

how to **TRAVEL LIKE AN INSIDER**

You have joined our exciting travel industry opportunity and now you want to know how to travel like an insider with your industry credentials. We got you!

This guide will help you to access the best rates for your own personal travel.

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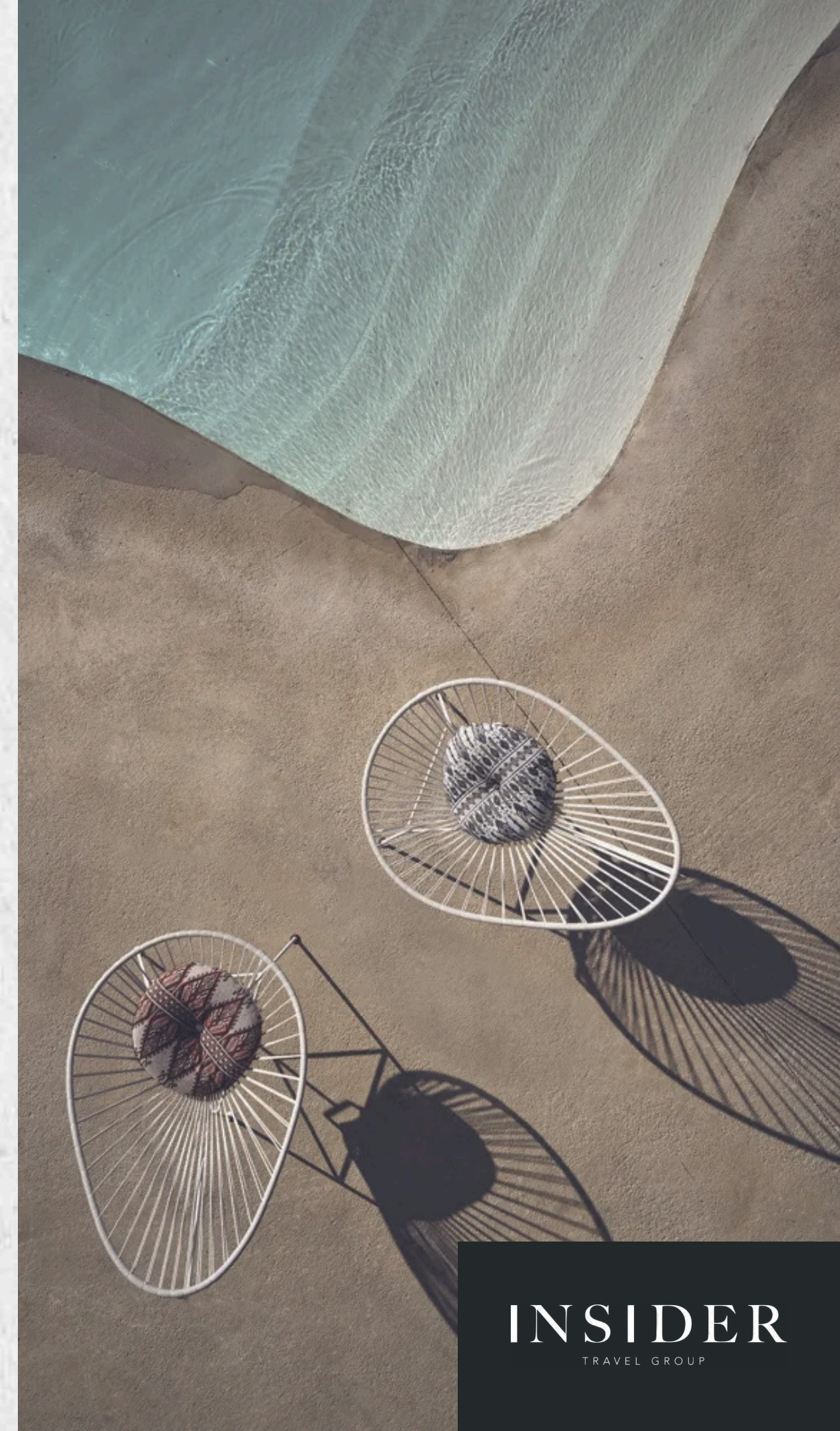
We are going to outline the starting point for accessing industry stays. The practical steps you need to complete before you start to search and the terminology you need to understand.

