

October 21, 2014

How to Swap Luxury Travel Goods



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The economic downturn that gave rise to the sharing economy seems to have finally spread to the luxury market. You can now swap everything, from homes to cars to handbags, while laying out very little cash and leveraging your own assets to reap more value from your belongings.

According to travel and hospitality marketing firm MMGY Global, individuals who earn \$250,000 or more annually are [traveling more often than those with lower incomes](#). In 2013, travelers with higher earning power took almost two more trips on average than those with household incomes between \$150,000 and \$249,999.

While these facts alone probably aren't that surprising, what these high-earning individuals do with their luxury goods might be. Using a variety of high-end travel swapping services, those privileged to own lavish second homes or luxury sports cars can now maximize use of these goods to reap even more sumptuous perks (with everyday travelers benefiting, too).

Share your vacation home

The founder of [3rd Home](#) — a swapping service for second homes — created the company after spending 25 years selling vacation homes. He noticed that many buyers were hesitant because they didn't want to be tied to just one destination. With 3rd Home, owners can spend as much time in their second home as they'd like, while leveraging the time the property is empty to travel and stay in other high-end second homes around the world.

To participate in 3rd Home, your house must be a second home or condominium valued at \$500,000 or more and located in a vacation destination. Other criteria, such as the home's condition, decor and amenities, also must pass muster.

For a one-time initiation fee of \$2,500 and a fee ranging from \$395 to \$995 per exchange, you can offer weeklong stays in your second home at any time of year and receive credits called "keys." You redeem your keys for stays around the world at some 2,600 homes, which average \$2.3 million in value (some even come with private chefs and butlers). "It allows you to get a return on your investment without making a big commitment," said 3rd Home CMO Steve Zacks. "Some of our members travel just once or twice a year, while some use it to knock just about everything off their bucket list."

[HomeExchange.com](#), the largest property exchange company in the world, offers access to 55,000 listings in more than 150 countries. To appeal to owners of luxurious properties, the company created a new service for elite members: [HomeExchangeGold](#). The site provides access to the company's most luxurious home listings, ranging from penthouses in metropolitan areas to beachfront properties on remote islands.

HomeExchangeGold participants only need to pay an annual \$500 fee to join. There are no standard qualifications for a Gold listing or membership, though with homes ranging from castles to oceanfront yachts, the bar is set high. You work directly with a homeowner to trade stays in each other's homes, said COO of HomeExchange.com Jim Pickell, noting that high-end homeowners tend to be remarkably flexible when it comes to scheduling and access to their amenities like motorcycles, sports cars and even seaplanes.

Drive fast cars

If you appreciate luxury cars, but don't have the need (or means) to buy one yourself, consider [Fast Toys Club](#). Car enthusiasts and exotic car owners can satisfy a need for speed with the company's vehicle-sharing program. You don't actually have to own one of these pricey vehicles to participate, though if you do, you'll receive discounts; instead, you choose from varying levels of memberships, which include a one-time fee of \$8,000 or monthly fees between \$1,459 and \$5,833.

Memberships provide access to all cars, free gas, a chauffeur and organized track days. You'll have your pick of cars, including the Rolls Royce Phantom, the Lamborghini Huracan and the ever-popular Aston Martin DBS Volante.

Loan your yacht

[Sailsquare](#), a company that promises to help luxury yacht owners manage upkeep costs, benefits both owners and travelers. Yacht owners receive money from Sailsquare for trips booked on their boats, while travelers gain access to luxury vessels at a reasonable price. Here's how it works: Skippers and yacht owners post trips — which vary by length and price — on Sailsquare. Travelers can browse posted trips and pay directly through the site. Vacations currently listed include stops in Sardinia, Italy, the [Canary Islands](#) and [St. Vincent & The Grenadines](#), with prices ranging from about \$204 to \$1,590 per person. Aside from providing a unique sailing experience (yacht owners man the boat), Sailsquare also promises to save travelers up to 30 percent compared to traditional tour operators.

To join the program, owners must have a safe, well-maintained yacht that's at least 35 feet long, provide proof of a nautical license and have traveled at least 1,000 miles in the last three years.