virtual tours on a hotel Web site "a very desirable feature." **Further, according to research by DoubleClick, rich media or virtual tours generate 46 percent more sales (bookings) than still images.**

"With nearly half of our bookings originating online, it's critical that we provide consumers with the information and images they need and want to make decisions," said David Kong, president and CEO for Best Western International. "Our research clearly indicates that detailed visuals, depicting the specific features and amenities that define a property, play a key role in the booking process."

The move to virtual tours also provides the hotel chain with another means by which to capitalize on the growth in online reservations. In the last year, bookings on the company's Web site alone have risen nearly 48 percent. On average, the site has been booking \$1 million in revenue per day for Best Western since January 2005.

"We expect the virtual tour feature to provide us with a distinct advantage in the mid-scale market," said Kong, "and to propel the growth of our online revenue even further."

The project, which will involve a team of nearly 75, is expected to take 24,000-plus hours to complete. Production crews will travel more than 350,000 miles gathering in excess of 12,000 virtual tour images.

In addition to the 360-degree virtual tours, Best Western will add eight new still shots per property to its Web site - a combination of interior and exterior photographs. Other enhancements made to bestwestern.com this year include the addition of translated content into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages.

About Best Western International

Best Western International is THE WORLD'S LARGEST HOTEL CHAIN® with more than 4,100 hotels in 80 countries and territories. It is a membership association of independently owned and operated hotels that provides marketing, reservations and operational support to its members. For more information, please visit: www.bestwestern.com.