2

The juicy part! Which websites you should look at, how to organise your search and some of the considerations you need to make if you are wanting to access the best rates for your personal travel

3

How to approach to travelling like an insider, the credentials you need to share during your stay, what is expected of you and the compliance do's and don't's to ensure you can continue selling travel to others.





what are **INDUSTRY RATES?**

What are Industry Rates?

Sometimes referred to as travel industry rates, agent rates or familiarisation rates - these are the hotel rates that you can only access if you're part of the travel industry.

Who can I book at Industry Rate for?

Generally speaking, you can only book industry rates for your own travel (and those travelling and staying in the same room as you on the same dates). There are a few exceptions to the one room rule (more on this later).

Why do hotels provide Industry Rates?

These rates exist for travel agents to experience the property first hand and as a result sell rooms/book for clients. You are under no obligation to sell hotel rooms before or after your stay. You may just have the best experience and this may result in you booking for others - or even just recommending the hotel. Both of these are good outcomes for the hotel.

Is there one place to find Industry Rates?

There isn't just one website or database as there are thousands of hotels and brands all over the world. The aim of this guide is to help you navigate it all.

how to **GET STARTED**

Once you get your credentials and access to the sites it is so easy to get excited with all of the potential which having a travel business can offer you. Based on our years of experience and thousands of pounds worth of savings there are some key fundamentals we think you should start with.

Buy a notebook/create a list or spreadsheet

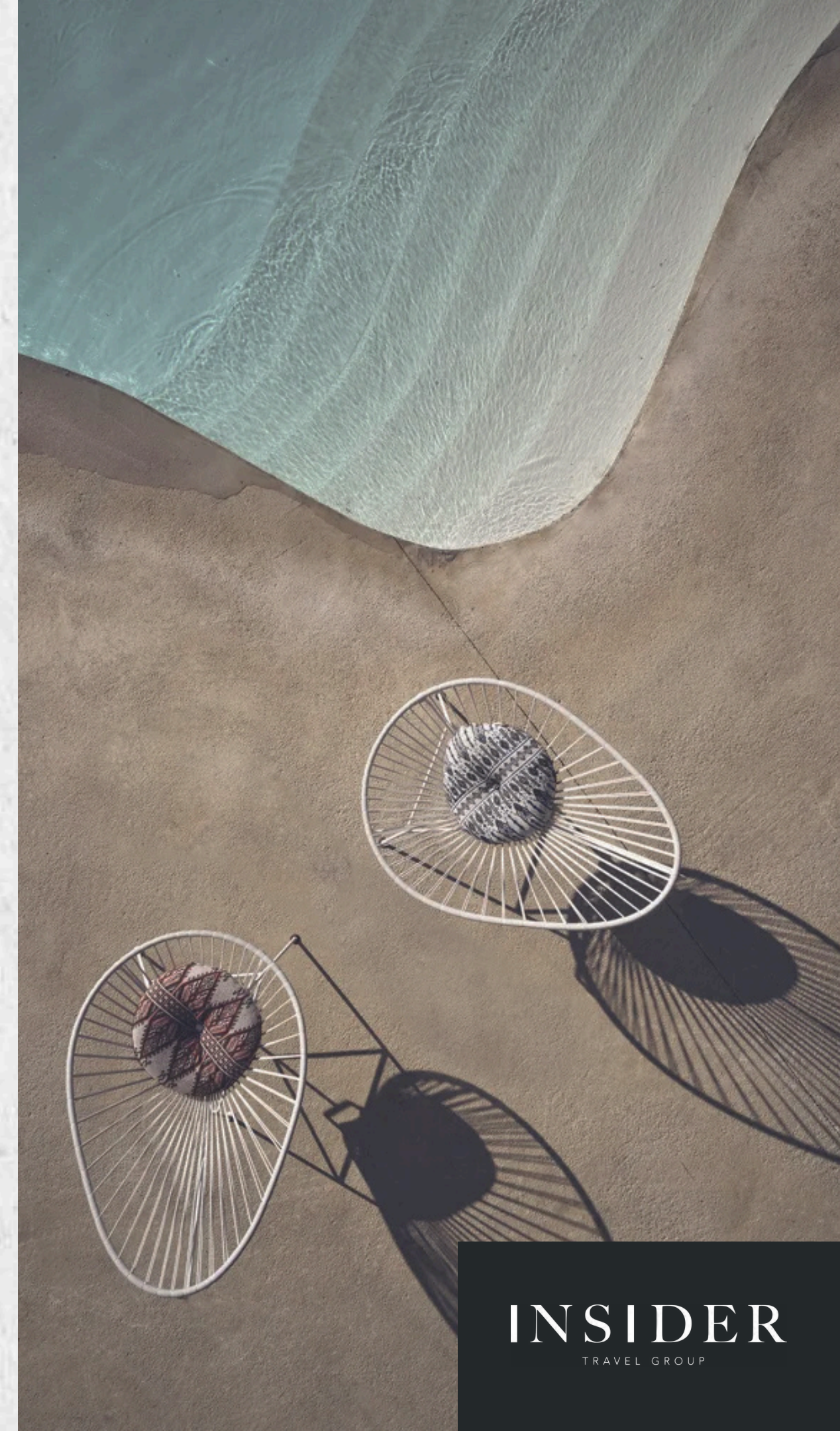
You are going to need to be registered with a number of websites and hotel brands - meaning there will be a lot of logins and passwords to remember! One of the best bits of Insider Travel is the community shared knowledge. You want to have somewhere to record those top tips.

