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Our founder/ CEO Marin Bright came up with some clever ways to help alleviate some of that #EventProfs pressure.



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Melia Punta Cana Beach Resort

PLAYAS DE BAVARO, PUNTA CANA

Adjacent to the beaches of Playa Bávaro, the adults-only Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort offers guests luxurious amenities, an assortment of international dining options and irreplaceable activities. Showcasing white sandy beaches, crystal-clear waters and tropical gardens unique to the atmosphere of the Dominican Republic, the property is acutely in tune with the local environment. Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort combines the essence of the Caribbean with modern all-inclusive spaces to offer the perfect destination for groups of all sizes.

ACCOMMODATIONS & AMENITIES

Having opened in December of 2018, the resort consists of a total of 544 rooms, inclusive of standard junior suites and 136 THE LEVEL suites. Groups who book under Meliá Hotels & Resort's signature elevated service concept, THE LEVEL, are offered amenities like preferential treatment, free Internet access, premium beverages, and hors d'oeuvres alongside coffee and tea service throughout the day. The specialized treatments include an exclusive VIP lounge for check-in/out, a private pool for THE LEVEL guests only and additional restaurant inclusivity at the Quimera Restaurant & Rooftop. Ideal for large groups who favor their privacy and travel luxury, Melia's THE LEVEL offers a 'Concierge' perfect for those who have a bit of free time in between meetings and looking to treat themselves at the spa, book group golf outings or more.

MIN

PECIAL PROMOTION

L ARTICLE

MEETING SPACE

Beyond the beaches, gardens and luxury accommodations, the resort offers guests 7 meeting space rooms fit for a multitude of convention necessities or private conferences. These spaces can fit up to 1,000 guests and are fully prepared to adapt to each and every type of event. From holding a run-of-the-mill meeting to presenting the latest products at the forefront of an industry, Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort is dedicated to creating the magic required for any event to be a success.

DINING & ACTIVITIES

With cuisine ranging from Mediterranean to Italian, groups have the opportunity to experience a different restaurant each night. The resort offers seven individual restaurant concepts including an elegant restaurant featuring a wood fire grill named Casa Nostra, an oriental-style restaurant offering Dim Sum, Vietnamese, Sushi and Robatta style cuisine named Muoi, and an open-air breakfast and lunch experience with stunning views of the Caribbean Sea and an international buffet named Rumba. Adjacent to Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort is the family-friendly property

Meliá Caribe Beach Resort which offers guests access to 11 additional restaurants.

For dining options that vary to fit every need, it's no wonder that the resort offers a wide range of activities as well. Perfect for exercising both the mind and body, Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort offers cultural workshops and fitness or dance classes that can create essential team bonding moments. The resort's beautiful tropical environment additionally encourages the utmost in relaxation. Escape the boring board room with access to the Cocotal golf course - an 18-hole course designed by the famous course architect José Gancedo - or fun in the sun at the beach or at one of the several spacious pool options. No matter the activity, guests are sure to leave Meliá Punta Cana Beach Resort with truly unforgettable experiences.



• Officially opened Dec. 15, 2018.

- The resort is adults-only and perfect for large groups.
- The resort consists of a total of 544 rooms, including standard junior suites and 136 THE LEVEL suites.
- Please change for 9 meeting rooms with over 15,767 sq.ft.
- Dining options include 7 individual restaurant concepts, with cuisine ranging from Mediterranean to Italian, and access to 8 restaurants at sister-property Melia Caribe Beach Resort.
- Guests have access to the Cocotal golf course, an 18-hole course designed by the famous course architect Jose Gancedo.
- The resort is complete with 4 swimming pools, a YHI Spa, a health club and 7 bars.

Lessons Learned

It is not an accident that our Planner of the Year issue and our annual education check-in story share the same cover. Learning how to manage thousands of people in variable circumstances with strict budgets that often reach seven digits is something that requires constant learning.

I have been in the meetings industry my entire career and have managed events since I pioneered the practice of bringing suppliers and planners together for intimate, one-on-one business meetings paired with elevated informal networking. I have seen up-close the lessons an event professional needs to be successful. While there are now more formal education programs available than ever before (see story on page 52), there are still lessons that



have to be learned in the ballroom. And while you can study for your meeting professional, strategic design and sustainability certificate that will help you to master your craft without a doubt, you also need some core competencies. This is my cheat sheet.

Bright Rules for Mastering the Meeting Room

Go to meetings-all kinds of meetings. Join and attend association events, competitor events, random unrelated events. Sit in the back of the room at one of your own events and take it all in from an attendee perspective. Sometimes, you have to take off the planner hat to hear the next big idea.

Put the goal in the middle. You are not planning an annual conference. You are raising the profile of the company, empowering employees and changing lives. We have to work strategically if we are going to be effective. See our July 2019 cover story.

Do the site visit. Our destination articles are designed to inspire you to consider new cities, venues and activities. And I am jazzed about innovations coming in virtual and augmented reality that could make it possible to do coordinated looksies online.

"Congratulations to the 2019 Planners of the Year. Thank you for sharing your journey."

But once you have narrowed down the short list, nothing beats walking the halls, looking the team in the eye and scoping out the cleanliness of the restrooms.

Check it twice. Who doesn't love a good checklist? I track tasks everywhere—on my phone, taped to the wall as giant sticky notes, in the front of the binder. These are non-negotiable.

Delegate. The more I trust my team to deal with the details the way I would, the more I can think about ways to improve the overall experience in ways not yet imagined.

Learn how to sleep anywhere, anytime on the plane, between the precon and the sound check, even without blackout curtains. You can't energize others if you are drained.

Chocolate. Enough said.

@marinbright

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Smart meetings INSPIRING BRILLIANT EXPERIENCES

VOLUME EIGHTEEN, NUMBER NINE, SEPTEMBER 2019

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DASH OF SMART

5 Tactics to Attract More Attendees to Your Event

Know your target audience.

Consider building a profile using data provided by your registration software. Web analytics and social data can provide useful information, as well. You can integrate a web analytics platform with your registration tool and track users or the ticketing system to dig a bit deeper. Social data tools, such as Facebook Insights, can add another layer.

Maximize online advertising for the most impact.

Use the data you've gathered on your target audience, along with strategic advertising tools such as Boostable, to make advertising work for you, so you reach the right audience.

Use email more effectively.

Don't just blast your entire email list to announce your event; segment instead. Categories might include those who bought tickets to previous events you held versus those who haven't, or different demographics within your target audience. Create individual campaigns for each of those groups, with specific messages.

Network at similar events.

Team up with events that share audience demographics to publicize your next event. Set up a booth at a medical conference to promote your upcoming pharmaceutical event, for example, or sponsor a networking happy hour near a major technology conference to get the word out about your tech-related trade show.

Promote through engagement.

Shift your focus to conversational. Move away from strict marketing messages on your social media platforms and engage your followers with useful content that speaks to them.

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Dominican Republic

TAKE YOUR TIME!

TIME MANAGEMENT HACKS FOR WHEN YOU CAN'T FIND ENOUGH HOURS IN THE DAY

Event planning is an industry that runs 24/7. In order to stay on top of their game, event planners need to manage their time with utmost precision. Here are some time management tricks to help you keep up with your hectic schedule.















1. Create a time audit. The first step is knowing where your hours go. Apps such as Rescue Time and Toggl can help you track down your time thieves. 2. Set a time 1 limit to each to of your tasks. E This can help 1 you avoid to distractions a and prevent j procrastination. r

3. Plan each day the night before. Before you leave work for the day, spend a few minutes jotting down your must-dos for the next day and prioritize them. **4.** Tackle your most important most important tasks first thing the morning. A President John F. Kennedy one said, "The time prepare the room is when the sum is shining."

5. Reflect on your most important accomplishments tasks first thing in at the end of the morning. As each day. Doing President John so can help you F. Kennedy once stay on track and said, "The time to motivate you to prepare the roof conquer your is when the sun goals the next day.

on your6. Learn to say
"no." Many of
us pile on more
stress than
needed because
we find it difficult
to turn people
ur
ext
ext
ext
effective when we
set limits.

o say7. Delegate. This
can be difficult for
some of us to do,
but it can be a big
time saver. If you
don't have time
to train someone,
hire a freelancer
who has the
knowhow.

8. Recharge. Take a few minutes throughout the day just to just close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Schedule bedtime and stick to it. Rest helps us stay focused.



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Smart Buzz

NOTE FROM MARIN BRIGHT IN AFTERMATH OF TRAGIC SHOOTINGS

The summer was filled with tragic headlines from across the country as shooter incidents left a trail of death and destruction in public places, including events. The reality is that our events have become targets. While we need to continue to take every precaution and learn from each incident, we may have to come to terms with the fact that until we change the culture, security guards may not be enough. Anything can happen anywhere and we, unfortunately, have to be prepared to deal with it.

During difficult times like this, it is important to talk to each other about what we are doing, feeling and hearing. We excel at sharing best practices, thinking fast and being there to support each other. I am putting my hope in the strength of our event professional community and the resiliency that serves us well in the face of tragedy. As the people responsible for the safety of our attendees and as citizens of the world, we have to do everything in our power to protect everyone who trusts us to create a safe place to come together.

NEW SAFETY MEASURE IN PLACE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Dominican Republic's Ministry of Tourism announced new safety measures to reassure travelers to the island in the wake of media coverage of tourists experiencing health issues over the past several months. The situations are being investigated, but the U.S. State Department has not issued an elevated travel warning.

New safety initiatives include requiring hotels to post information in every room on how to contact embassies, the tourism police force and 911 services; increasing the number of monitoring measures; and additional medical facilities on property. Also, a multilingual emergency tourist center has opened in Bavaro, home to ever-popular Punta Cana. Hotel inspections will be doubled, and now include detailed food and handling protocols, as well as comprehensive information on all food-and-beverage suppliers.

