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A Site to Book Luxury Trips and Preview Them in Video

By ANDREW ADAM NEWMAN

With so much turmoil in the economy, it might seem an odd time to unveil a Web site dedicated to luxury travel, but backers of Voyage.tv, which made its debut last week, say affluent travelers are still packing their Louis Vuitton bags.

According to promotional materials for Voyage.tv, the market for the site is “affluent urban consumers” who are heavy users of the Internet, especially social networks. The site combines elements of the Travel Channel and Expedia.com <<http://Expedia.com>> : users can view broadcast-quality videos of destinations (mostly the Caribbean now, with New York, Tuscany, Bali and other locales in production), as well as buy plane tickets and book hotels.

John Pasmore, the president of Voyages North America, said he expected the site’s revenue to be about equally divided between advertising and bookings. The company reports selling more than \$1.8 million in advertising before its debut. Advertisers appear not only in display ads but also in spots at the beginning of videos. Those videos — with accompanying advertising spots — will also be available to 20 million television viewers through video on demand.

According to a recent report by Euromonitor International, a market research firm, worldwide hotel revenue will shrink by 3.6 percent this year and air travel by 2.3 percent, compared with last year. The group predicts that both segments will begin to bounce back in 2010, each growing by about 1 percent.

Mr. Pasmore said that the site had been in the works for more than two years, preceding the downturn, and that he and his partners decided not to wait for rosier economic forecasts to unveil it.

“When we felt the site was ready, we certainly wanted to take the wrapper off,” Mr. Pasmore said. “And we’re glad this June isn’t like last November was, when people thought we were falling off a cliff.”

Still, because even Lamborghini drivers are spending less conspicuously, Mr. Pasmore said the site was tempering the emphasis on luxury, which it will highlight more in the future.

“Affluent consumers are buying, but in a more modest way,” he said. “If we were launching into a boom, we would be adding videos of more five- and six-star unique properties, but at this point, at that super-high end, you aren’t seeing demand, and people are looking for more eco-travel packages and other lower-hanging fruit.”