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Tour Guinness distilleries without ever leaving Pleasanton

by Jeb Bing

Diageo, a consumer goods company with a portfolio of world-famous drinks brands with offices in Hacienda, has partnered with Google's Business View to offer a free virtual tour that allows people to see inside the walls of the famous Guinness Storehouse and four other distilleries, the No. 1 tourist attraction in Ireland. The tour includes all seven floors of the massive building, including the top-floor Gravity Bar, the highest bar in Dublin, Ireland.

"People travel from all over the world to the Guinness Storehouse in Dublin and to our distilleries in Scotland to learn about the heritage and provenance of their favorite brands," said Venky Balakrishnan, Diageo's global vice president of digital innovation. "Google Business View brings the immersive experience of visiting these famous landmarks to people, regardless of where they are in the world."

Of course, Diageo PLC, which is headquartered in London, wants more people to tour some of its distillery operations, even if only virtually. The company makes its money by producing and distributing beverage alcohol with spirits, beer and wine brands. These include, besides Guinness, Johnnie Walker, Crown Royal, Buchanan's, Windsor and Bushmills whiskeys, Smirnoff, Ciroc and Ketel One vodkas, Captain Morgan, Baileys, Don Julio, Tanqueray and Guinness.

The company owns manufacturing production facilities across the globe, including maltings, distilleries, breweries, packaging plants, maturation warehouses, cooperages, vineyards, wineries and distribution warehouses.

Diageo's promotional efforts in the Tri-Valley are part of the company's effort to boost sales and its public image. The firm has faced headwinds in recent days according to market analyst Trefis, with its operating profits declining 11% on a year-on-year basis.

That's not surprising. Trefis reports that there's been a slowdown in the U.S. spirits market, economic stress in Russia, "anti-extravagance" measures in China and economic turmoil in Venezuela, which resulted in a 2% decline in volumes, particularly among global brands.

As a result, Diageo is becoming more innovative, appealing to consumer interests with flavor extensions and special events, such as its virtual tour for Tri-Valley consumers.

To learn more about Diageo at diageo.com, use Google to search for virtual tours of Guinness Storehouse and four single-malt scotch whiskey distilleries in Scotland: Cardhu, the Singleton of Glen Ord, Talisker and Lagavulin. Diageo has its Pleasanton offices at 4695 Chabot Drive.

Diageo is but one of the vibrant business activities seen this summer in Hacienda, a Pleasanton business park where growth and new product applications are topping the list of an economic rebound. More than a dozen new companies have settled into Hacienda since the beginning of the year.

"Tenant activity in Hacienda has been very good so far this year" said James Paxson, Hacienda's general manager. "Even with a slight increase in vacancy this last month, Hacienda's occupancy has increased by nearly two percentage points since the end of last year. Additional activity is expected before the end of the year."

Paxson said Hacienda has recently welcomed new tenants to the park. They include:

- * Dr. Alex Anastasiou, a provider of adolescent and adult psychiatry, with an office at 5890 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 215.
- * Ananda Bhavan, a new restaurant featuring authentic South Indian cuisine, at 4515 Rosewood Drive, Suite 700.
- * Stanford Children's Health Bayside Medical Group, a provider of health services for children, at 5890 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 212.
- * Solid Personnel, a recruiting and staffing firm, at 5933 Coronado Lane, Suite 201.
- * Leisure Sports, designers, developers, owners and managers of high-end fitness resorts, at 4670 Willow Road, Suite 100.

Hacienda is the largest development of its kind in Northern California with more than 10 million square feet of existing mixed-use space occupied by some 660 companies that locally employ approximately 19,000 people.