Licensing and training of medical personnel working inside first-aid facilities at hotels will be scrutinized and the country's Department of Tourism Services and Companies will closely monitor hotel medical offices. In addition, aquatic facilities such as pools will be closely inspected and certified lifeguards will be in place.

John Jannini, SITE Foundation president and vice president of meetings and events at Melia Hotels International, said, "Recent media reports have portrayed this amazing destination in a very misleading light. The Dominican Republic is diversified like no other island in the Caribbean, with pristine beaches, deserts, high mountains, historical sites, waterfalls and remote islands. Its price-tovalue ratio and airlift make it hugely accessible, while its people are warm, friendly and welcoming. Meliá Hotels International has been in the destination for decades, with a 100 percent record around safety and security."

Paul Steinmentz, director of The American Meetings Network at American Meetings, blames public perception as the media frenzy around recent events continues to take its toll on the country. "I think there's a real case of optics," he

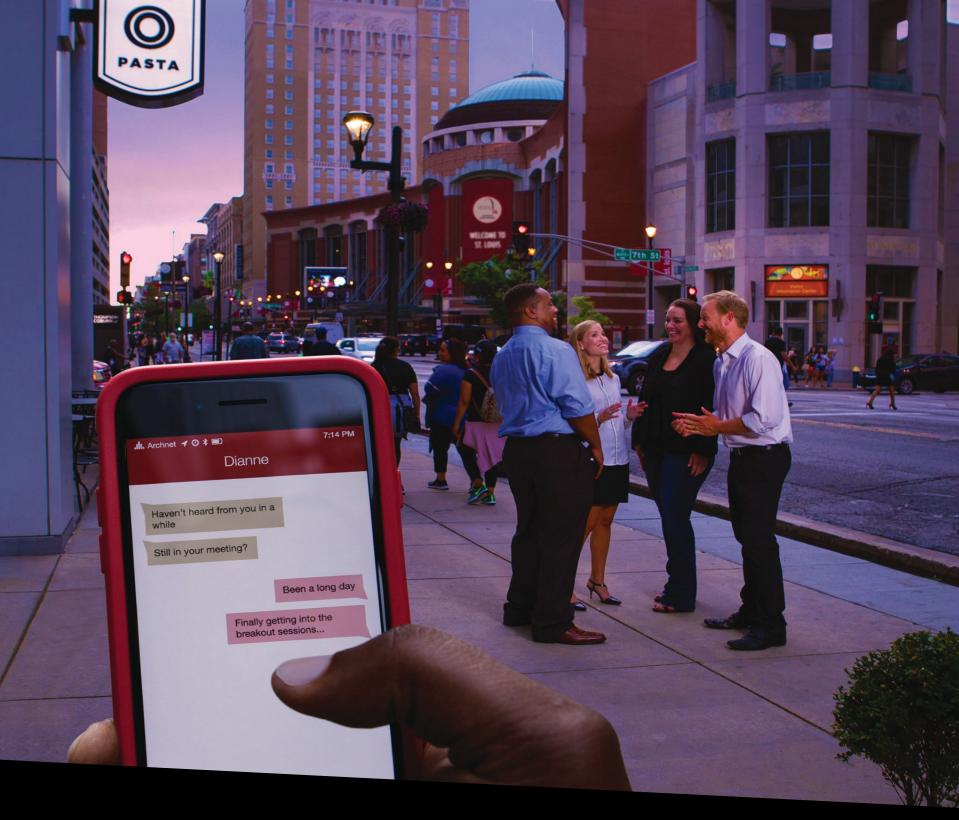
says.

Marin Bright

tional with misrepresenting facts connected to resort fees.

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Smart Moves

Sam Torgerson

Viceroy Hotels and Resorts promoted Torgerson to director of global sales. She was director of strategic accounts at Viceroy Snowmass in Aspen, Colorado, for four years. Before Viceroy Snowmass, Torgerson served in various sales roles with properties such as The Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch in Avon, Colorado, and Vail Marriott Resort & Spa, also in Colorado.

forever. though.

things?" Hudson said.



Chad Enloe

Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau named Enloe vice president of sales. He recently served as regional director of sales for Aimbridge Hospitality in Plano, Texas. He's held other sales leadership positions at major hospitality companies and organizations, including Hyatt, American Airlines, Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau, InterContinental Hotels and Omni.



Kelli Tretina

Tretina is destination sales manager for JW Marriott Chicago. She joins the team after working with The Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale in Florida as senior catering executive. Prior to The Ritz-Carlton, she worked at Renaissance Fort Lauderdale in catering sales. Tretina also served as assistant event operations manager at Renaissance Chicago Downtown.



Martin Wormull

The Candler Hotel, the first Curio Collection by Hilton in Atlanta and opening this fall, named Wormull general manager, furthering his 17-year relationship with Hilton, during which he held numerous executive leadership positions. The 30-year veteran recently served as managing director at Hilton's The Dalmar and Element Hotels in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Knowledge and Events Director. IMEX ale Hudson was preaching about sustainability

before it was cool-or had a name. Growing up in

Zimbabwe, Hudson spent a lot of her time outdoors,

and fell in love with nature. She realized that the beautiful

natural resources that she enjoyed every day wouldn't last

our natural resources with very little thought or conse-

quence, and it made me start thinking, 'When is anyone

going to take notice that they are not endless, and that

we need to start thinking about alternative ways of doing

hands. "In every one of my roles, I have tried to implement

[sustainability] into my job role in some capacity," she said.

Bloom gave her full reign to begin a sustainability program

During her career, she took the matter into her own

When Hudson joined IMEX in 2003, Chairman Ray

"As I grew up, it worried me that we seemed to use all







alongside her day job. As knowledge and events director at IMEX, a large part of her job involves spreading the word about how vendors and planners can shrink the size of their carbon footprint during events.

Hudson has served several sustainability and educational organizations, such as Spread the Word Nevada, where delegates can bring books or make contribution for the purchase of books. She has also helped to foster Water Wise Wednesday, where participants are encouraged to buy food that uses a less than average amount of water to produce.

IMEX's Be Well initiative encourages planners to introduce meditation into their daily routine. Hudson says people always come back to say what a difference practicing meditation has made in their lives. "Meeting planners have incredibly stressful [lives]...I believe having some sort of outlet at an event for delegates is really important," she says.

Anthony Duggan

Duggan is director of sales for L'Auberge de Sedona in Arizona. He has worked in leadership positions throughout the United States, most recently at The Westin Washington D.C. City Center. Duggan also worked for InterContinental Hotels for 11 years and Fairmont Hotels & Resorts for seven years, during which he served as director of operations at Fairmont Kea Lani in Maui, Hawaii.

Dustin Arnheim

Visit Baltimore appointed Arnheim vice president of convention sales and services. He previously spent 10 years with Visit Indy, where he served as senior director of sales. Before joining Visit Indy, Arnheim was sales manager for Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in Chicago; he later became associate director of sales and interim director of sales for Hyatt Regency Indianapolis.

Matt Bailey

Bailey is managing director for Carmel Valley Ranch in Carmel-By-The-Sea in California. The California native spent five years as president and chief operating officer for Aqua-Aston Hospitality in Honolulu; before that, he was managing director at Grand Wailea, A Waldorf Astoria Resort, in Wailea on Maui, in Hawaii. He was also executive vice president for Fandango Resorts in Park City, Utah.

Susan Richardson

Richardson is director of sales for Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau. Previously, she worked at Jacob Javitz Convention Center in New York City as director of sales and marketing solutions. Richardson served at other New York-based properties, including complex director of sales and marketing for The Renwick and Gregory Hotels, and director of association sales at The Roosevelt Hotel.



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Name: Deiter Heigel

Title: General Manager

Organization: Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel, Illinois

Why the push for stimulating, innovative meeting environments?

Today's savvy event planners understand the expense of creating current and appealing settings for their events. An environment that is already stimulating and interesting allows planners to focus on presentations, and on exceptional food and beverage experiences.

Everyone has a different learning style. Many times, the key to successfully communicating the meeting message or providing an open learning environment is the setting of the room and the sensory environment. A well-planned and well-executed meeting will always be a memorable event.

How are hotels making their environments more energized for attendees?

Many hotels provide unique settings within the event space and the general hotel. The Renaissance Schaumburg has many of those spaces: the Knowledge Zone, the Studio (surrounded by glass on the three sides) and the Shoreline Stroll.

How can biophilic design help stimulate attendees and enhance their experience at hotels?

In my opinion, any work or meeting space with natural light will create a more positive and productive environment. Incorporating nature and natural features will enhance the positive atmosphere and contribute to a successful event.



Stimulating Environments Energize Meetings

"Incoporating nature and natural features will enhance the positive atmosphere and contribute to a successful event."

At your hotel, you "bring the outside in." How does this help stimulate and otherwise affect attendees?

At the Renaissance Schaumburg, nature is one of the key elements of the overall design. An abundance of natural light from several lobby skylights, 48-foot clear glass panels, views through the lobby and the open, six-floor atrium create the feeling of "outside" inside. Over a dozen full-size trees, along with many natural plants and the use of natural materials, enhance the sense of a warm spring day, even in the darkest of winter.

For the exterior, the natural wetland ponds and fountains at the entrance of the property were worked into the overall ambiance of the building, while also serving the purpose of preserving the environment. Indigenous foliage is used both outside and inside the property not only to beautify the grounds, but also to benefit how the property functions. For the interior, the trees and flowers help to trap pollutants and oxygenate the air, dualing as a visual and health appeasement.

Why were the meeting rooms given aspirational names?

We believe every meeting has a purpose. The five meeting rooms that constitute the Knowledge Zone were named with the persuasion of an idealist and awe-inspiring meeting. For example, the Perfection Boardroom's purpose may be for a team to perfect a project, while Connection may be used for networking and imagination may be used for networking and imagination may be used for brainstorming. Our ballrooms, Utopia and Nirvana, and our intimate meeting spaces in the Heavenly Zone—Euphoria, Epiphany, Prosperity and Serenity—were dramatically named with words that signal the end result of an event.

