



Select a category: ALL NEWS CLASSIFIEDS BUSINESSES C

Search travel resources: Go! C

Web site specializes in setting up once-in-a-lifetime experiences

Sunday, January 22, 2006

Abigail Leichman
THE RECORD (HACKENSACK, N.J.)

Perhaps you take an annual trip to Italy, looking at architecture and enjoying a week of great food.

Now imagine if you could add a twist: a private tour of the Hermes or Manolo Blahnik factory, where you could order a custom bag or pumps to ship home.

It could make the difference between a routine vacation and an experience you would never forget.

That's what Robin Wilson calls a "wallbounce."

Members of her Internet venture, wallbounce-.com, get to purchase experiences they could never arrange on their own.

"Anybody can walk into a couture retailer and hire their private shopper," Wilson says. "But if you're a Wallbounce member, you get the personal shopper for eight hours, who will take you to the store's private warehouse and help you choose items for a special event.

"Then, on the day of the event, a hairstylist will come prepared to do your hair and makeup based on a picture of the dress and accessories you chose."

In other words, she says, "A wallbounce takes you to a place you've never been before."

Why the wacky name?

"It was one of those rainy-day moments last January," recalls Wilson, 35, a former business executive in Arlington, Va.



CARMINE GALASSO | THE RECORD (HACKENSACK, N.J.)

Six hours with professional organizer Mary Carlomagno, right, is one of the services offered by Robin Wilson's wallbounce.com.

"I was sitting there thinking, throwing a ball against the wall, and suddenly I thought, 'That's it! Wallbounce!' I immediately bought the domain name and sat on it for eight months deciding what to do with it."

Inspiration came last summer as a group of her girlfriends listened to the description of an unforgettable evening at a backstage concert party.

"I'd pay anything to do that," one of the friends declared.

"Something went 'bling' in my mind," Wilson says. "She was saying she would love the opportunity to peer behind the curtain, and that's what I decided to provide — a way of packaging unique experiences."

Wilson figured vendors would welcome the opportunity to partner with her.

"It gains them a passive customer and builds brand loyalty," she points out.

Working feverishly for 12 weeks — "I didn't sleep from August to November" — Wilson got Wallbounce up and running with a wide assortment of adventures for sale, grouped geographically and categorically.

Most are pricey — the couture-and-makeup adventure described above costs \$1,800 — but she swears she talked down vendors as far as they would go.

For example, she tapped her buddy Jenny Gering, a Manhattan celebrity stylist who fetches \$8,000 a day for her wardrobe advice and shopping expertise. Gering agreed to offer three hours of one-on-one consulting or personalized shopping at any store for a mere \$925.

"She can take you from Wal-Mart to red carpet," Wilson says.

Two weeks after the site went live, Wilson had members from 17 states and the United Kingdom — the highest concentration of both vendors and clients is in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, she says — lining up to buy 33 limited-edition experiences.

Wilson is in the process of negotiations on 30 more deals, including the Manolo Blahnik tour. An auction option will premier this year, allowing nonprofit organizations to receive 75 percent of the proceeds on celebrity auction items.

Gift certificates are available toward any experience, and members will soon be able to create wish lists of adventures they would like to have featured on Wallbounce.

Wilson says the only things similar to her concept are adventure travel sites that arrange personalized excursions, such as safaris to Africa.

If you go

WALLBOUNCE . COM

Here are some of the experiences offered by Wallbounce:

- An afternoon tea for four at the Harlem Tearoom in New York, with a choice of 24 teas, scones with whipped cream and strawberry jam, finger sandwiches and pastries (\$125)
- "Belly to Baby" photography sessions, just before and after baby's arrival, with leading photographer Amanda K (\$1,000)
- Simulated air combat in a T-34 airplane in Colorado (eight hours, \$800)
- "ReelBiography," a custom documentary produced by an award-winning production team, like your own A & E bio (\$12,500)
- A weeklong whitewater-rafting trip for six in the remote Futaleufu region of Patagonia (which spreads across southern Argentina and Chile), including lodging with local families (\$15,000)
- A custom "Ultimate Shirt" from Individually Suited; choose from 70 fabrics, eight collar styles, six cuff styles and other options (\$200)
- Six hours with professional organizer Mary Carlomagno plus a copy of her new book, Give It Up!, and a home consultation (\$775)
Source: The Record (Hackensack, N.J.)