Professionalism is everything

You will need a professional email and email signature. We have details of this later on in the guide but it is a *must*. Hotels often will not accept communication from personal email addresses. We aren't saying it won't work, but take our advice if you want the best results!

Register for hotel brand portals and industry websites

We have a list on our Mega Drive with some of the hotel chains and websites which offer industry discounts/perks. You will need to register for most of these and sometimes it can take a few days to gain access, so do this at the beginning rather than 24hrs before you think you may want to book that hotel.





how to **BOOK A HOLIDAY**

Lets work through a scenario...*you want a week in the sun in September.*

Be flexible with location as this will often bring the total holiday cost down if cost is a factor. For example - Italy in September is incredibly busy and accommodation gets booked a year in advance.

Booking travel & accommodation separately

Most of the time, it is cheaper to book flights, hotels and transfers separately. However, as new preferred partners come on board that isn't always the case.

Flights are not something we typically get discounts on (we will cover this at the end of the guide), so we would advise that you book flights separately and as early as you can as prices just tend to increase as more seats on the flight are sold. Budget airlines tend to be cheapest upon release, and other airlines around 1-2 months after release.

Be open to where you stay as every hotel will manage differently. Some are able to facilitate industry stays at a local level and others will have to comply with the approach led by the hotel group they belong to.

Your motivation will influence the approach you take. You may decide on a location due to cheap flight prices and then look to create a shortlist of hotels. Or, hotel facilities may be the most important factor. Start with what's most important to you.

how to **BOOK A HOLIDAY**

You've made a decision. You and your travel partner want to go to Crete or do a cruise. You've identified some good flights and know your dates of travel. The next stages of this guide are going to explain what you can access and how you can approach both options and compile your shortlist.

1. Hotel Brand Portals - by this we are meaning Hilton, Melia, IHG etc, but also a whole host of brands you haven't heard of!

2. Travel Industry Booking Portals - these compile rates from a range of hotels and often specialise in particular geographical locations - for example, Web Hotelier is the go to industry portal for Greek hotels.

3. Going direct to the hotel - you can really travel like an insider with this method, building professional relationships with hotels which can often result in receiving industry add-ons during your stay,

For your cruise, you are mainly going to focus on:

Travel Industry Booking Portals

Booking direct via a particular preferred partner (eg Virgin Voyages)

Social Media

We are going to highlight these options throughout the guide.





how to use **HOTEL BRAND PORTALS**

You have been researching hotels in Crete and have identified that there are a mix of hotel types on the island. From ones which look to be independent brands - but are actually part of a chain - to some big household names that you've heard of before.

Hotel Brand Portals

Some of the larger hotel groups have made it easier for travel industry professionals to access travel industry rates due to the number of hotels falling within the brand and the volume of requests. These hotel groups often require you to register in advance, will have a separate site or ask you to use a code in their booking portal. Discounts vary.

Some hotel groups we particularly love (find some of these in the hub & on last page)

MELIA - ME hotels, Gran Melia, Paradisus, Melia The Level - Adults Only

(20% off plus an additional 10-20% off twice annually during 'Melia Wonder Week')

HILTON - Waldorf Astoria, Curio, Domes, Nomad, Conrad, Doubletree & more

(between 20-30% off)

MARRIOTT - Edition, Luxury Collection, St Regis, Le Meridien, W, Sheraton, Moxy

Westin & more *(rates vary and you can contact these hotels directly too).*

DESIGN HOTELS - *typically smaller and design led hotels*

(some properties 50% off > register for Travel Pro & find in Travel Industry Rate menu)

ACCOR - Sofitel, Fairmont, Raffles, Rixos, Pullman, Hyde, Ibis & more

IHG - Iberostar, Indigo, Six Senses, Kimpton, Intercontinental, Crowne Plaza & more

HYATT - Alua, Dreams, Grand Hyatt, Park Hyatt Thompson, Secrets & more.

