A Look at Several Internal Exchange Programs

In addition to the companies featured in TimeSharing Today’s annual Comparison Chart of Exchange Companies, several management companies and many of the timeshare chains operate internal exchange programs that supplement the exchange companies. We asked several of these management companies and resort chains to provide us with brief descriptions of how their exchange programs work. The responses follow.

Raintree Resorts International – Raintree Vacation Club

Since the company was founded in 1997, Raintree Resorts International has gracefully matured to become the largest U.S.-based independent vacation ownership developer operating in Mexico.

With corporate headquarters in Houston, Texas, and business offices in Mexico City and Whistler, British Columbia, there are currently 20 resorts in 15 popular vacation destinations flying the Raintree banner. Half of these are in Mexico, where the company plans additional resorts, and the other properties are located in the western U.S. and western Canada.

Raintree Vacation Club is the points-based exchange arm of the company. Distinguished by its high level of Member satisfaction, Raintree Vacation Club is a unique blend of club, resort and hotel hospitality vacation options serving the company’s more than 50,000 owners/Members.

Located in highly popular vacation destinations, Raintree properties in Mexico are found in Cancun, Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta, Oaxaca, Acapulco, Puerto Isla Mujeres and Puerto Mio – Zihuatanejo. To facilitate travel to these cities, Raintree has implemented a strategic marketing alliance with Mexicana Airlines, which provides special discounts for Raintree Members.

Over the past decade, Raintree has continued to acquire properties. In 1998, they accelerated their growth by acquiring Whiski Jack Resorts, a Whistler, British Columbia timeshare-company and one of Canada’s largest vacation ownership companies. Today, Raintree manages units in the 17 properties that comprise Whiski Jack Resorts.

Additional resorts include the Cimarron Golf Resort in Palm Springs, California; The Miners Club located in the Canyons Ski Resort area in Park City, Utah; Sandcastle in Birch Bay, Washington; as well as units or unit equivalents at the Kona Reef in Kona, Hawaii; and Polo Towers, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Raintree Resorts is one of the few companies that sells both fractionals and timeshares, making both available to their Members through Raintree Vacation Club. They have also developed the luxury, ski-in, ski-out private residence Teton Club, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and Grand Regina Residences, a luxury, fractional development in Los Cabos and acquired significant inventory in The River Club and Franz Klammer Lodge in Telluride, Colorado. All of these properties are part of Raintree Vacation Club.

Raintree’s Members exchange internally an average of 42,000 times per year. When combined with the 8,000 external exchanges (through RCI), last year the company sent more than 200,000 people on vacation.

Raintree Vacation Club Members purchase a specific Membership Type, represented by an annual allotment of points. Points can be spent a little at a time or all at once. Members may borrow points from up to two future years’ allotments or save for use during the next year. Points may also be used for cruises, car rentals, airfare and hotel accommodations.

Members may choose to gift their vacation time to others with Guest Certificates and enjoy Membership Upgrades or obtaining resort rentals at discounted rates.

External Club Member benefits include exchanges through RCI Weeks as well as RCI Points. Raintree Vacation Club Members may also enjoy cruises by exchanging their Points through ICE Platinum Rewards.

The company remains committed to continuing to provide memorable vacation experiences for Raintree Vacation Club Members in upscale resorts in popular destinations while remaining the best – and largest – independent, U.S.-based vacation ownership company operating in Mexico.

Trading Places International

Trading Places International manages 18 resorts, associations and vacation clubs in Hawaii, the continental US, and Mexico. Exchanging is brisk within this family of managed resorts. Our customers are familiar with the quality, popularity and great availability of the resorts we manage, plus the incomparable customer service they have come to know from their ongo-
ing relationship with Trading Places. A Trading Places managed resort owner can deposit a week at their home resort and complete an exchange, all on one friendly call. Because we manage their resorts’ affairs, we have instant access and the ability to verify their week right on the spot.

At Trading Places, owners have priority when exchanging back to their home resort, and because we manage their resort, chances are good they will get the dates they are requesting. Trading Places also calls owners to confirm their use plans, so their vacation does not go unused. We also offer incentives to owners such as 2-for-1 bonus week promotions for making their plans early. At many of our managed resorts, we have an onsite agent who can assist with guests’ vacation needs.

Trading Places specializes in the most often requested vacation destinations including Hawaii, Mexico, the area west of the Rockies, and the Caribbean, and we have access to many other resorts all over the world. In addition to the resorts we manage, Trading Places has a wide network of hundreds of available resorts in which to exchange. With over 35 years in the vacation owner services business, we have built strong relationships within the industry, giving us access to resorts in destinations that we don’t necessarily specialize in. Customer service is our priority; owners will often talk to the same agent, and will be referred to by name, not just some owner number. Consumers know we make good on our word and will come through for them every time.

