

Independent Hoteliers Find New Solutions in Tough Times

50 more hotels turn to Stash Rewards for technology, marketing scale, and true independence

Dec. 1, 2011 – It's a tough time for independent hotels. The anemic recovery may just have stalled. Lenders won't return phone calls. Competing for frequent travelers has never been tougher, as big brands creep into the independent's backyard with new mass-produced boutiques like Aloft and Indigo. It's enough to keep an independent hotelier up at night. And there may be reason for that insomnia. Hotel broker Atlas Hospitality estimates independents represent 71% of the California hotels in foreclosure.

So what's an independent hotelier to do? Throw in the towel? A few have, joining the "boutique collections" of big chains. Yet far more are sticking it out. Many of those stalwarts report that new solutions have emerged to help independents fill rooms and compete with the chains. For Lisa Koester, director of sales and marketing at Napa River Inn, one such solution is Stash Hotel Rewards. "Stash did something that we've all been talking about, trying to figure out for years. They connected independent hotels with a points program. It's genius."

Just 18 months old, Stash has already become the largest independent hotel loyalty program in the United States. And it's getting bigger. Fast. In the past 6 months, 50 more hotels joined the network, with 167 hotels throughout the United States and the Caribbean now participating in the program. In the last month alone, 18 hotels joined Stash—more than 1 new hotel every 2 days.

What's driving this rapid adoption? Stash partner hotels report the program increases bookings and guest frequency. Denihan Hospitality Group, with six of its Affinia hotels in Stash, analyzed the behavior of their repeat guests. Prior to joining Stash, those guests stayed 2.8 times a year. After enrolling in Stash, they stayed 3.3 times a year, an increase in frequency of nearly 20%. "Enrolling guests in Stash can mean the difference between seeing them 3 times a year instead of just twice," said John Moser, Chief Brand & Marketing Officer, Denihan Hospitality Group.

Hoteliers joining Stash also say they find the program's flexibility, low cost, and minimal commitment appealing...and a significant departure from joining a chain. Brigitte Breitenbach, co-owner of Milwaukee's The Iron Horse Hotel, said her hotel was heavily courted by the big brands. "The overriding issue with the chain programs was cost," said Breitenbach. "The idea of giving 6-7% on rooms we would have sold anyway didn't make a lot of sense."

The chain's marketing and operational guidelines were also a concern. Breitenbach wondered if The Iron Horse Hotel's edgy style—with its motorcycle rentals and special places to hang helmets and leathers—would survive under a chain. She didn't have those concerns with Stash. "Stash is subtle in its branding," said Breitenbach. "It's like a seal of approval versus the chain boutique brands which are more overarching, like joining a big conglomerate."

This latest wave of new partners opens the door for Stash members to earn and redeem points in 29 new destinations, including Honolulu, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Houston, Brooklyn, Nashville, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Newport, RI. New Stash partners range from Viceroy Miami—a chic high-rise with a Philippe Starck-designed spa, to Hidden Pond—a collection of plush Kennebunkport cottages, to The Strand Hotel—with a glassed-in rooftop terrace and a stunning view of New York's Empire State Building.

New Stash partner hotels include some of the most-loved hotels by travelers, with an extraordinarily high average TripAdvisor recommend rating of 86%. Many rank #1 in their markets, including Glidden House (Cleveland), Iron Horse Hotel (Milwaukee), Hotel Murano (Tacoma), John Ascuaga's Nugget Casino Resort (Sparks, NV), The Hotel Veritas (Cambridge, MA), Delamar Greenwich Harbor (Greenwich, CT), The Lodge at Woodloch (Hawley, PA), and The Olde Mill Inn (Basking Ridge, NJ).

Travelers can join Stash for free at www.stashrewards.com. Stash members earn 5 points for each dollar spent on eligible room rates and can redeem them at great independent hotels across North America, including the Caribbean and Hawaii. Stash points never expire, and redemption is simple, without blackout dates or category restrictions found in many chain programs. Stash partner hotels also provide members with exclusive travel deals.