Additionally, the three separate sections of the

Convention Center—Adventure, Discovery and Exploration—were named for the courageous spirit of the Renaissance target customer: the spontaneous explorer. All of these names are unique to our property.

Nirvana Ballroom features a living wall and work tables with 15-minute timers, comfortable chairs and large screens. How do they improve the meeting experience?

No matter your group's size or purpose, a dedicated event team at the Renaissance Schaumburg brings together a feel of the neighborhood with inspired styling of each space, incredible locally sourced catering, and turnkey social breaks to inspire and motivate networking among your guests. The set in Nirvana Ballroom features state-of-the-art technology and modern design, including experiential sensory elements for the table settings, such as intriguing hourglasses, nostalgic writing utensils made of chalk and local Lemonhead candies. These interactive elements keep guests engaged, while elevating the mood and stimulating sensory memory to enhance recall.

How are areas optimized for smaller groups' needs?

There are many ways to spend time, both by yourself and with others. The idea of the public space design is to incorporate many different meeting options as well as space to just "be"—whether it is the rocking chairs facing east to linger during the sunset, the individual swing chairs to read a book or the communal tables for small group meetings. Step seating is great for team meetings, and so is gathering around the featured oversize fireplace we call Warmth.

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Bottom-Line Basics

Eight essentials for a killer sponsorship strategy

By Victoria Rohrer

ttendees are the reason planners work long hours sourcing the perfect venue, crafting agendas and testing AV setups—but sponsors keep the lights on.

Cvent Sponsorship Manager Noel McWilliams and Fazefwd founder Meg Fasy have mastered the art of attracting partners who will support all or part of your agenda. Following are eight of their suggestions that could increase your bottom line—and decrease your blood pressure.



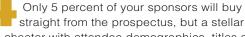
Develop a Wholistic Sponsorship Strategy A personalized attendee journey begins with understanding attendees' motivations and behaviors so you can create a targeted experience. Ask, "What companies do your attendees want to know more about?" Those are the potential sponsors you want to approach to create a win-win relationship.

Get Closer

Keeping a current customer is cheaper than getting a new one. Brainstorm ways you can help them interact more meaningfully with your attendees for a true partnership relationship. Putting a logo on a PowerPoint presentation is no longer the end-all. Could the company provide experts for workshops or discounts for consulting? Enhanced opportunities for sharing content increase the value of the sponsorship for all parties.







Create a Compelling Offer

one-sheeter with attendee demographics, titles and behaviors is an important reference piece. Bonus points if you can paint a complete picture of your attendees. Where do they vacation? What are their job titles? Do they participate in wellness programs?



Give Back

Incorporating CSR in an agenda is a great way to give back to the host community and involve sponsors in a positive way. Fun walks and runs, silent auctions and backpack stuffing help everyone feel better about the event—and themselves. Win-win.



Yes, Event Professionals are Salespeople

Editor's Note: Buried in many job descriptions for event planners is a requirement for sales skills. While the word "sales" may not be used, the duties are often the same—recruiting attendees and sponsors, negotiating with venues and representing the company. The more compellingly you can tell the company story and convince people to work with you, the more successful you will be.

Refer a Friend

Leveraging existing relationships helps to bring new sponsors to the table. Happy customer-partners could be your biggest advocates. Ask them to record testimonials and introduce you to like-minded companies who would appeal to your attendees.



Keep It Informal Your sponsors want to

spend quality time with your attendees. Experiential, immersive activities are one way to provide this networking benefit. The more sponsors can be face to face with attendees, the more valuable they will see your offer. Food and drink activations are a simple way to achieve experiential interactions at your event. Your venue could help you provide culinary "wow" on a budget if you know how to ask the right questions.

What are your tips for partnering to elevate the event experience? Email us at **editor@smartmeetings.com**.

Price It Right

Three important factors of pricing are profit margin, sponsor propensity and competitive analysis. The ideal profit margin for an event is unique to each company, but the rule of thumb is to aim for around 25 to 30 percent. Sponsor propensity relates to what the market is willing to pay. Lastly, look at similar conferences that have the same number of attendees, industry segments and attendee titles, and do a cost analysis around those factors.



Mine Post-Event Metrics Report back to sponsors using data to prove return on investment (ROI) or return on equity (ROE). Include information such as session attendance, post-event surveys and attendee feedback.

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It had been a long day of meetings and breakout sessions, but Alex Tan's co-workers told her they had another stop to make before calling it a night. They'd heard rumors about a bar in Harbor East with an unmarked door — where cell phones and selfies were replaced with easy conversation and a steady flow of expertly crafted cocktails. Their adventure led them to The Elk Room; and the next day on the convention floor, Tan and her new friends made a pact to meet there again before their annual conference ended. For them, Charm City had made business a pleasure.



Case Study: Inspiring Activists

Unrig made wonky politics cool again

By JT Long

EDITOR'S NOTE: How can a nonprofit, nonpartisan group focused on bringing 1,800 people together from across the country to share best practices for democracy reform pull off a win with a skeleton staff? Smart Meetings sat down to talk with Stephanie Slysz, executive administrator and Mei Seva, multimedia producer at RepresentUs, about just such an event.

BUSINESS GOAL: The second-annual Unrig event was designed to showcase a movement on the rise. The stories shared proved that one person can have a huge impact. Sessions featuring winning grassroots campaigns uplifted the voices of local leaders and brought to light their experiences, lessons and challenges on a big, national stage, with actress Jennifer Lawrence moderating.

CHALLENGE: All of this had to be accomplished with a tiny crew of 1.5 staff members until six months out; then five people started contributing part-time, and in the last month, everyone chipped in.

SOLUTION: Managing a conference of this size with few people requires securing the right partners. Working with Eventbrite and Entegy made it easier to create a seamless, customized registration experience that flowed into exclusive app usage.

FOCUS: Politics can be wonky, so a mix of panel discussions, plenary sessions, entertainment and star power kept the energy up. Unrigged Live was a night of comedy, music, entertainment and leaders, such as RepresentUs Director Josh Silver, and the force behind a Michigan antigerrymandering bill, Katie Fahey. Build-your-skills workshops empowered attendees to be more effective when they returned home.



SUCCESS MEASUREMENT: Surveys showed that 75 percent of attendees learned about a 2018 win or about a future campaign/coalition launching or growing. Half said they met someone of a different political ideology. And attendees were much more satisfied with the training offered than in the previous year.

LESSONS LEARNED: The timeline needs plenty of wiggle room. The team has vowed to start planning even earlier. Registration is always a beast when everyone comes at once and there are badge issues from the printer. Even more effort will go into looking for ways to make that first impression seamless.

The app not only served as a more environmentally friendly way to help people navigate the agenda: It forced planners to finalize schedules on time because delays would have affected the app rollout. One thing that worked well was having trained volunteers at a help desk, away from the registration table, to help people download the app so that everyone felt comfortable with the paperless solution.

The team also plans to keep the conversation going by recording episodes at the conference for Unrig the System Podcast, which will be released on Spotify and iTunes weekly.



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Over-the-Top Team Building

Three ways to maximize your Topgolf experience

By JT Long

hallenged with making the traditional golf tournament more relevant to everyone in the organization? Looking to liven up cocktail hour? Trade in the celebrity-designed golf course and ballroom for an interactive team-building outing with wide appeal and minimal planner effort.

Since Topgolf—a tech-enabled take on the driving range, paired with meeting space and fun F&B—now has 55 venues in the United States and five more on the way, there is probably a location close to your meeting space. Heck, you could even take the meeting to the building, since most have conference rooms that can accommodate up to 250 people and full audiovisual capacity, with high-definition, big-screen monitors and Wi-Fi. Rooftop terraces feature stages, lounge furniture, fire pits and views that promote visionary thinking.

When the Jolliffe brothers and a licensee developed the first Topgolf location in the United Kingdom in 2000, they hit on an idea that has come a long way from inserting microchips in golf balls to track their journey from the comfort of a covered driving range.

While staff is trained to personalize the experience to fit the goals of the event, here are some ideas from Director of National Events Nick Kopach for leveraging the F&B, games and technology that make each location special.

Tournament Win-Wins

Fun icebreakers and team competitions organized by Topgolf hosts make easy work of addressing the most common workplace skills: communication, collaboration and strategy. The format levels the playing field for all skill levels and rewards those who encourage each other. Play makes friendly conversations easy to start and creates a memorable common bond. At the end of each activity, participants reflect on lessons and learn how to grow together.

TopRelay

This fast-paced, high-energy challenge focuses on culture and adapting to unexpected twists and turns. Just when guests think they have mastered the strategy, hosts throw in a new rule that often results in discoveries about the hidden talents on the team.

TopTrivia

Turn the challenge up a notch by simultaneously testing guests' knowledge of sports, music, movies, history and geography while they are swinging to hit specific targets on the range. This modification allows everyone to shine.

TopWager

26

The object of the game is to score the most points by making a series of wagers. The lesson plan is focused on the collaboration and strategy of all team members, making for an interesting discussion. It can also be the fastest way to determine who is the most persuasive person on the team.







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To Your Health!

The case for organic wines

By Gary Diedrichs

s there poison in your glass?

Now that I've got your attention, let me rephrase that. If you, like so many of us, want to know where your food comes from—ideally, a local organic farmer or rancher at your farmer's market, or from the organic section of your supermarket—do you extend the same due diligence to a glass of wine? (Or, for that matter, a beer or cocktail?)

In other words, are there health hazards (beyond the obvious overindulgence) to drinking the equivalent of factory-farmed wine and other alcohol?

The subject is complex, so for this discussion, let's stick to wine. Nonorganic wines are made from grapes often sprayed with pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides, and treated with chemical fertilizers. Government agencies that are lobbied heavily by chemical companies and conventional farming organizations will tell you that these substances are perfectly safe when used as directed.