We are proactive in finding the perfect vacation destination. If we don’t have what a customer is looking for, we will take a request. Relationships with other companies in the industry virtually double our reach. We understand the urgency, and work diligently on our pending request list each and every day.

At Trading Places International our focus is getting you where you want to go, when you want to go there. We are proud to say we confirm the vast majority of our requests. We offer the ability to search for vacation opportunities before ever depositing or paying any fees. We have no mandatory membership fees, and our exchange fees are among the lowest in the industry.

To get started, please visit us online at www.tradingplaces.com/exchange or call your Trading Places representative at 800-365-7617 to check availability and/or deposit your week, book your airfare and make any additional travel plans. Don’t know where you want to go? Just deposit your week now, and travel up to three years later. With our online option you can literally do everything you could on a phone call – deposit, search, make an exchange, print your confirmation, view your history and manage your online account.

The Internal Exchange Program of Vacation Resorts International

Vacation Resorts International (VRI) launched their internal exchange program – VRI*ety - in February of last year with approximately 50 resorts participating. They have added more resorts each month since then, and there are now about 150 resorts participating – great news for the owners at VRI-managed resorts!

VRI*ety participants can expect an extraordinary array of benefits beginning with no annual membership fee and exchange fees less than $100. Owners at VRI-managed resorts now have greater flexibility to schedule their vacations, and they can also exchange for three or four nights at participating resorts for a minimal fee. Plus, there’s an exclusive VRI owner service line to speak with VRI*ety Reservations Guides dedicated to offering personalized service.

VRI*ety is available to owners/members at participating resorts managed or affiliated with VRI. An owner may exchange as many weeks as he/she owns each year, and the exchange fee is not charged until the requested exchange has been confirmed.

VRI*ety Deposits:

To make an exchange within VRI*ety, an owner/member must first have a fixed week or confirmed reservation at a VRI resort or club to deposit.

- Each week deposited will have a season of red, white or blue.
- Deposited weeks expire two years after the start date of the reservation.
- The earliest a week can be deposited into VRI*ety is two years in advance.
- The earliest a week is deposited before its start date, the higher the request priority.
- The latest a week can be deposited is 28 days in advance of the scheduled check-in date for Continental
U.S. destinations and 49 days in advance for International and Hawaii resorts.

**Long Term Requests:**
- Requests may be made up to 24 months in advance.
- Owners may exchange for a lower season than the deposited week.
- Owners may exchange for a unit type equivalent to the deposited unit. Exchange confirmations made 60 days or less prior to the check-in date may be scheduled in any unit size, based on availability.
- Priority in VRI*ety is based on the deposit date.
- A confirmation is sent when a request is filled.

**Short Notice Requests:**
- Requests may be made 28 days in advance of requested check-in date for Continental U.S. destinations and 49 days in advance for International and Hawaii.
- Requests may be made for any season: red, white or blue.
- Requests are filled on a first come, first served basis.
- Owners will be contacted if the time requested becomes available.

VRI manages almost 150 resorts in 26 states, plus one in Canada and a few in Mexico, so there are many fantastic resort locations in which to vacation through VRI*ety.

Future plans for VRI*ety include an enhanced web experience which will allow owners to explore destinations and make their exchange reservations online. Until then, owners can call VRI*ety directly and can also see a list of resorts at www.vriresorts.com.

If you have any questions about VRI or VRI*ety, or would like more information, please contact Jan Samson at 863-424-1698 or jan.samson@vriresorts.com.

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**Florida Owners Group Sets July Meeting**

The Florida timeshare Owners Group will hold its next meeting on Sunday, July 26th at 1:30 p.m. in the Venetian Room of the Pelican Pointe Golf and Country Club in Venice, FL.

Three guest speakers attend each meeting to discuss topics of interest to timeshare owners. Recent speakers included Shep Altshuler, publisher of TimeSharing Today, Fermin Cruz, who heads Dial An Exchange in the U.S. Gary Prado from Redweek and Lisa Schreier, author of Timeshare Vacation for Dummies. The speakers for the July meeting have not yet been confirmed. The meetings allow for a question and answer session with each speaker and discussions among members based on current issues.

Membership is open to all timeshare-owning Florida residents, whether full-time or seasonal, who are also interested in sharing information and experiences with fellow timeshare owners.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Frank Debar, Group Coordinator, via email to fdebar@webtv.net or by phone to (941) 351-1384. The group website is tsownersgroup.com.