What if I want more than one room?

The following hotel groups are known to offer two rooms at an industry rate (for the same travel dates): Hilton / Melia / H10 (selected hotels - contact directly to request)

Is there a list of Hotel Brand Portals?

Yes there is! You will find our favourites in the **Insider Hub** in the booking personal travel section and also feel free to browse the **Agent Mega Drive** within the Travel menu of the wider team **Travel Vault**.

What is the Agent Travel Vault?

The Travel Vault is a website created by agents for agents in our wider team. You need to register for it so please speak to the person who introduced you to the business if you need access. It is not affiliated with IntelTravel and is a community benefit.

What is the Agent Mega Drive?

Agent Mega Drive is hosted on The Travel Vault and contains a database of the different hotel chains known to us who have in the past offered industry rates or perks.

You'll find instructions on how to register with some of these hotel groups, in order to access their travel industry rates. Sometimes they give you a login, sometimes it will mean completing a form and sometimes it is a code on their website.

By now you should have registered with some of the hotel groups, had a look at the different rates they offer and started to compile your shortlist for Crete!





how to use **TRAVEL INDUSTRY PORTALS**

You take a look at your list and feel pretty happy. As you are going to Crete, it is worth checking Web Hotelier. For your cruise we recommend using Touchdown.

Staff Travel Voyage

Up to 80% off worldwide hotels. Particularly good for UAE, Orlando, Mexico and Caribbean, Indian Ocean, New York, Zafiro and Iberostar brands. Cruises also on here linked to www.insidertravel.cruises at reduced fares. Offers can frequently change.

Web Hotelier

A request site for for accessing net rates at Greece/Cyprus (+ other European hotels). Hotels will respond fairly quickly but respond times change between hotels. You need to request access to the site an individual hotels on that site.

Touchdown

Great for worldwide travel and cruises at discounted prices.

These sites are for travel industry members and their immediate travel party only.

For details of how to register for these sites - refer to the **Essential Travel Booking Guide** - the link for this guide is in the **Booking Travel** section of the **Insider Hub**. The guide will explain how to register for these travel industry booking sites correctly.

