



Seattle's Convention and Visitors Bureau

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News Release

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SEATTLE CVB BREAKS NEW GROUND WITH ONLINE BOOKING ENGINE Customers, Hoteliers Demand Year-Around Alternative to Web Bookers

SEATTLE – Seattle's Convention & Visitors Bureau (SCVB) announced today that its popular Seattle Super Saver hotel booking program has been extended through October 31, 2004. This extension was unanimously endorsed by the Seattle Hotel Association as a result of greater than expected room night production via its newly created online booking engine, seattlesupersaver.com. Last fall, SCVB launched the first of its kind online booking engine allowing for "real time" reservations via the internet for 48 downtown Seattle hotels. This technology was developed by SCVB in conjunction with the Seattle Hotel Association. No other convention and visitors bureau in the U.S. provides this type of alternative to the mega online booking companies such as Expedia, Orbitz and Travelocity for its members.

Seattle Super Saver was created 13 years ago to increase visits to the city during the traditionally slower months of November through March. In recent years, as consumers shifted to booking online, Seattle Super Saver experienced new competition during these months. In addition to the creation of the online booking engine, SCVB partnered with the hotel community to provide a package of benefits and services that the other online booking companies couldn't match. These included a meet-or-beat rate guarantee, best available room at time of check-in, great rates on suites, no pre-payment or cancellation fee for reservation changes.

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Through mid-March, the program has produced nearly 20,000 room nights for the participating hotels and more than \$2 million in revenue.

“Although most of the hotels in Seattle participate in several National programs, Seattle Super Saver has proven to be the favorite of travelers within our Pacific Northwest Region,” said Nancy Finch, Chair of the Seattle Hotel Association. “The Seattle Hotel Association's partnership in Super Saver is unique - a true win-win for everyone in the Puget Sound Area.”

Of particular cause for celebration is the achievement of a critical 20 percent share shift from call center to web site bookings, firmly establishing www.seattlesupersaver.com as a competitive online booking service guaranteeing the best available rates on Seattle hotels. Since the season began in November, roughly 60 percent of bookings have come from the Seattle Super Saver web site, representing 10,000 room nights and a record \$1 million in hotel revenue. Comparatively, 40 percent of bookings, or 7,000 room nights, have been made via the toll-free call center.

The upgrades have been a hit with program users. SCVB and Seattle-based GoTech conducted a customer satisfaction survey of 2,300 Seattle Super Saver past users in mid-March, garnering a 23 percent response rate. Respondents rated highly the program's primary features: a meet-or-beat rate guarantee; no pre-payment; no booking or hidden fees; no cancellation fees (up to 24 hours); and best available room offered at check-in. These distinctive program features will be retained while less popular features such as the honoring of hotel loyalty points will be dropped from the program. Also, according to customer demand, Seattle Super Saver's room inventory will expand beyond downtown Seattle to offer bookings at hotels in the University District, East Side, Sea-Tac and elsewhere. A foundation of some 40 properties in the program this month is expected to grow steadily through the spring and summer of 2004.

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“Our program is small compared to behemoth online bookers such as Expedia, Travelocity and Orbitz,” said Steve Morris, President & CEO of Seattle’s Convention & Visitors Bureau. “But according to a recent survey, our customers overwhelmingly praise Seattle Super Saver’s rates, features and service for its greater overall value. Their experiences with our program have been as good or better than with private sector web booking companies and they say they’ll book through Seattle Super Saver again. Recognizing the strength of our product and the potential for growth, our Seattle hotel partners have compelled us to expand our dates and add inventory.”

Benefiting both travelers and Seattle hotels, the program is operated by the non-profit Seattle’s Convention & Visitors Bureau and sanctioned by the Seattle Hotel Association. This unique tourism industry alliance allows Seattle Super Saver to offer “preferred” room inventory at the best available rates, as well as a unique package of benefits and services not available via any other Seattle hotel distribution channel. Participating properties can match the lowest available rates during requested dates while also offering options for upgrades to higher room categories or suites at substantially discounted Super Saver rates at the time of the reservation. At check-in, Seattle Super Saver hotels will draw from the best available guestrooms and suites, depending on availability. Other online bookers typically offer leftover room inventories to their customers.

To receive the discounted rate, at least one overnight stay at a participating hotel is required and reservations must be made via the Seattle Super Saver web site or toll-free telephone reservation line. Online bookings can be made at www.seattlesupersaver.com. The web site profiles participating hotel properties and offers maps and other tools to assist in booking. Alternatively, travelers within the U.S. and Canada can reserve the program toll free by calling (800) 535-7071; from outside the U.S. and Canada, the number to call is (206) 461-5882. Phone lines are staffed by knowledgeable reservationists who personally inspect each property and can advise of hotel features and location, as well as make bookings. Reservation lines are open 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Pacific Time), Monday through Friday; and 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

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