

How does it work?

It works in a similar way to a franchise like *Century 21*, (the real estate broker), developing more value with each new franchisee in the network. The local partner, usually a local tour operator, collects content for the local web portal, supported by a team of WHL copy-editors.

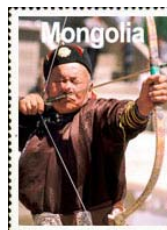
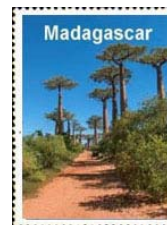
The local partner then manages all local bookings generated via their site. WHL tracks the performance of every operator on the system. Key performance criteria are benchmarked and made available to all franchisees so they can see how they perform compared to other operators.

The WHL international team provides services that are typically difficult to access locally at the quality and price needed. These include web access to a sophisticated database-driven booking engine, secure hosting with a variety of credit card payment options, web marketing and linking to global affiliate marketing deals.

Specifically, WHL provides its local partner with:

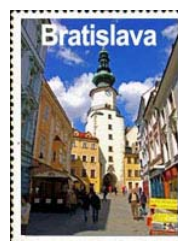
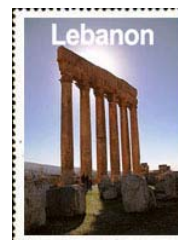
- In person and online **consulting services** from WHL staff in all aspects of establishing and operating an e-marketplace for small hotels and tour product.
- **Standard templates** for localisation of the web portal and individual web sites. The custom-built WHL content management system allows easy updates and includes guidance on content collection and editing.
- Extensive **web marketing services** including subsidised sponsored links with *Google Adwords* and *Overture* for the first 3 months to drive traffic and ensure visibility. WHL has also negotiated numerous affiliate marketing deals with distribution channels such as airlines and *Lonely Planet*.
- Connection to a **central booking administration system** which enables smooth payments, establishing a common customer interface and capturing traveller information for marketing purposes.
- **Real time access to core statistics** such as response times, membership growth, sales, conversion of inquiries to bookings, turn-around time and benchmarking data.
- Access to an **extensive resource library** which includes user guides, manuals, case studies and procedures to set up an online e-marketplace business, and a user forum for all WHL partners.

worldhotel-link.com

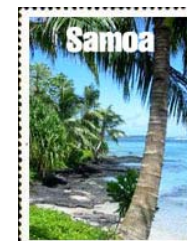


For more information

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**The online
travel services
site for the
developing world**



What is it?

Worldhotel-link.com (WHL) is a newly registered company that sets up and supports online travel booking sites for small accommodation providers and tour operators in developing countries. It originated as a pilot project of the IFC's Mekong Private Sector Development Facility (IFC/MPDF).

WHL operates like a franchise network: it provides local partners (local tour operators or hotel or tour associations) with a complete package to get their members online and sell rooms and tours.

Each locally-owned and operated site is linked to a global network of WHL websites, and receives full marketing, operations and technical support from WHL. In return, local partners (franchisees) pay start up and then monthly service fees.

Development agencies can and have played an important role in getting local WHL projects off the ground, mainly by organizing and supporting the local businesses participating in WHL websites.



Who is it for?

WHL is targeting SME accommodation providers and tour operators, most of whom are too small for major players like Expedia and Orbitz to reach. Most are 3-star (and below) hotels or guesthouses, that are well-positioned to meet the needs of the independent traveller, but less able to meet the demands of e-marketing.

Lonely Planet estimated in 2005 that around 50% of the accommodation providers they review worldwide are not able to be booked online. This is WHL's target market.

Many of these smaller businesses have seen poor returns from working with local, stand-alone e-marketplace operators. They find many destination marketing sites are unable to provide adequate web-marketing or distribution, or service support such as an on-line booking service and on-line payment.

By being WHL partners, these SMEs benefit from being part of a global network that is able to distribute their services globally.

What does it offer?

- For the **small hotel and guesthouse owner or tour operator**, the key benefit WHL offers is access to the growing independent traveller market - where bookings are made online. They see extra bookings and revenues which result from this.
- For the **independent traveller**, WHL offers access to local accommodation and tours which cannot be found online via any of the other global 'centralized' booking services. There is also the benefit of dealing with a local person, who is able to answer the many questions we all have when taking the road less travelled.
- Finally, for the **local WHL franchisee partner**, WHL offers a high-value service from a company with unique tourism development credentials. They earn commissions from the online booking service, and the money stays in-country to invest in local tourism.

WHL's promise is commitment to good outcomes for all stakeholders - member franchisees, travellers, local communities, destinations and WHL staff.

Where did it come from?

WHL originated with a pilot project financed by the IFC/MPDF to develop an internet model to market SME travel products from the developing world.

Given the skills gaps, language difficulties and internet access problems in developing world destinations. WHL needed a model which combined the best of local (local knowledge and support to travellers) and best of global (global marketing/distribution and technology).

The first pilot site was established in 2002 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, site of the famous Angkor Wat temple complex. With little notion of how to market their accommodation effectively, small hotel and guesthouse owners in Siem Reap were at the time bypassed in favour of big hotels with on-line sites.

Initially, IFC/MPDF assisted with seminars to explain e-marketing, and undertook training of local back office staff in collecting information on member hotels, basic accounting, and management of a web-based booking system. Facility staff then developed the portal, website templates, and a tracking system. Early success in Siem Reap led to requests for replication in Phnom Penh, and then in Vientiane, Lao PDR and Vietnam. In 2005, WHL started adding destinations outside the Mekong.

Now fully networked with interactive forums, all of the WHL operators around the world can learn from one another. Travellers to one country are also able to move from one destination to another easily, making multiple bookings across the network, and giving customer feedback.