Organic wines—and those labeled "Made with organic grapes"—can be made using specific remedies to combat insects, leaf mold and other vineyard challenges, but most of these are naturally derived, not created by chemists. Biodynamic wines, too, are grown without chemicals and GMOs, with added practices to nurture the soil and surrounding environment.

We are reminded of Rule No. 19 in author and activist Michael Pollan's Food Rules: "If it's a plant, eat it. If it was made in a plant, don't."

The Hidden Additives

Then there is the matter of additives. Pollan also got us reading food labels—and rejecting those with ingredients that our great-grandmothers wouldn't know. Wine is food of the gods, so the saying goes, but alcohol products, in general, have so far successfully resisted passage of laws requiring such labeling. In *Wine Food: New Adventures in Drinking and Cooking*, sommelier Dana Frank and Andrea Slonecker, note, "There's a laundry list of legally approved additives that can be used in wine-making—everything from colorants to tannin softeners, to fish bladders."

Others commonly used include: egg white, milk products, gelatin, and substances derived from pig and cow pancreas and stomach (vegans, take note).

Organic wines can use these substances for fining (clarifying) and filtering, too. But the one additive that sets organic wines apart is sulfur in the form of sulfites (sulfur dioxide), a preservative that keeps wine from turning brownish. A small percentage of us is allergic to sulfites, which can produce asthma-like symptoms (not headaches, a common misconception). U.S. law requires wine labels to state "contains sulfites" if a wine contains 10 or more parts per million (ppm) of this substance, which is naturally occurring in small quantities

in wine. Organic wine cannot contain more than this. Conventional wine can contain up to 350 ppm, and sulfites are added routinely to extend freshness and shelf life, especially in white, rose and sweet wines. Some research suggests hangover symptoms may be linked to high levels of sulfites.

Skip the Roundup

But one of the most concerning aspects of vineyard management these days has nothing to do with anything applied directly to the grapes. It's a chemical used to kill weeds that border the vines—glyphosate, better known as Roundup. Trace amounts of the widely used herbicide made infamous by Monsanto (recently bought by Bayer AG) were found in 19 of 20 wines and beers recently tested by U.S. Public Research Group (USPIRG).

Glyphosate, marketed globally for decades to gardeners, landscapers and farmers, is a dangerous carcinogen, says the World Health Organization. In May, a jury in California ordered Monsanto to pay \$1 billion in damages to a couple who blamed Roundup for getting non-Hodgkins lymphoma; earlier cases have also awarded large damages to plaintiffs. Monsanto and Bayer deny all allegations.

According to the USPIRG report, St. Helena, California-based Sutter Home wine, a convenience store staple, had the highest levels of glyphosate, at 51 parts per billion (ppb). Glyphosate is banned in organic farming, so that should

be the end of that story. Yet it was detected in several organic wines tested, including Inkarri Estate and Frey Organic Natural White wines. How the chemical herbicide got in the organic soil is unknown—wind drift from nearby nonorganic fields, perhaps? If there's a "There's a laundry list of legally approved additives that can be used in winemaking—everything from colorants to tannin softeners, to fish bladders. shred of good news there, it's that, at 5.2 ppb and 4.8 ppb, respectively, levels were significantly lower than in conventional labels.

A Safer Way

In his book, *Spontaneous Healing*, Dr. Andrew Weil compares the human body to a river. In a healthy river, pollutants, debris and sludge

are sluiced away—until too much of the bad stuff overwhelms its ability to "heal." Today's world is awash in unhealthy inputs, such as the dirty air we breathe, the chemical-laden food and water we consume, plastics and other petrochemical products that surround us, UV rays and maybe even unseen EMFs. Why add more with wine, potentially, when it can be—has been for centuries—made for our enjoyment in a more natural, safer way?

And, oh, by the way, just because a wine is labeled organic (or "grown with organic grapes," biodynamic or sustainably farmed) doesn't mean you'll love it. You'll still have to channel your inner Michael Pollan and read the label, be selective and find the bottles that suit your palate, occasion and food.

Don't forget to recycle the bottle. Why not help the planet while you toast your health?









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Drowning in Data

Event marketers have the info-now what?

By Alexandra Pusateri

You've set up your data collection points, your attendees have completed surveys and now, in your hands, is what is arguably the most valuable asset to understanding your attendees. What do you do with it?

Freeman, one of the leading brand experience companies in events, released additional insights into its *Data Benchmark Study*, in which more than 650 brand marketing executives across multiple disciplines were surveyed. (The study and expanded insights are available for free on freeman.com.) The expanded insights into the event marketing side of data provide a much-needed perspective of what exactly event and meeting planners are tasked with long after the venue doors close.

Event marketers are "drowning in data," according to the report—46 percent of those marketing executives found their most-pressing challenge centered around analysis of the data they collect. It's easy to forget that the numbers, bytes and bits of data are tangible, real human beings—something Freeman discusses in its report.



By looking at the trends of attendees and the actions they take throughout an event, planners can adapt not only the physical layout of the event (such as with radio-frequency identification through wristbands and badges), but also the structure and entire purpose of the event itself. Before that can happen, however, event professionals must ask why they are gathering data in the first place.

In an episode of "Run of Show," a video web series by event marketing company Splash, CEO Ben Hindman reiterates the importance of this purpose, in addition to the process of transferring the data to the key players in your organization to analyze: "It doesn't matter if you've captured all this data and you stored it in some system somewhere. If you don't get it in people's hands in the time that they can use it, you might as well not have collected it at all."

3 KEY APPROACHES THAT PLANNERS CAN IMPLEMENT

• Have discussions with your marketing and sales departments to understand the purpose behind collecting specific data. Do you want to know just the contact information of your attendees or would you prefer knowing whether your networking attendees are extroverted or introverted?

Collect your data into a master database (often using a third-party vendor, which can make an event professional's life much easier in this regard) that will pull into different categories when needed. This will help departments cross-examine data and use subsets that are necessary for their category, and prevent an overwhelming endeavor.

• Tell a story with your data to show ROI. If there is no context alongside your data, it is meaningless. Provide a clear picture on the return of your event by also providing insights into why the data matters.



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What Kind of Planner are You?

Lead your team by managing your expectations

By Libby Gill

ust like people, planner teams have personalities. While the nature of teams has shifted since our tribal hunter-gatherer days, teams are still one of our most crucial social structures. This is true in most organizations, and particularly the case in high-stress event planning groups. How we introduce hopefulness into our teams can be the difference between joyful collaboration and frustrating second-guessing.

While you may not always have the luxury of hand-picking your team members, the more you understand the personalities involved, the more you'll be able to predict and manage the group dynamic. See if you recognize yourself and your co-workers in the list of team member archetypes below.



The Visionary

Visionaries are the creative engines of the team machine. Though they may sometimes seem lost in the clouds, it is precisely their ability to dream-and dream big-that can bring a breakthrough idea to the team. These creative types aren't just found in positions like marketing or design. Learn • Creative to tolerate their flights of fancy and give them encouragement • Big Picture to express their thoughts, and you may find they're full of fresh Imaginative process and people solutions that can help solve even the • Future-focused thorniest problems.



The Driver

Drivers are the leaders who keep the team focused and moving forward. Often, these are designated leaders, but in flat teams or organizations where everyone is meant to be equal, leaders often emerge naturally. If there's no clear leader,

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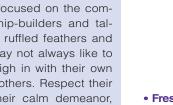
 Focused one of the first team tasks should be to choose someone to direct the team. Typically, that person will be charged with guiding group discussions, assigning roles and managing conflict-in short, keeping the team moving efficiently toward the end goal.



The Diplomat

Like the Organizer, the Diplomat is focused on the common good. Diplomats are relationship-builders and talented team players who can soothe ruffled feathers and bring out the best in others. They may not always like to take the lead, but they'll happily weigh in with their own thoughts and encourage input from others. Respect their emotional nature and appreciate their calm demeanor, and you'll have a connector who can rally the team even in the most difficult moments.

 Influential Harmonious Relationshiporiented



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The Expert

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Though everyone on the team should have skills that allow them to contribute to problem-solving and organizational growth (except for the Wild Card), there should be at least one person on the team with deep subject matter knowledge. The Expert is the go-to answer person on the problem at hand, a skilled researcher and someone who can pose and answer the questions no one else even thought to ask. Treasure them.

 Disruptive Innovative Challenging

The Naysayer

Contrarians of the corporate world have gotten a bad rap for being negative. But that's actually their blessing. If you can put up with the Naysayers' occasional sourpuss style, you'll discover that their out-of-the-box way of looking at the world can bring an enormous amount of innovation to the group. Deal with their disruptive attitudes, listen to their wild ideas, embrace their sometimes-unusual methods, and you may strike gold.

Idea-people



The Organizer

With a strong organizer on board, the team leader may be able to shift some of the administrative activities. Organizers are process-oriented and often adept with lists, calendars and charts. Rather than impose their will on others (as some Drivers tend to do), they love to put systems in place to create an atmosphere of order and harmony where everyone can thrive. Be grateful if you have someone like a former assistant of mine who told me proudly at our initial interview,

"I live to organize." It was music to my Driver ears and the

beginning of a long and fruitful relationship.

 Detailed Supportive Team-focused

oriented



The Wild Card

Not every team needs a Wild Card, that is, a person who comes from a completely different discipline and might not normally interact with the group. But by bringing a Wild Card onto a team or even just an occasional meeting, particularly brainstorming sessions where all ideas are welcome, you may get some great surprises. People who are new to the organization or business unit can often be great Wild Cards, bringing fresh perspectives and competitive knowledge that can be invaluable.









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The Candler Hotel, Atlanta

The Candler Building, built by Asa Griggs Candler, founder of Coca-Cola, was Atlanta's tallest steel skyscraper, and is recognized as a National Historic Place. Based in Atlanta, it has since been rebuilt into the 265-room Candler Hotel. For the meeting planner who has an interest in the rich history, 6,000 sq. ft. of meeting space awaits.



