Cloudinary

lastminute.com Makes Vacation Packages Visually Surreal with Cloudinary

Single source of truth across teams and departments

Efficient workflow leading to savings in publishing time

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lastminute.com

INDUSTRY
Travel Agencies

SIZE
1001–5000 employees

HEADQUARTERS
London, England

For a website catering to travelers, deals on flights or exclusive vacation packages are not enough to entice visitors. It's often the images of that luxury villa in Greece, romantic Parisian street, or exotic tour through the markets of Marrakech that inspire vacation bookings. **lastminute.com** promotes its offerings on the company's website, via social media and advertising, and in its e-newsletters with more than 120,000 images. The challenge of having multiple teams dealing with so many assets, which includes an increasing number of videos, led lastminute.com to leverage Cloudinary for maintaining a centralized media library and digital asset management (DAM). Cloudinary also gave lastminute.com the ability to automate image transformations to drive greater consistency across its platforms and launch new campaigns faster.

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>
> **— Stefano Castelli,** Creative Production Manager, lastminute.com
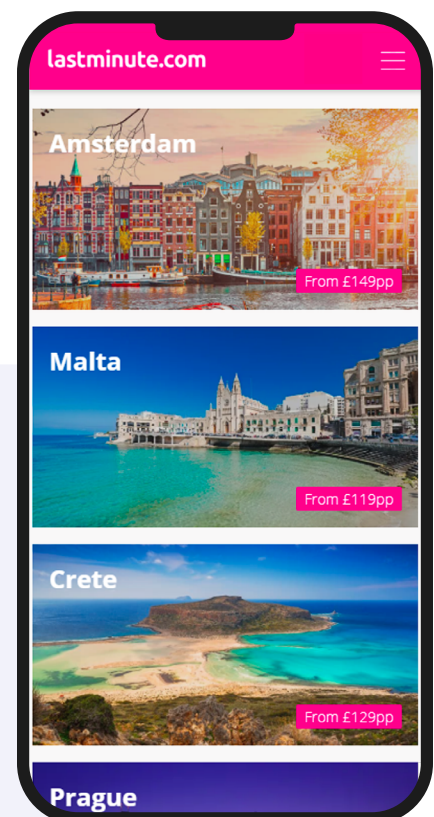
ABOUT

lastminute.com

lastminute.com is a leading European online travel and leisure retailer, operated by lm group. The company's mission is to be the most relevant and inspiring travel company, committed to enriching the lives of travelers. lastminute.com and its 1,200 employees look forward to providing its visitors with a comprehensive and inspiring offering of travel-related products and services. lastminute.com is a publicly-traded company listed under the ticker symbol LMN on SIX Swiss Exchange.

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THE CHALLENGE

Streamlining Asset Management

In business for more than two decades, lastminute.com historically had separated teams that managed its image assets, using different repositories.

As a company, lastminute.com had been using Cloudinary for a long time for very specific use cases, such as hotel images. These were managed by tech teams, who dealt with image upload, asset management, and serving to the live site, all via API. In parallel, there was a team dedicated to manual asset management (with editors and non-tech people), using a different DAM provider for editorial purposes.

"Even though we had different teams managing different assets stored in different systems, we had become used to the process and made it work. But there were inconsistencies in the way we had to link to the DAM for different use cases," said Stefano Castelli, lastminute.com's Creative Production Manager. "But as Cloudinary added more functionality, including DAM capabilities, to its platform, we saw the opportunity to increase team efficiency and improve the consistency and quality of experiences."

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Another challenge was how long it was taking to modify images for new campaigns. This was a time-consuming task, with designers having to make the changes to each picture in Photoshop, then upload all the new images for the campaign into the old DAM. Depending on the number of images involved, this process could take weeks. This laborintensive work limited lastminute.com's ability to quickly launch new campaigns that would let vacationers capitalize on limited-time deals.

THE CLOUDINARY SOLUTION

A Cross-functional DAM for the Entire Asset Lifecycle

Using Cloudinary, lastminute.com can securely upload assets from a wide variety of sources. They then can organize images using AI-based tags and metadata to make them easily searchable.

At the same time as they were moving to Cloudinary, lastminute.com implemented a new content management system (CMS). With Cloudinary's APIs, it was easy for lastminute.com to integrate the two systems and automate the media workflow that was previously manual and time-consuming.

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"Video is continuing to grow in popularity and importance. Cloudinary enables us to customize the video player to suit our brand and optimize videos to reduce both our bandwidth usage and our website visitors' bandwidth requirements. Being able to make these changes in real-time is quite impressive. Since videos can be quite huge,the ability to optimize performance is key for us."

— Stefano Castelli, Creative Production Manager, lastminute.com

The ability to make transformations by simply editing the image URL or the UI — a capability unique to Cloudinary's system — was a "killer feature that we're taking advantage of a lot," he added. "It is one of the biggest advantages we've seen."

lastminute.com is able to change certain parameters in the URL to resize, change the format, and adjust the quality of images. They also have used it for a wide variety of other transformations, including cropping, blurring, and applying overlays in real-time, without the painful download-edit-upload cycle.

The company specifically used this feature when it launched its Flash Sale product offering with specially hand-crafted travel deals available for a limited amount of time. For that product, the company took advantage of Cloudinary overlays and image manipulations. "In fact, every week we use those features for populating our landing pages," said Castelli.

lastminute.com also discovered the benefits of Cloudinary for video manipulation.

"Video is continuing to grow in popularity and importance," he noted. "Cloudinary enables us to customize the video player to suit our brand and optimize videos to reduce both our bandwidth usage and our website visitors' bandwidth requirements. Being able to make these changes in real-time is quite impressive. Since videos can be quite huge, the ability to optimize performance is key for us." He added that now they are beginning to increase the use of video as another way to showcase the company's travel packages.

THE RESULTS

Greater Consistency, Better Workflow Efficiency, and Bigger Time Savings

By bringing all the teams managing aspects of the media lifecycle together on a single platform, lastminute.com has been able to reduce the complexity of its technology stack, enhance the workflow for its design team, and make teams more productive.

The combination of Cloudinary and the new CMS made the publishing process faster. Before the integration of Cloudinary and the new CMS via API, lastminute.com had to find the image in DAM, get the URL, go to CMS and paste it, while now it's just finding an image in DAM and selecting it. This is obviously possible because of both the functionalities provided by Cloudinary and some logics implemented in our CMS (such as smart size — pixels — delivery based on content resolution).

"Where we've seen some of the biggest benefits is in terms of user experience," said Castelli. "We've been able to reduce the page size and improve loading time, which dramatically improves our visitors' experiences using our site to search for the perfect vacation."

About Cloudinary

Cloudinary's end-to-end solution makes it easy to upload, store, manage, manipulate and deliver images and videos, efficiently and effectively. Cloudinary has quickly become the de facto solution used by web and mobile application developers at major companies around the world to streamline image and video management and deliver an optimal end-user experience. Among Cloudinary users are Conde Nast, Bleacher Report, Forbes, Wired, TED, Under Armour, Lululemon, Whole Foods and many others.

For more information, visit **www.cloudinary.com** or follow on **Twitter**