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MailOnline

Holidaymakers encouraged to 'make an offer' as they bid for credit-crunch travel bargains

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From offering huge discounts to wafting exotic aromas towards customers in travel agencies, recession-hit travel operators are turning to ever more desperate methods to sell holidays and now one villa company is giving people the chance to bid for any of their holiday villas that remain unsold.

Sunisle's 'Make An Offer' scheme invites last minute holidaymakers to bid for villas and apartments that have become unexpectedly available within a week or two of the holiday start date.



Families can snap up a villa on the island of Trapezaki, Kefalonia for as little as £200 in Sunisle's online auction

The company sets a small reserve price on each property and accepts the highest bid above this reserve when the offer comes to an end.

Current deals include seven nights in a four-bed villa in Trapezaki, Kefalonia - originally priced at £1799, the current bid is just £200.

There's also a six-bed villa in Rethymnon, Crete, originally priced at £1395 for the week but whose auction price currently stands at £200 and a 4-bed villa in Skala, Kefalonia, which was originally £848 and whose top bid is currently £500 (sunisle.co.uk/makeanoffer).

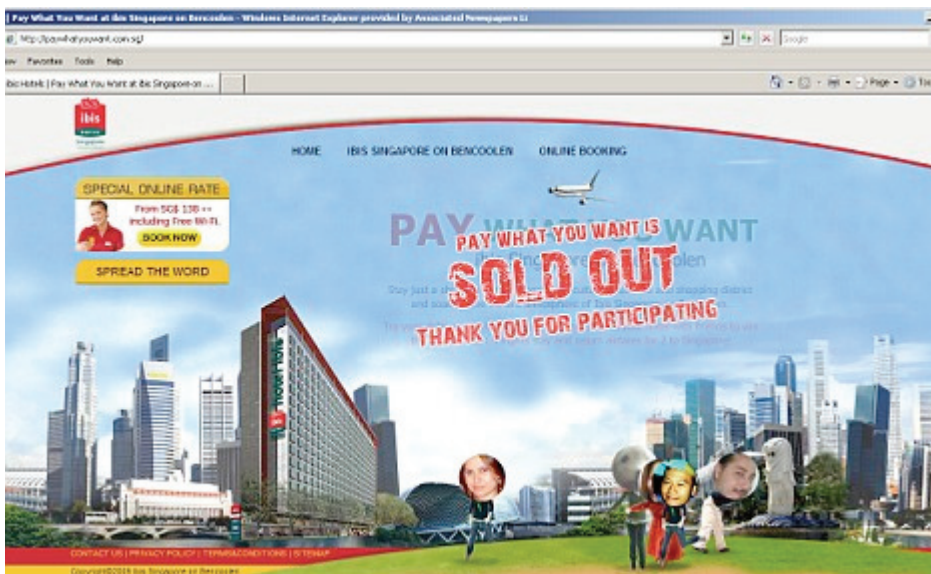


The Sunisle website encourages people to 'make an offer' for any holiday villas that remain unsold

Such online auctions appear to be part of a growing trend. Earlier this year, a new Singapore hotel hailed itself as the world's first 'international economy hotel' by asking guests to pay what they want for a room.

The Ibis hotel offered customers the chance of a budget holiday by letting them bid for rooms on the company's website www.paywhatyouwant.com.sg. Customers were invited to log on during designated sales periods and name their price for available rooms ahead of the hotel's opening on 12 February.

Bids went as high as \$100 for a \$138 room but prices as low as one dollar were accepted on some rooms. The first days' rooms were sold out in minutes with bookings coming from all over the world.



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Similarly, Priceline.com invites its customers to "stare full price in the eye and call its bluff". The website features blind auctions where specific hotel brands and seller identities are unknown, and it claims that people can save up to 50% on the price of a hotel room (www.priceline.com)

Meanwhile, San Diego's Rancho Bernardo Inn is offering travellers a novel pricing model, entitled the Survivor

Package. Cash-strapped guests are asked: "How low will you go?" and invited to choose the price of their room by excluding various amenities they can live without.

The room rates start at \$219 per night with breakfast for two people but drop as amenities are taken away. If you skip breakfast the room costs \$199, opt out of having a mini bar and the rate drops to \$179 and if you can live without air conditioning or heat it drops once more to \$159.



The Austrian village of Längenfeld is inviting 200 tourists to perform a Live Quality Check and pay what they think their stay was worth

The list of 'luxuries' that can be taken away include pillows, sheets, linens, toiletries and even lights. Finally, if you can do without a bed you will pay just \$19 per night (www.ranchobernardoinn.com/specials_packages.php)

An Austrian village is also getting in on the act by inviting 200 tourists to visit for three days in July and then pay what they think their stay was worth.

Located close to the Alps, the picturesque village of Längenfeld is asking the visitors to perform a 'Live Quality Check', in which they will test the village's hotels, restaurants and leisure facilities. When it's time to leave, they'll fill out a survey and pay what they think their stay was worth.

The local tourist industry hopes to gain useful feedback on their pricing strategy and the quality of their services. Martin Santer, the project's initiator, says: "Längenfeld has become a thriving tourist resort; a place we're very proud of. With Live Quality Check, we're showing our pride by letting guests determine how much they pay." (www.live-qualitycheck.com)

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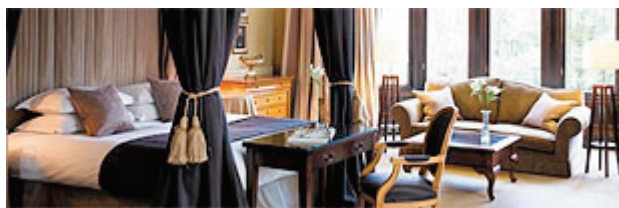
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