Sanderling Resort, Duck, North Carolina

Meet with a view of the Atlantic at two renovated meeting spaces at this 123-room resort. The two-story Oceanside House & Deck includes outdoor fire pits and lawn games. The Pavilion has its own private dock and over-water gazebo, and now includes an outdoor deck. Both spaces accommodate up to 180 guests.



The Harpeth Hotel, Franklin, Tennessee

This is Franklin, Tennessee's first downtown hotel. The 119-room property is home to more than 5,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. The Riverside Ballroom features light fixtures that resemble the handmade lace of early ballroom dresses and Maury Ballroom is named after Abram Maury, the city's founder. Both rooms pay homage to the city's history.

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NEGRONI AT 100

n 1919, Camillo Negroni, a Florentine count, ordered fizzy water in his Americano cocktail to be switched out with gin. Thus the classic negroni cocktail was born. Today, according to a survey taken by the magazine *Drinks International*, it's the second-most-called-for cocktail worldwide (the old-fashioned finished first). In part, that may be due to its simplicity—it's hard for a bartender to screw up equal parts gin, sweet vermouth and an Italian or Italianate bitter aperitivo (traditionally Campari). But that simple standard has yielded endless riffs, including questionable variants made with aquavit, rum, rose, coffee and even squid ink.

Baglioni Hotel London England

You would expect negroni paradiso at a five-star luxury Italian hotel in London's Kensington, and you get it. Among three lavish options is Duomo Negroni, with Cocchi Vermouth di Torino, Sarpa Poli grappa infused with lavender, Campari and Cynar foam. Where else to sip Italian heritage with views of Hyde Park, or partake in afternoon tea accompanied by homemade focaccia with Pugliastyle grilled veg?

The Peabody Memphis

Memphis, Tennessee

The Peabody's history dates to 1869, and since 1933, resident mallard ducks have paraded to the accompaniment of a Sousa march to splash in the lobby fountain. Jack Daniel's distillery is home turf, but The Lobby Bar uses a Kentucky bourbon, Angel's Envy, to make its brown-liquor version of a negroni, commonly called a boulevardier. Instead of an orange slice, Amarena cherries are the garnish.

Angad Arts Hotel

St. Louis

Located in Grand Center Arts District, this is the world's first hotel where guests can book rooms by emotion of color. Its Grand Tavern by David Burke calls its negroni "To Run Italians"—a theater saying meaning "a rehearsal in doubletime"—and builds it with top-shelf gin, Italian vermouth and Amargo-Angostura Vallet, a French liqueur made from angostura bark, cherries, cloves, roots and spices.

The Jefferson Hotel

Richmond, Virginia

Breathtaking opulence and a century of history at this downtown landmark—13 presidents, Elvis and The Rolling Stones have stayed there make improvising on the classic unnecessary, and so its Lemaire Restaurant, which is named after the maitre d' to Thomas Jefferson during his presidency, serves its negronis with only two variables: on the rocks or straight up.



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THE SMART MEETING

Your Body Talks

Smart Meeting Northeast keynote focuses on impact of physical "language"

By Malik Anderson

id you know that body language accounts for more than 60 percent of communication? You may have the "gift of gab," but if the movements of your body don't match your words, then the gab is meaningless.

This is the message body language expert Blanca Cobb conveyed to attendees during her keynote at the Smart Meeting Northeast event, held at The Roosevelt Hotel in New York City on July 11.

Attendees shuffled in their seats and checked their posture as Cobb talked about the importance of body language in daily life. According to her, people create their perception of you—whether they like you, trust you or want to do business with you—within the first seven seconds of meeting you, and it becomes difficult to shake that perception thereafter. "Their perception of you becomes their reality of you," she continued. Talk about *pressure*.

Cobb discussed common misconceptions about body language—such as if you don't look into a person's eyes as you speak to them, you must be lying. Actually, a metaanalysis—a compilation of multiple studies—that Cobb referenced found that the break of eye contact has no causation (the eye-contact breaker probably isn't lying).

Near the end of her keynote, Cobb urged the audience to not only pay attention to what people are saying to them, but also to what their body language is telling them, as they go about their day. "You will enrich your understanding of people and you will enrich your relationships when you focus not only on their words, but also on their body language," she said.

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Keynote speaker Blanca Cobb

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jwmarco.com

400 South Collier Boulevard, Marco Island, FL 34145, 239.394.2511



Smart Style

Here are hand-picked gifts for your attendees—and you. This month, we're making September sustainable for the planet and your attendees with gifts that keep giving in the office and at your events. Tweet us your faves at @smartmeetings to get featured on social.



Tumbler Home Runs

These sporty glasses feature unbreakable stats from the biggest MVPs in history, doubling as a competitive icebreaker. uncommongoods.com

See it, love it,

Underwater Pavilions

Tote-ally Sustainable

MoMA artist Doug Aitken collaborated with eco-friendly Parley to create a gorgeous tote out of premium recycled plastic from the ocean. store.moma.com

Smart Brush

Yeah, we're going there. This toothbrush uses facial recognition and your smartphone to help you never miss a spot. oralb.com





SWAG BAG IDEAS?

Here are some of our favorite goodies for a killer gift bag!

A HOODIE GOODY BAG

When you're not sure if it's sweater weather yet, this incredibly comfortable hoodie transforms into an adjustable, Shark Tank-approved backpack-or swag bag.

quickflipapparel.com



TOOTHPICK-PROOF SNACKING

They're delicious, flavored mini-popcorn snack packs with small kernels, guaranteed not to get stuck in attendees' smiles.

pipsnacks.com

40



Snaps You'll Love

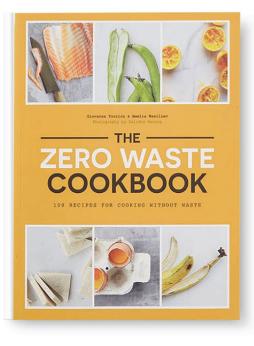
Instant photos. Foldable material. Quality images. And the entire camera is made from recycled cardboard. jollylook.com



Blend and Go!

This sleek, portable blender helps you take your smoothie break at home, at the office or on the road. amazon.com

own it!



Waste-Free Recipes

The perfect gift for a conscientous client features kitchen hacks for cooking without waste. barnesandnoble.com



For the Adventurer

Got a hike on the itinerary? This survival kit provides water purification tablets, matches and more, all packed into a handy flashlight.

vsslgear.com



HAPPIER HOUR

If you hosted a social networking outing the night before, this detoxing, liver-boosting drink will get attendees ready for the morning keynote. morelabs.com



TECHNO BENTO

The BentoStack neatly organizes all attendees' technological carry-ons, plus it comes with a built-in phone charger. function101.com



PERSONAL SECURITY

Safety is a top priority at events, and Basu's clippable, powerful eAlarms help keep it that way. basu.com

2019 PLANNERS OF THE YEAR OF THE AN EVENTFUL LIFE

BY JT LONG

at the highest levels have often taken a circuitous route to their exalted positions. When we put out the call for nominations for 2019 Planner of the Year, we knew the titles, geography and roles would be diverse, because this industry calls on people to perform a wide range of skills.

vent professionals working

We also were pretty sure the nominees would be a passionate group of experts who challenge themselves and those around them to reach higher and try harder. But when we heard these leaders talk about their journeys and the never-ending desire to bring people together that fuels them-along with a lot of coffee-we couldn't wait to share their stories with you.

Their starting

points may have been on opposite ends of the intentional spectrum. Kara Ferguson, meeting planner at American Society of Anesthesiologists in Chicago, knew in college that she wanted to plan events, and immediately applied to Roosevelt University's Hospitality and Tourism Management in Chicago before beginning her life in the association world eight years ago.

Karen Cornelius, global event marketing manager at Toronto-based Scotiabank, has always felt at home in the financial industry, and started planning events for Toronto Stock Exchange 20 years ago. She moved on to arranging tax conferences at CICA (now CPA Canada) and then headed into the banking industry for the next 12 years, organizing client events at TD Securities and TD Wealth, and now, Scotiabank.

Meanwhile, Gigi Gleason, senior manager of global strategic meetings at Autodesk Inc., started as an intern at Meridien Paris Etoile in Paris and pursued culinary training before landing in California's Silicon Valley.

Pilar & Co. founder Amaia Stecker started in politics and shifted to coordinating transportation for a three-course, plated dinner for 800 people from Washington state to Washington, D.C., overnight via Alaska Airlines. The following year, she planned the entire event, from fundraising to finish. That set her course in the industry.

CBD Event Logistics Manager Victoria Love, who works on-site at Cisco in Irvine, California, started in the entertainment industry as a production manager and associate producer until she found that she craved the more immediate satisfaction of the event business.

Denver-based Megan Finnell started as a singer until the loss of her voice led her to the association world at Medical Group Management Association, where she discovered she had a talent for what she calls empathetic design—considering the needs of all stakeholders at each moment in the attendee experience.

There is no one path to a fulfilling career in the meetings industry, and many confided that they fell into the field while others explained that they had charted their course from the beginning. What all the 2019 Planners of the Year have in common is a love for what they do. The respected leaders nominated by their peers were refreshingly honest regarding their biggest challenges and dreams. Hopefully, they will inspire you to blaze your own path to "wow."

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PLANNER OF THE YEAR CASSANDRA FARRINGTON

THE BUSINESS OF GROWING MJBIZCON

The legal cannabis market is officially a giant sequoia of a business. A Research and Markets study estimated in March 2019 that the value of goods sold in North America in 2017 was \$8 billion and predicted that number could grow to \$35 billion by 2023. That is equivalent to the total GDP of the country of Albania today. A growing—and controversial—industry of that size requires support that can only come from face-to-face meetings. Enter Cassandra Farrington, MBA, former Citi vice president and B2B startup cultivator.

ALL BUSINESS

The CEO of MJBizDaily started her career in business-to-business media, where she learned the art of planning and managing newsletters, direct mail and conferences. She took time out to earn her MBA in global business management from University of Texas at Austin Red McCombs School of Business before joining Citi and working her way up to senior project management. "Then I hit a corporate wall," she recalled.

