
PRESS RELEASE



MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS REPORTS SURGE IN POPULARITY OF EXPERIENTIAL GIFTS THIS FESTIVE SEASON

- Merlin Entertainments, the global leader in branded entertainment destinations, announces that the gift experience market quadrupled from 2021 to 2023, marking a significant trend in consumer preferences.
- The company's commitment to providing unique, shared experiences is projected to drive further market growth with an anticipated fivefold increase in the gifting and experience channel by the end of 2025.

19 December 2023 – Merlin Entertainments, a global leader in branded entertainment destinations including LEGOLAND® Resorts, Madame Tussauds and SEA LIFE aquariums, today shares data which shows that growth in experiential gifts across the company's UK attractions has quadrupled in just two years since its introduction following the global pandemic.

Merlin's collaboration with partners such as Virgin Experiences and Buy A Gift has enabled it to curate an extensive range of gift experiences suitable for a range of budgets. In 2023, revenue from these partnerships has more than quadrupled.

The unique experiences on offer at Merlin's attractions across the globe can range from entry ticket gifts through to VIP access packages and unique behind-the-scenes experiences. In the UK, this includes educational animal experiences such as giraffe feeding at Chessington World of Adventures Resort; a meet and greet session with the UK's only Northern sea otters at the National SEA LIFE Centre in Birmingham; or a VIP champagne capsule on the lastminute.com London Eye.

Data from Merlin's recent Black Friday sale on their Merlin Annual Passes, the company's UK loyalty programme providing access to over 30 attractions and experiences, also reflects the increasing popularity of experiential gifting. Between 2021 and 2023 the number of products sold has increased by 65%.

The trend is also notable in the US where Merlin has witnessed an increase in purchases of the VIP Experience package at all three LEGOLAND® Resorts in North America. Nearly 6,000 tours are sold annually across the US for a service which offers an all-day Personal VIP Host and priority access to all rides, shows and attractions.

As part of plans to increase the scale of its gifting offer, Merlin has [unlocked its hotels as products for third-party partners to sell](#) within their portfolio, due to the increased demand through trade partners.

Merlin Entertainments is committed to providing unique, shared experiences across over 140 global attractions, from LEGOLAND® Resorts and the London Eye to Madame Tussauds and SEA LIFE aquariums. The company has observed a significant shift in consumer behaviour, with individuals

PRESS RELEASE



demonstrating a willingness to invest more in truly unique experiences. The average spend on Merlin's experiential gifts has reached approximately £300 post-COVID, reflecting a growing appreciation for the value of spending quality time together with loved ones.

In line with this trend, Merlin anticipates a fivefold growth in the gifting and experience channel by the end of 2025. This projection is not only based on the phenomenal growth it has experienced post-COVID but also aligns with the findings of the [global gift retailing market report](#) which expects the market size to expand to \$94 billion by 2031.

Fiona Eastwood, Chief Operating Officer for Midway and Resort Theme Parks, Merlin Entertainments, said "Experiential gifts provide so much more than a material possession in a box; they offer memories and moments that people cherish. The phenomenal growth we are seeing in this area is testament to Merlin Entertainments' ability to offer unique experiences that bring friends and families together. As we head into the holiday season, we are excited about the prospect of offering more of those moments that that bring joy and create lasting connections."

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Media Enquiries

Brunswick (Merlin)
Greg Dawson / Cecilie Oerting
+44 (0)20 7404 5959
merlin@brunswickgroup.com

Sarah Brown
Head of External Communications
+44 (0) 7756 504 620
sarah.brown@merlinentertainments.biz

Notes to Editors

About Merlin Entertainments

Merlin Entertainments is a global leader in branded entertainment destinations, operating over 140 attractions, 23 hotels and 6 holiday villages in 23 countries and across 4 continents. Merlin's purpose is to deliver memorable experiences to its millions of guests around the world, through its iconic brands and multiple attraction formats, and the commitment and passion of its employees.

See www.merlinentertainments.biz for more information.