The complete list of recently-added Stash partners includes:

Arbor Inn and Suites, <i>Lubbock, TX</i>	NU Hotel, <i>Brooklyn, NY</i>
The Beacon South Beach Hotel, <i>Miami Beach, FL</i>	Old Fort Inn & Resort, <i>Kennebunkport, ME</i>
Capitol Hill Suites, <i>Washington, DC</i>	Park South Hotel, <i>New York, NY</i>
Delamar Greenwich Harbor, <i>Greenwich, CT</i>	Pequot Hotel, <i>Oak Bluffs, MA</i>
Duane Street Hotel, <i>New York, NY</i>	PruneYard Plaza Hotel, <i>Campbell, CA</i>
Edgewater South Beach, <i>Miami Beach, FL</i>	Royal Sonesta New Orleans, <i>New Orleans, LA</i>
Gateway Canyons Resort, <i>Gateway, CO</i>	Sugar Bay Resort and Spa, <i>St. Thomas, USVI</i>
Glasbern Country Inn, <i>Fogelsville, PA</i>	The Buccaneer Hotel, <i>St. Croix, USVI</i>
Glidden House, <i>Cleveland, OH</i>	The Chase Park Plaza, <i>St. Louis, MO</i>
Hidden Pond, <i>Kennebunkport, ME</i>	The Cottages at Cabot Cove, <i>Kennebunkport, ME</i>
Hotel deLuxe, <i>Portland, OR</i>	The Hotel Veritas, <i>Cambridge, MA</i>
Hotel Lucia, <i>Portland, OR</i>	The Hotel Wilshire, <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>
Hotel Max, <i>Seattle, WA</i>	The Independent, <i>Philadelphia, PA</i>
Hotel Monteleone, <i>New Orleans, LA</i>	The Iron Horse Hotel, <i>Milwaukee, WI</i>
Hotel Murano, <i>Tacoma, WA</i>	The Island Inn at 123 West, <i>Friday Harbor, WA</i>
Hotel Preston, <i>Nashville, TN</i>	The Kennebunkport Inn, <i>Kennebunkport, ME</i>
Inn at St. Mary's, <i>South Bend, IN</i>	The Lodge at Woodloch, <i>Hawley, PA</i>
Inn at the Black Olive, <i>Baltimore, MD</i>	The MAve, <i>New York, NY</i>
Inn Marin, <i>Novato, CA</i>	The Modern Honolulu, <i>Honolulu, HI</i>
Jailhouse Inn, <i>Newport, RI</i>	The Olde Mill Inn, <i>Basking Ridge, NJ</i>
Jekyll Island Club Hotel, <i>Jekyll Island, GA</i>	The Strand Hotel, <i>New York, NY</i>
John Ascuaga's Nugget Casino Resort, <i>Sparks, NV</i>	The Tides Beach Club, <i>Kennebunkport, ME</i>
Modern B & B, <i>Houston, TX</i>	University Hotel Minneapolis, <i>Minneapolis, MN</i>
Moonrise Hotel, <i>St. Louis, MO</i>	Viceroy Miami, <i>Miami, FL</i>
Napa River Inn, <i>Napa, CA</i>	Woodcliff Hotel & Spa, <i>Fairport, NY</i>

Hotels interested in partnering with Stash can contact partner@stashrewards.com.

About Stash Hotel Rewards

Stash Hotel Rewards frees travelers from the uninspired offerings of existing hotel reward programs by making it easy to break free from big, bland hotel chains and stay at amazing hotels. Stash was founded on a belief in the happiness-producing power of traveling to places that convey a unique and interesting story – places with soul. It's a belief that is shared with the independent hoteliers and the independently-minded travelers the company was created to serve. Launched in May 2010, Stash was founded by a team of travel and e-commerce veterans from Expedia, Amazon, Microsoft, and Zillow.

Stash is headquartered in Palo Alto with offices in Seattle and Miami. Travelers can easily sign up for a free account at www.stashrewards.com.

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