As luck would have it, a friend from the early B2B days reached out with an entrepreneurial idea Farrington could not pass up. What started as Anne Holland Ventures Inc., was soon a family of B2B publications, including *Which TestWon* (now operating under the name Behave.org), *Subscription Site Insider* (now Subscription Insider) and *Marketing Sherpa* (now a division of MEC Labs).

In 2011, the pair launched Marijuana Business Daily (MJBizDaily), focused on the business of the cannabis industry. "We wanted to help dispensary owners do their jobs better, run their businesses better and understand what they need to do now that they had a more traditional business model," Farrington said.

MJBIZCON IS BORN

The company hired a business journalist who had previously covered airlines and published a few stories a week. The editor continued to hear that people needed a place where they could get together to talk shop. Denver readers knew a lot was going on in San Francisco, but didn't know who to talk to about it. Portland, Maine, readers felt they were on an island. Events were more like consumer festivals and plant celebrations—not a place where you could have an effective business meeting.

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Conferences weren't new territory for the pair, so they shrugged their collective shoulders and started planning the first MJBizCon with a date that happened to correspond with the week of the November 2012 election, which included recreational cannabis measures in Colorado and Washington state. Both measures passed and interest in the Denver conference shot up just days before the doors opened. What was planned as an event for 250 people had to be expanded to accommodate 400. Farrington credited the shoestring nature of the gathering with having the flexibility to almost double in size in less than 48 hours. "We weren't ordering extra lobster," she said. "We just had to find more cold cuts."

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The trade show caught fire. Attendance continued to grow and the event moved to Las Vegas, where it brings together business owners, investors, wholesale growers, dispensaries and support services each year at Las Vegas Convention Center. Farrington is expecting more than 35,000 attendees in December—almost double the capacity at T-Mobile Arena. Four other events have spun off around the world—MJBizConInt'l in Toronto, Latin American Cannabis Symposium in Bogota, Colombia, and European Cannabis Symposium in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The agenda includes a marijuana business crash course, a science symposium, speakers and the announcement of the MJBizDaily's Cannabis industry Award winners—and not a whiff of marijuana on the show floor. "Networking is a huge component," Farrington said. "We get the right people in the room because our media provides trust, and that builds on the momentum."

SHAWN CHENG, CMP, DES

SENIOR PROJECT COORDINATOR

CI GROUP CANAD Bachelor's in public administration and attendees, mainly congresses and conferences, but occasionally help with some corporate events and DMC clients.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: It was definitely not an easy route. I started my career as a banquet server at a hotel, as an event assistant at a small local company and as a customer service agent at Tourism Vancouver Visitor Center at the same time. In 2014, I had the opportunity to join MCI, a third-party agency specializing in both professional congresses, and meetings and events.

UPHILL BATTLE: Moving from taking orders to managing projects.

MOMENT OF FLOW: In 2018, I worked on an international congress for bird scientists in Vancouver. We redesigned the exhibition hall and formed partnerships with local art communities. The result was the highest number of sponsors and exhibitors the congress ever had, and the show floor was busy all the time throughout the week.

ULTIMATE GOAL: Be an innovative and strategic planner who continues to create meaningful experiences and value.

ADVICE FOR FUTURE MEETING PROFESSIONALS: Work hard, be humble and stay curious.



grams, and executive- and client-facing off-sites to receptions and golf tournaments in Canada and the United States.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: I have always loved planning personal receptions and dinners. I secured a formal education and then started a second certificate program. Along the way, I gained a wealth of experience by organizing many different types of events and as a member of MPI for 19 years. This has allowed me to nurture strong relationships with third-party suppliers, vendors and hotel partners.

UPHILL BATTLE: Diverse client personalities, learning to manage unrealistic client expectations and educating clients on event logistics. Debunking the perception that we are just party planners.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Validation when hearing positive feedback from clients on a successful event. Once, a client approached me to do a Canadian Investment Conference only two months from the proposed date. The format was for 125 people for five days of training, with eight breakout rooms a day. It required two off-site dinner receptions and 625 room nights. Event parameters were met; I dealt with last-minute changes; the client was ecstatic; and I managed to stay under his \$500,000 budget.

ULTIMATE GOAL: Continue building strong relationships with my business partners; creating more client experiential events allowing for that "wow" factor.

KAREN CORNELIU CMP

MANAGER OF GLOBAL EVENT

Loyola University of Chicago (un-dergrad), Roosevelt University of Chi-(grad). I plan eight or more meet rent role focuses on mana-of several small- to mi include exhibit citywide -the

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: I initially started as a volunteer intern so I could get a taste of the industry. I enjoyed my responsibilities and moved on to become a meetings coordinator, meetings specialist and currently, a meeting planner for a 52,000-member medical association.

UPHILL BATTLE: The most difficult thing to manage as I grew in the industry has been the ideas given on-site without a minute to spare. It is imperative that each meeting gives off the "wow" factor, but they also need to have an intentional impact on the audience and be realistic, based on the available budget.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Obtaining my CMP. Personally, I have been most proud when attendees, during and after a conference, provide feedback to our team about how they enjoyed the meeting and how it has made a positive impact on their life. This means that we were key contributors in designing a successful event.

ULTIMATE GOAL: I want to continuously learn more tips, tricks, trends and tools that will enable me to advance up the career ladder while simultaneously incorporating inspiration, influence and innovation to create new experiences for attendees.

ADVICE FOR FUTURE MEETING PROFESSIONALS: There are so many avenues when it comes to planning, so it is good to be open. If you adapt easily, that could open the door for other opportunities. Ultimately, make connections with colleagues and industry professionals by joining a professional association. Remain focused and persistent.

MIKE

OWNER AND FOUNDER

RREIRA

KARA FERGUSON, CMP, MSHTM

MEETING PLANNER

MADEEAS Bachelor's in hotel management, Cal Poly Pomona, and master's in executive hospitality administration, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. My team represents more than 300 meetings a year for clients and books meetings as small as five and as large as 5,000 attendees.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: I have worked in hotels since I was 16. I worked for Hilton Waterfront Beach Resort, Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel and Montage Laguna Beach while in college. I was accepted into the MGM Resorts Management Associate Program, where I was a convention sales manager at Bellagio in Las Vegas. I then was promoted to hotel sales, where I spent five years before leaving to start my own company.

UPHILL BATTLE: When I started MME, I left a salary to chase my dream. I literally ate top ramen while growing my company. I went completely broke, so I can help event planners with their hotel contract negotiation needs.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Starting my company and watching my team help their clients find hotels all around the world while ensuring they're receiving phenomenal hotel sales contract deals.

ULTIMATE GOAL: To always ensure we serve our clients the best while being transparent, honest and fun-loving. I want to ensure we continue to hire people and watch their careers grow. That is the best feeling on earth!

MEETINGS

ADVICE FOR FUTURE MEETING PROFESSIONALS: Read a lot, find mentors and grow your network as big and as fast as you can.

MEGAN FINNELL. СМР

DIRECTOR OF MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

MEDICAL attendance.

Bachelor's in music, vo-"I performance. My team is "a for 10–13 events a year with "a and as many as 4,500 in "he performance world derailed that path, "nd events. After market and "s really PLANNER JOURNEY: I started out in the performance world as an aspiring opera singer. After vocal problems derailed that path, I found myself in the SMERF world, planning programs and events. After six years there, I switched over to the association planning market and found my true passion. Designing immersive experiences for audiences really hit on my training and experience in new ways I found exhilarating.

UPHILL BATTLE: As we continue to improve our conferences and audience experiences, we tend to add, and not subtract. The increasing complexity puts a strain on our staff and time. Next year, I hope to focus myself and our teams on editing all the good ideas in order to simplify and focus our experience, reduce the decision strain on our attendees and streamline our efforts

MOMENT OF FLOW: Last year, when trying to identify pain points for attendees and stakeholders, I inadvertently stumbled upon a process to force myself to think about each moment of the show in strategic ways. I began taking moments of the show schedule and asking myself: In this moment, what does an attendee want? What does an exhibitor/sponsor want? What do we want as an organization? What do our additional stakeholders want? I call this process "empathetic design."

ULTIMATE GOAL: As a planner, I see my role as facilitating positive change in peoples' lives. Through empathetic experience design, we can create little human collisions among our audience that provide new information, encouragement and connection to make their industries and their worlds a better place. Like interior designer Ilse Crawford said in the Netflix series Abstract, through design, "we hope to add to the sum of human happiness to leave the world a better place."

ODESK Studied hotel restaurant management and business information systems at University of Houston. My team supports more

than 350 meetings globally per year for audi-ences of 10 to 11,000 attendees.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: The thing that drew me into the hospitality industry and keeps me coming back through all of my career twists is the people. These are my people! My early years in the industry concentrated on hotel operations. I then worked as a professional chef and worked my way into several technical roles (something I never thought I would be interested in or good at), and went back to school and earned a degree in business information systems. I spent about a decade in that field, with jobs ranging from IT director for a multinational law firm to project and product manager for Autodesk. I spent seven years on the third-party side, working as an Experient national account manager. I loved this role, but found I missed the day-to-day, in-office interaction with colleagues. I made a switch to an event technology role with an event automation and registration company, managing global implementations of our solution. Finally, an opportunity presented itself for me to return to Autodesk as leader of the Strategic Meetings Management Program, where I am today.

UPHILL BATTLE: The most difficult, but also the most rewarding, thing to manage has been approaching supplier-partners with an open mind and genuinely seeking to understand their business concerns so that we can craft agreements that create a win-win where both parties are sharing the risk and reward in a fair way.

MOMENT OF FLOW: The global program that we've created at Autodesk is built by our rock star team on the foundation of delivering concrete value to all our partners and stakeholders, which is truly recognized by the organization all the way through the C-suite.