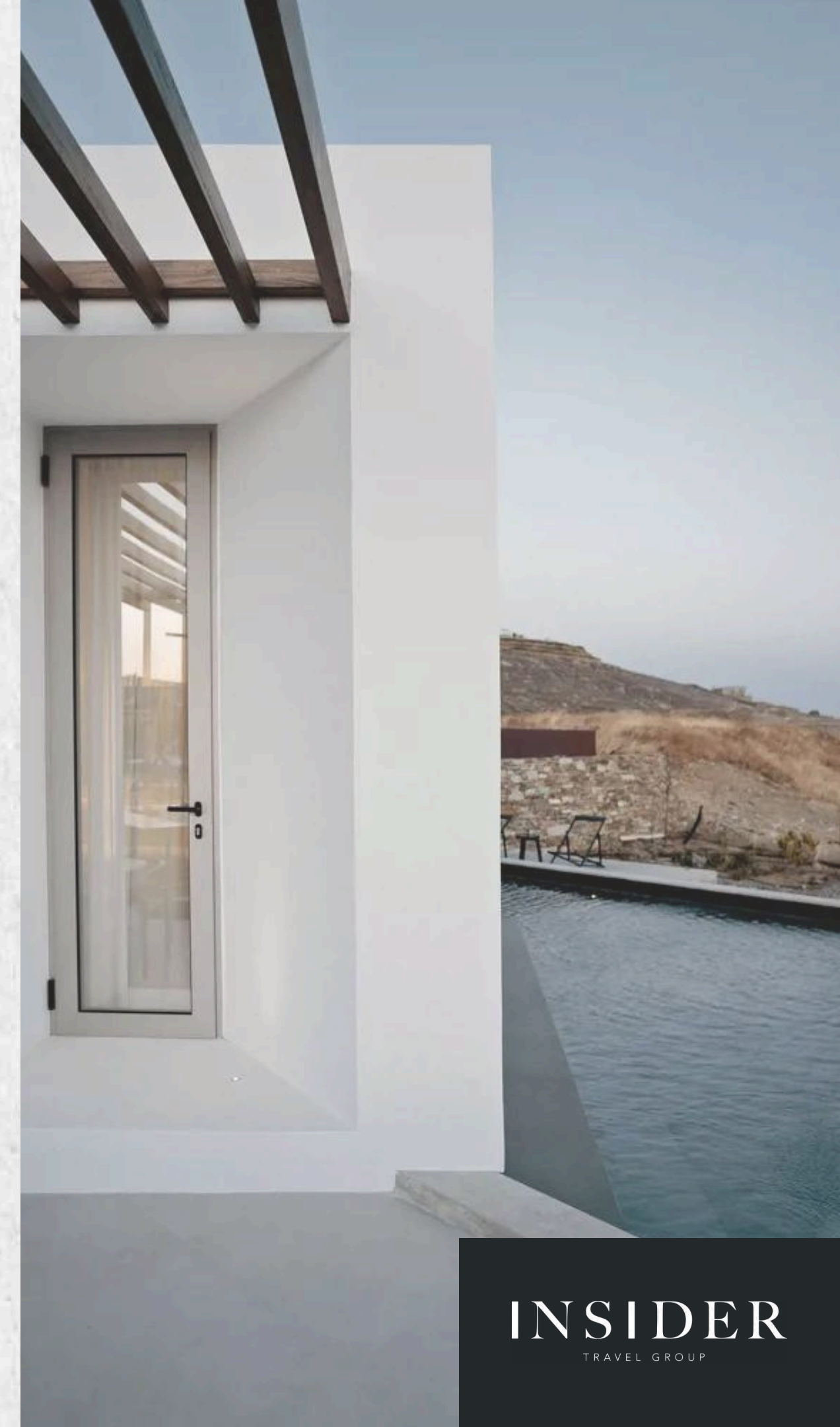
how to **CONTACT HOTELS DIRECT**

You are able to send an email to request a travel industry rate for any hotel. Note that it's definitely always worth emailing a hotel directly; even if a travel industry rate is available for the hotel on it's travel industry portal. You may not always get a reply this way - it is very much hotel dependent but still worth doing.

What you will need

When you're contacting hotels directly as a travel industry professional - you will need the following:

- **a business domain for a professional email address** we recommend IONOS and GoDaddy to purchase a travel business domain (name@travelbusinessname.com) - which are super affordable and worth their weight in gold when it comes to obtaining industry rates. Hotels will want to see that you're a genuine travel industry professional and therefore most will not consider a gmail, outlook, yahoo or similar generic email address to be the real deal! If you would like to purchase an Insider Travel Group Domain for £6/month - Whatsapp Adele on 07826850498.
- **a professional email signature** containing your business name, your host agency address and credentials. Find our email signature template **here** or you can find lots of templates on Etsy to adapt to your own style and add your own travel brand logo.
- **business cards** - not required as such - but if you're looking to make money booking travel and if you plan on staying in a number of hotels using industry rates, they are super useful to have. Developing relationships with key hotel contacts in person gives you an incredible advantage for future stays and potential client trips.



Finding the right hotel contact can be key...

If possible, call the hotel to ask for an email address for the sales manager - or ask who the best person is to speak to regarding booking a travel agent industry stay. (You can access international calls with Skype for a low monthly cost).

Alternatively, use the live chat function on the hotel website, or use Google or LinkedIn to identify a named contact.

If you are unable to identify a specific contact, use the reservation department email, and failing that the generic hotel email address (but mark for attention of Sales/Reservation Manager in email subject field).

EXAMPLE EMAIL TO HOTEL

Subject: Travel Industry Enquiry

Dear Sales Manager/Reservations Manager,

My name is (full name) and I am an Independent UK Travel Agent (UK IATA 10-548020 ABTA P7384). I am a travel industry specialist in luxury/boutique/family luxury/design hotels (adapt to personalise your niche).

I am looking to book a stay for myself at (hotel name) – I would love to showcase this property to my clients travelling to the (destination) region. I would also like to share my experience of the hotel with my direct team of 120+ UK travel agents and recommend your property to our future clients.

