

## Web Hosts

From cryptocurrency to NFTs, hotels are opening their doors to the new digital landscape

By Jillian Dara

Illustration by Michał Bednarski

**▶** **THOUGH 2022 WITNESSED** breakdowns within the crypto market, a number of hotels stand by it, recognizing that it attracts a younger demographic. Still, experts recommend caution. “If hotels are accepting cryptocurrency, it’s important that they understand how to keep funds safe,” says Cameron Thompson, a reporter for *CoinDesk*. “This is an industrywide takeaway from the collapse of FTX.”

Brands are taking numerous approaches to the digital landscape. In 2021, The Kessler Collection was the first U.S. luxury group to accept cryptocurrency as payment. Last November, InterContinental Hotels

& Resorts entered the metaverse in partnership with British contemporary artist Claire Luxton to launch its first collection of 10 exclusive NFTs that contain luxury travel benefits. Around the same time, Marriott International reintroduced its second Power of Travel campaign, partnering with digital artists to create NFTs and awarding purchasers 200,000 Marriott Bonvoy reward points. “We are continuously seeking opportunities to connect with travelers in new ways,” says Nicolette Harper, vice president of global marketing and media at Marriott International. “With our entry into the digital goods space, we are ▶



further igniting travel and sharing that message with our newest generation of travelers.”

The Dolder Grand in Zurich is also seeing success from integrating cryptocurrency into its hospitality program to attract a younger demographic. Dolder Hotel AG managing director André Meier says that through cryptocurrency, the resort has seen an increased number of bookings for its top suites, going for as much as \$15,600 per night. “To stay on top of market trends and drive business to the hotel, we’ve partnered with other service providers who accept cryptocurrency, such as BitLux, a private jet charter from the U.S. We’ve also noticed that guests who book their entire stay using cryptocurrency are below the age of 40.”

Meanwhile, Rosewood London brought a modern twist to British afternoon tea when it launched an NFTea for its Mirror Room Art Afternoon Tea. “This activation has not only kept our loyal guests revisiting us, but has also raised awareness among a younger demographic,” says Amelia Harper, Rose-

**FROM TOP:** Artist Claire Luxton, here with one of her pieces, has partnered with InterContinental Hotels & Resorts to create exclusive NFTs; Rosewood London has launched an NFTea



wood London’s director of communications. “This demographic will make up the majority of the luxury sector by 2030, so it is vital to attract them now for the future success of Rosewood London.”

Indeed, as younger consumers seek out luxury experiences and accommodations, cryptocurrency has become part of this redefinition. “We compare it to accepting the Black American Express Card in the 2000s,” says Brice Jones, cofounder and CEO of Freehold Hospitality.

Though uncertainty still surrounds the crypto market, Thompson says it’s important to contextualize the moment: “We’re out of lockdown, and people are eager to travel. While much of blockchain and cryptocurrency focuses on digital worlds, it’s exciting to see projects that bring real-world cases to Web3.”

Jones agrees. “Everyone is committed to the long haul and understands there are growing issues in this budding industry. From a hospitality perspective, we do not just attach to trends to be in vogue but, rather, commit to endeavors we believe in. We stick with it through the downturns.”

#### PODCAST

### ***Other People’s Pockets*** (out now)



• A former reporter who covered police misconduct, Maya Lau is turning her attention to a topic that’s a bit lighter—yet still quite juicy: other people’s finances. In her new podcast, she interviews folks from all economic walks of life and asks them to get “radically transparent” about their wallets, from how much money they make to how they got where they are today. If you’re the kind of person who spends too much time obsessing over how your friends can afford their steep rent, this podcast is certain to scratch that itch.

#### BOOK

### ***Magic Words: What to Say to Get Your Way*** by Jonah Berger

(March 7)



• A marketing professor, Berger has written books on subjects such as the forces that shape human behavior. For his latest, he’s researching the science of language and the ways certain words can help us be more creative, build better relationships and more. How do lawyers win over jurors? What makes a teacher effective? Berger is pulling back the curtain on such topics as machine learning and computational linguistics. —NICHOLAS DERENZO

TOP: COURTESY OF INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS & RESORTS; BOTTOM: DURSTON SAYLOR