GIGI GLEASON CMP, CWAS

SENIOR MANAGER OF GLOBAL STRATEGIC MEETINGS

HAUTE DOKIMAZO

2019 PLANNERS OF THE YEAR

Bachelor's in hospitality management and event planning, Lexington College. Plans spontaneous think tanks.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY:

I volunteered to help run a homecoming for the USS TRUMAN in 2005 and knew there had to be a better way than 14,000 sticky notes on my walls to put together an event (which is funny because now we use sticky notes all the time). I minored in event design, but my real education came from my interactions with people.

Life happened and it took me until 2011 to walk across that stage, but during my time in school, I learned to engineer my own luck. I said yes to every opportunity to help at events. I wanted whatever opportunity didn't exist yet and the hustle to create my own adventure bedazzled my soul! Things started falling into place literally the week after I graduated...like working an event for Oprah and helping design Christmas at The White House. True story!

MOMENT OF FLOW:

I get to be a part of teaching humanity how to be human again. I consider Haute Dokimazo a cure for the loneliness epidemic in the world—helping people learn to genuinely talk and connect with each other.

My proudest moments are when our attendees have genuine connection moments that extend beyond being in the event industry. At the end of our Spontaneous Think Tanks, we have a live retrospective where people share what they loved and what they think we should change for next time. When someone who has been in the industry for 30 years stands up in awe, talking about how they've never had an experience like this before at any other event, that makes me proud! Those are moments where Liz, one of the other co-founders and my partner in fabulousness, and I don't really need to share words. We just look at each other and share a "wow" face because we know we've built something much bigger than the two of us!

UCER-GAMING

FERENCE

NICOLE

SIBO

Bachelor's in Spanish and Russian from Oxford, master of studies in comparative literature from Oxford. I produce three of Clarion Gaming's major conferences: ICE London (36,000 attendees and more than 200 speakers), Juegos Miami and iGB Affiliate Lisbon.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: I left university knowing I wanted a role that allowed me to use my languages and develop my academic research skills into market research skills. Having worked on capital markets conferences, I joined Clarion at the beginning of 2017. There is so much more to gaming than machines and betting.

UPHILL BATTLE: It can be quite difficult to simultaneously manage internal deadlines for your event with speakers and external stakeholders' deadlines, so you have to be on top of your workload and timelines. A lot of our high-profile speakers have their own external commitments, so it's imperative we work with those whilst still hitting all our own targets.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Getting to work with the United Nations was a proud moment. I launched our first ever diversity and inclusion workshop at WrB London and managed to get the U.N. on board despite their concerns about being associated with the gambling industry. WrB Responsible Gambling is the preferred platform for high-profile government, regulators, operators and suppliers to discuss the industry's future, so this was a great coup.

ULTIMATE GOAL: My main goal is to give the people who do this work a platform to speak and bring the positive aspects of the industry to the forefront. The gaming industry is so diverse, incorporating so many different market conditions, regulations, CSR initiatives and public support incentives that I really want to showcase.

Z GREEN CMP AND CTA

CEO AND CHIEF EVENT CURATOR

Y LIZ GPM ELEVAR Bachelor's in animal science, Ohio State University. Event planner for The Arnold Sports Festival, a four-day festival that now features more than 80 sports and events, with 22,500 athletes competing annually in Columbus, Ohio. The event draws more than 200,000 attendees and has a \$51.4 million economic impact.

EVEN

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: I thought for certain that I would be a veterinarian; however, that was not in the cards. In the year off between being eligible to apply for veterinarian school, I took advantage of my logistical mindset and my equestrian background, and started working for Equine Affaire where I was a trade show coordinator. I then moved to American Ceramic Society and left five years later to pursue a director of education role with Ohio Veterinary Medicine Association. This move allowed me to explore more of the strategic planning of events, as I managed meeting specifications and all stages of the meeting management process for a 6,000-registrant annual conference, board meetings and committee meetings, while overseeing a few event team members. I left to travel the world with California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for six years, managing logistical details for Arnold Sports. I now operate my own corporate event planning company.

UPHILL BATTLE: As the world and technology both continue to change, I think one of the most difficult things to manage in the industry is security. As part of a large, international scope event with a recognizable celebrity, security measures have kept me up at night.

MOMENT OF FLOW: When Gov. Schwarzenegger pulled me off to the side at the 30th anniversary of the Arnold Sports Festival and praised me in front of my husband. He even followed up with me post-event with a personal letter. It is a great honor to have been a part of this great health and fitness crusade for the past six years.

NATION MANAGEMENT BLUE STURNE Bachelor's in rhetorical communications and West European studies and minor, Spanish and Italian, University of Pittsburgh; graduate, Leadership Lake Tahoe; served on boards for South Lake Tahoe Wedding and Honeymoon Association and Valhalla Tahoe. 1 plan 65–75 destination weddings, corporate retreats, community events and concerts for up to 8,000 people.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: I traveled to Lake Tahoe for a summer during college and got an internship working in the marketing department at a resort. After I graduated, they offered me a position to develop an event center out of an undeveloped beach. Within four years, it was a profitable business with procedures built and staff in place. I really enjoyed building the business, so I decided it was time to build my own business.

UPHILL BATTLE: When I first started bringing on employees, it was hard for me to sell to clients that I would not be the lead planner. Even though my name is not in the business name, I have been the face of the company. It took a few years to build my team's reputation so clients would trust that our staff was just as good.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Over 15 years, many of my employees have grown into great event planners. Some have moved away to start their own businesses or gone into corporate event planning. Right now, the team at Blue Sky Event planners is the best we've ever had. They take ownership of every event as if it is their only one.

ULTIMATE GOAL: The next step is to go outside of the Tahoe region. I'd like to gain more annual clients so we can really get to know their needs and help them grow through the years.

KERRY

CO-OWNER AND SALES DIRECTOR

Bachelor's in radio, television and film, California State University. I plan 50 meetings a year for 10 to 200 people.

PLANNER JOURNEY: Started in the en-

CD

VICTORIA LOVE, CMP

EVENT LOGISTICS MANAGER

tertainment industry as a production manager and associate producer. Loved the planning and on-set part of my job—hated post-production. Didn't like sitting in an edit bay for weeks to get a 30-minute show pieced together. Then we would have to wait months or years to see if our project was any good. I quickly realized event planning didn't have as much "post" work and when I walked out of an event, I immediately knew if my work was a success.

@ CISCO

UPHILL BATTLE: Most difficult to manage is myself and my ambition. I love what I do and want to do it all. I have learned that if I'm not crazy-busy with a million things to do, I'm bored.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Planning large conventions for 4,000 direct sales consultants. Used creativity in all aspects of the event.

ULTIMATE GOAL: My all-time ultimate goal would be to work on the Olympic planning team.

ADVICE FOR FUTURE MEETING PROFESSIONALS: The one thing that will make you successful is experience. The more exposure you have working on various types of events, the better prepared you will be for anything.

CAROL MCGURY

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF EVENT AND EDUCATION SERVICES Bachelor's in communications with a minor in business, St. Xavier University, and master's degree in public service administration, DePaul University. My team of more than 130 event planners and education/curriculum design professionals manages more than 200 events, conferences, trade shows, workshops and meetings, as we serve associations, nonprofits and corporate client organizations.

MITH

UCKLIN

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: My start in the industry was a bit unorthodox. I took a job at SmithBucklin in 1988, serving technology-user communities by contributing to their membership and operations administration, and eventually supported delivery of two annual events with more than 6,000 attendees each.

I progressed to serve as the chief staff executive for a large technology association. In 2010, I became strategic director for a new client organization—a large corporate technology company. We were responsible for delivering a series of international conferences and trade shows, all held within one month in Paris, Stuttgart [Germany], Shanghai and Tokyo.

In 2011, I took on oversight of our education and learning services team, and in 2013, I was promoted to executive vice president, overseeing all of SmithBucklin's event and education services, and the people who support them.

UPHILL BATTLE: Security. I remember the impact 9/11 had on our client organizations' events. Today, our security protocols continue to evolve, and we must keep pace. Basically, we're managing for the unknown. It's not only about having a detailed, up-to-date security plan in place, but it's about trusting in a great team made up of individuals who have experience and expertise, and who are nimble and adaptive to respond effectively.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Every time I see the achievements of my team—when they surprise and delight attendees, bring innovative approaches, design unique session formats or nail delivery of hundreds of sessions, develop a meaningful CSR activity or drive strategy resulting in new growth that went above and beyond stakeholders' expectations—I am extremely proud.

LINDSAY PROSS

EVENTS DEPARTMENT SUPERVISOR

ENTAL Bachelor's in communications, King's College. I plan more than 25 events per year for Benco Dental, a national dental-supply distribution company. Internal sales trainings, incentive trips, award shows, customerfacing seminars and trade shows range in size from 20 attendees to 900.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: I started in the events industry on the food-and-beverage side, working for The Westmoreland Club, a private social dining club, part-time while earning my degree. Eventually, I was promoted to catering director, where I planned the club's social events. I played a central role in bringing events to life, managing budgets and ensuring that the quality of event execution met membership's high standards. That's where I fell in love with event planning. It afforded me the opportunity to exercise my creative muscles, but most importantly, it allowed me the privilege to be a key part of people's special days. I find that tremendously gratifying. After a little over a decade, I moved on to corporate event planning when I started working for Benco Dental. Although I'm no longer adjusting a bride's train and the attendees aren't counting the day among the best of their lives, I am still in the business of creating moments.

UPHILL BATTLE: Probably the most difficult thing is making time for family and industry research while effectively managing the planning of a multitude of events.

MOMENT OF FLOW: One of my proudest planner moments was receiving positive feedback on a format change I fought for during the early planning stages for the company's largest event. Ultimately, I convinced the stakeholders to trust my decision to change the format. Following the event, my most vocal opponent, a senior leader, gave a glowing review of the change and said the event was the best it had ever been. It earned me some invaluable credibility and I learned that what I bring to the table is both valued and valuable.