Subject to availability, are you able to offer a Travel Industry Rate for myself plus one to arrive on 27th September 2024 for 7 nights? In addition to sharing the experience with my travel agent team, I would also like to offer a site inspection with the sales manager, a positive and detailed Tripadvisor report (and a review of the property elsewhere if applicable ie website/travel agency socials etc).

Thank you in advance, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards.

Requesting a NET rate as an alternative

(top & tail this message)

Thank you for confirming that you are unable to offer a travel industry rate on this occasion. Are you able to offer a net rate a (a standard rate without commission included) for my potential stay as a travel agent?

Email etiquette travel industry rate requests are exactly that - a request! We are travel agents and our travel platform was not created to be solely used as travel discount scheme. Please be professional and respectful to hotels in your email correspondence. If a hotel has good relationship with our agents then this results in future benefits for us all. Also be aware of language barriers and simplify language where possible.

Hotel Inspections these are not formal inspections as such - but simply a tour of the hotel spaces; and usually given by a member of the hotel management team - often a General or Sales Manager. They are an amazing way for you to view the different room categories, film content for socials and to learn about the history of the hotel, if the hotel is seasonal or open throughout the year etc. Ask lots of questions! Does the hotel have any plans for future development, what is the client market by country, how does the hotel receive the majority of it's bookings etc. There are no right or wrong questions to ask, just remain chatty and professional. The hotel staff are used to doing show arounds and agents filming content during the site inspection. They may also ask about your agency, your target client base (i.e: are they predominantly UK clients, age and market (luxury/families/couples/honeymoons).

Exchanging business cards during the site inspection is encouraged so that you have a direct contact for future stays, whether that's for yourself or your clients.





Other top tips

- If the hotel offers an industry rate, compare this rate with our preferred partner sites taking into consideration the commission included in the price and what you'll receive after travel has taken place (usually a few months after travel ends). It's worth weighing up hotel only and also package prices.
- Compare to rates found in the back office 'Stays' search (Booking.com, Expedia and more feed into this search engine). Commission here is typically lower than preferred partners but there are some incredible deals hiding in here with up to 70% off.

Compare all your rates just like you would if you were searching online - except now you have many more options available to you. For example, sometimes it can be more cost effective to book a hotel with a commissionable rate using Ratehawk rather than booking an industry rate - as these rates include 15% commission. Don't just presume that an industry rate is going to be the cheapest!

If an industry rate is very similar in price to booking indirectly with a partner - note that booking the industry rate directly is more likely to result in upgrades etc.

Remember that industry rates do not need to be registered anywhere in the back office as there is no commission to be collected by our host agency.

In advance of your industry stay

48 - 72 hours after booking

Once you have booked your stay, then it's generally advised to email the hotel 48-72 hours after receiving the booking confirmation to inform them that you're part of the travel industry and that you'd like to arrange a site inspection during your stay. You don't need to do this if you've booked directly with them. It's also acceptable to politely ask to be placed on their industry upgrade list - subject to availability.

1 week before travel

Request a 'verification letter' from the live chat function on the back office system and have this to hand as either a print out or a screenshot of the email upon checking in. You won't need it every time but you may be asked for industry credentials.

4- 7 days prior to check-in

If you've booked an industry rate **directly** with the hotel then it's advised to email prior to your check in date - to reconfirm your booking, to let them know your approximate arrival time and to arrange the site inspection. You can also request to be placed on their industry upgrade list at this point. *This can also be a secondary email to the email mentioned in the paragraph above if booked non directly.*

On the day

Arrive to the hotel looking smart casual - looking presentable goes such a long way and can sometimes influence whether an upgrade is given or not. Leave a couple of business cards with the front desk as you're checking in and ask if this can be shared with the General and Sales Manager.





What about Flights?

The make up of commission within flight fares is very different to hotel rates - and instead, various taxes make up a portion of the ticket cost. Generally speaking, only airline staff can access straight discounts for flights with their own airline. If you were to walk into a high street travel agency you'd not be able to book a low cost flight for less than you would directly on the airline's website. We are no different. So - for travel involving low cost flights, most agents tend to secure an industry rate with the hotel and book their flights directly with the airline (e.g. Ryanair).

For long haul destinations, it's worth checking with preferred partners such as Travelpack, Major Travel, Gold Medal and JTA for flight only. Sometimes these partners can offer console fares which are cheaper than you'd find on the airlines' site. Business class seats can regularly be cheaper too - and don't forget the commission!

Avios Points

If you aren't already collecting Avios points on a credit card to convert to 'companion fares' (essentially buy one get one free and at a significantly reduced fare cost when also using your points) - then you should be! Many of our agents put their normal day to day spending on their British Airways credit card and simply pay off monthly in order to reach the required annual spend requirement for the companion fare (£15k in 12 months). If you are booking your travel using this card too then it quickly accumulates. (If you want to apply for a with a higher referral bonus click [**here**](#))

Exclusive Agent Offers...

Preferred Partner Facebook Groups

You will find a list of preferred partners' travel industry Facebook groups within The Travel Vault (or ask the person who referred you to the platform for a list of groups). The group names are often mentioned on the relevant partner webinar. These groups are where you'll hear about exclusive agent rate trips, familiarisation (FAM) trips etc - which are often limited/time sensitive - so if you see anything you like, move fast! Recent agent offers have included 40% off Sani, Transun Lapland packages and more. Note that these groups are also for the general travel trade therefore please don't ask about agent rates in these groups unless they've been recently mentioned.

Cruises

We regularly get fantastic rates for cruises (but remember, don't mention this to full paying passengers whilst on board!) Check the Back Office for the Preferred Partner list and complete their training, once you have done this you often have access to preferential rates, cabin upgrades and other discounts.

Remember - these are all tips to receive the best rates on your personal travel and best possible chance of being upgraded. You aren't required to use any of these tips and resources if you don't want to.





Completing your booking

Once you have your list of hotels and booking options it's time for the exciting part - making that booking! We would always recommend you book a fully flexible rate where possible and importantly do not share publicly online that you have received an industry rate or agent rate. This could result in having your hotel booking cancelled by the hotel.

Securing Industry Rates

Note that it is not always possible to secure an industry rate, this will be dependent on a number of factors including:

- if the hotel actually offers industry rates (some hotels don't)
- if the hotel has already allocated the maximum number of industry rates available on your dates (there may be blackout dates too, e.g. Christmas)
- if the hotel is almost at capacity on your dates (we generally advise to book earlier for the highest chance of securing an industry rate or not in peak season).

If an industry rate is not available, hotels frequently offer travel agents net rates (i.e. a rate without the commission mark up) - so this rate is still (by around 10%) less than a public rate. There are some instances where hotels won't offer either. Remember, there are thousands of hotels in the world and results will vary - but we have no doubt you'll be able to find them!

INDUSTRY RATES WE LOVE!

(where codes are provided, use on hotel's website)

Barcelo

Code BTRAVELAGENTS25 on booking page for 25% off

Jumeirah

complete online Jumeirah Beacon training for up to 50% off.

<https://www.jumeirahbeacon.com/>

Email hotel to request a Beacon rate.

(subject to dates, time of booking and availability of industry rate rooms)

HYATT

<https://www.hyatt.com/info/travel-agent-booking>

RAYA Hotels (Thailand)

Code TAPSE for 20% off

Hoseasons

book via concession portal (watch partner webinar/see partner information tile)

(all for your own stays only, take your proof of agency, ie verification letter, to present at check in)

INDUSTRY RATES WE LOVE!

Invisa Hotels (Ibiza, Madrid, Barcelona)

Code AGENTEVIAJES for 20% off

JA Resorts & Hotels (Dubai, Maldives, Seychelles)

<https://www.jaresortshotels.com>

enter promo code JATRAV

Princess Hotels

Code TRAVELAGENTPRINCESS

(agents must use code INTELETRAVELUK110438 for client bookings)

Preferred Hotels

<https://preferredhotels.com/offer/phr-travel-advisor-rate-program>

Up to 35% off best available rate. Travel Agent is required to complete site inspection with hotel.

Max stay of 3 days. Failure to present valid travel agency credentials will revert to best available rate at check in.

Virgin Voyages Cruises

<https://www.firstmates.com/fmdc/s/registrationtype> - select 'become a first mate'

First Mates Rates \$150 per person, per night plus taxes and fees.

(all for your own stays only, take your proof of agency, ie verification letter, to present at check in)

INDUSTRY RATES WE LOVE!

Barcelo Hotel Group

BTRAVELAGENTS25 (20%)

Dakota Hotels (UK)

‘Friends of Dakota Rate’ Rooms from £110 - £145 classic room bed & breakfast (valid Sun - Thurs)
single occupancy rate, additional £18 for double occupancy, blackout dates apply
email rachel.clements@dakotahotels.co.uk to enquire/request