BENC

Master's and MBA, Johns Hopkins; bachelor's, University of Idaho. I plan five to seven events a year, ranging in size from 50-person receptions to as many as 1,500 for a multiday fly-in to Washington, D.C., for meetings on the Hill, dinners and other activities around the city.

DESIGNER PLANNER JOURNEY: While working on Capitol Hill, I realized that my volunteer activities, which I enjoyed immensely, all revolved around planning and coordinating events. Fast forward to post-grad school: While working in associations, I preferred the "other duties as assigned" projects of event design and execution to my actual job description. After nearly six years of acting as additional support in an eventplanning side gig, I took a risk and decided to offer these services full-time with my own firm, where I specialize in helping associations plan successful events and develop the resources required to execute them.

UPHILL BATTLE: Getting clients to make decisions on a new approach that I know would really benefit them. Often, associations see a new path as a risk, rather than an opportunity, and tend to want to stay with the "same old." It's funny, because that desire for improvement in their events is precisely why they hire me. Learning to navigate the "old dog, new tricks" conundrum has been a big learning curve.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Successfully launched a reverse trade show-hosted buyer pilot program with the National PTA for their annual conference this past July. We needed a new way to get exhibitors truly engaged with the attendees in a lower-pressure environment other than wandering an exhibit floor. The sponsors and attendees had prescheduled 15-minute meetings to discuss both attendee needs and sponsor services. Response was overwhelmingly positive from both attendee and sponsor perspectives, including feedback that the attendees were willing to have additional meetings and valued their time spent with sponsors. We'll be expanding the program in 2020.

AMAIA P. STECKER OWNER AND LEAD

Bachelor's in marketing, WGU Washington. In a previous role, I worked on more than 150 events per year. Now I manage about 30 events per year.

SISENSE

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: I started at Executive Briefing Center 13 years ago, providing day-of support to C-level meetings.

UPHILL BATTLE: The most difficult thing to manage has been my own perfectionist tendencies. I tend to want everything perfect, as we all do in this industry, so allowing for small imperfections or completely giving another person trust that they will execute a task in the right way has been a huge challenge for me.

MOMENT OF FLOW: Taking on the most recent 1,000-person event with only four months to execute and only having the venue locked down. Additionally, two team members and my manager left before the event was executed. However, the event was a huge success, garnering more than 30 percent more attendees than the original target and implementing sponsorships to help offset costs, which caused me to come in \$50,000 under budget.

ULTIMATE GOAL: I want to work in an environment that provides people with unique experiences and a lifetime of memories. Ultimately, I would love to plan experiences for Disney World.

ADVICE FOR FUTURE MEETING PLANNERS: Make sure you go into the part of the industry that you love the most. The further you get in your career, the more difficult it is to cross over into another area.

KAREN WATSON, CMP AND CERTIFIED EXPERIENCE ECONOMY EXPERT

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC EVENTS

GLOBAL Bachelor's in business administration, Texas A&M University. I plan two to three event professional events for 500-650 people and a smaller advisory board meeting for 25–35 people. The client event is focused on defining the future of our industry together, so we take chances wherever we can on the event. We experiment so that everyone attending can learn from what we do and apply those lessons to their own events.

MARITZ

PLANNER JOURNEY: I worked on the hotel side of the business, primarily in catering and convention services, for about 10 years before moving to the planning side. That logistical background provided me a realistic understanding of what I now ask of a facility. I began with Conferon, which later became Experient, which is now a division part of Maritz Global Events.

UPHILL BATTLE: I adopted my daughter as a single parent, so balancing travel, work, home, homework and basically...life. I'm always working hard not to cut either priority short.

MOMENT OF FLOW: A couple of years ago, for the client event e4, we created a physical "museum of events" with galleries dedicated to general session/ production, well-being, food and beverage, and exhibit halls. Then we asked our guests to submit the "artwork" for the gallery walls. Their own events became the art and they got to experience their fellow e4 attendees' events through these galleries. Many of the educational sessions were based around their submissions. For an event that is designed around peer-to-peer dialogue, in some ways it was the epitome of the goals of e4.

ULTIMATE GOAL: I love the job I have now. I am fortunate to have a lot of creative freedom on our client event, and the team that works on it is a dream team. We take chances and intentionally experiment with the event, which means I continue to learn and grow. In some ways that is all I can ask for...to keep learning.

AMANDA

TILLEY, CMP

HEAD OF EVENTS MANAGEMENT

Master Mour Career

ADVANCED EDUCATION CLASSES ON BOTH COASTS HELP EVENT PROFESSIONALS LEAD

BY JT LONG

Event management has reached a critical point, where being a master of logistics, AV, registration and technology is not enough to be effective at the highest level. Event leaders need to be able to strategically work with all stakeholders to advance the company's goals. This requires adding skill sets that have not always been in the job description—and frankly, can be a bit scary for some longtime practitioners.

We are talking about core competencies such as financial management, data analysis and behavioral science—in other words, leadership. Luckily, two new executive MBA-style programs are launching this fall on opposite sides of the country to help midcareer event professionals fill those critical gaps.

NYU OFFERS PRACTICAL ADVANCEMENT

Two dozen students are in the inaugural cohort to enter the Master of Science in Event Management program at New York University's Jonathan M. Tisch Center of Hospitality. Beyond the core curriculum of finance, marketing, risk management and data analytics, students must be working in the field to put the lessons to work in a practical setting. For electives, they can focus on business development, sport event management or event operations.

Lynn Minnaert, academic chair of the department and a clinical associate professor, explained that as the event management field continues to expand, "We are seeing a shift in how event professionals are perceived. They were once seen as 'nuts and bolts' operational managers, but now they are often strategic partners in marketing/sponsorship, risk management, contracting, compliance and creative experience design."

That expanding role comes with an increased demand for specialized knowledge and skills, such as in the areas of data analytics, technology and regulatory requirements. "That is why the term 'event planner' has fallen out of favor lately—it doesn't capture the skill set contemporary event professionals have," she said.

Incoming student Sherene Lewis is one of the midcareer professionals looking for a pivot. After graduating from college, she started a family and fell into litigation paralegal work. She wants to return to sporting events, where she worked as a photographer in the NBA. "My ultimate goal is to plan big events like the Super Bowl," she said. "That is where my passion lies."



Lewis is excited about going back to school, but also nervous because it has been several years since she was an undergrad and she has to get back into the mindset of studying and taking tests. Top on her to-do list is getting involved getting to know her fellow students and the industry leaders who will serve as her professors.

SDSU FOCUSES ON BUSINESS

On a sunny August morning on the West Coast, 14 students embarked on their next chapter by participating in a one-week intensive orientation at San Diego State University that addressed just the transition Lewis was anticipating. Before they arrived, the 12 women and two men from the association, corporate, higher education, venue, nonprofit and third-party worlds answered a series of questions about themselves that will be used as a starting point to learn empathetic communication skills.

On average, the students have 15–20 years of experience in the industry and some have more than 30 years. They don't need to be quizzed on the basics. They are looking to move up in their organizations. But first, they need to better understand themselves and how they interact in the world.

"We reverse-engineered this program of five to eight week courses by interviewing top professionals in the industry to identify skill gaps, and found that business skills—communications, finance and leadership—were the things holding them back from getting a seat at the table, so that is the genesis of the curriculum," explained Carl Winston, director of SDSU's L. Robert Payne School of Hospitality and Tourism Management program.

The research, done in conjunction with MPI, found that 20 years ago, most meeting professionals fell into the career accidentally and taught themselves to be good at logistics, putting together programs and managing budgets. But the job has evolved, and so has the toolkit needed to be successful. "Logistics are the price of entry; we will not be teaching how to set up a room. This is about learning to lead entire organizations from the middle of the org chart," he said.

The challenge is that most planners don't sit at the top of the company ladder, but they are responsible for the entire company coming together in the same room for three days at an event and directing the executives about what to do. They have to learn to manage stakeholders effectively, without the boss title.

Students are now back at their jobs, completing team projects and learning from case studies online. The ability to put the concepts learned in class to work at the office helps make the lessons more meaningful and improves the planner's organizational visibility. "Her boss will see her working with other departments, expanding her role in the company. Organizational fluency and effectiveness goes up immediately inside and outside the organization," Winston said.

Upon graduation 18 months from now, in addition to strategies for motivating others at work and home, planners will also come away with 16 contacts of fellow students that will always be there for them when they need some candid feedback. "The networking is off the charts," Winston said, referring to what he has seen at other SDSU executive MBA programs.

2020 SKILL SET REBOOT

This is not your grandmother's event management world. Here are the skills being taught at the master's level for the next generation of event professionals.

COMMUNICATION/EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: Event planners, marketing managers, finance directors and executives often approach an event with different goals. Understanding each person's motivation and being able to communicate in a way that resonates with each individual is the sign of effective stakeholder management.

FINANCE: SDSU/MPI research showed that one of the biggest skill gap areas—and one of the scariest—is in accounting and finance. Powerful planners are learning to embrace the spreadsheet.

DATA ANALYSIS: "If you aren't using finance and data, you won't get that seat at the table," Winston said. Being able to ask the right questions, see patterns in the trends and iterate to improve the product is how programs continue to improve.

LEADERSHIP: Sharing a vision for a better way to design events to meet company goals is the mark of the event professional of the future. Mastering the art of bringing people together to execute on a shared vision is the secret to unlocking a whole new world of influence.

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Small is Beautiful

Executive retreats, board meetings, seminars-how to move the needle at every small meeting

By Gary Diedrichs

ustomers are easy. Employees are hard," said Ray Lane, when he was president of Oracle. He was referring to the challenge of moving the needle—of making meaningful and lasting change to the culture, the mission or the performance of any company.

Change is what organizational progress is all about, and such change almost always begins at the top, in the C-suite or corporate board, or the leadership team of a business unit or team. And it typically begins at a meeting. Not one of the huge expo variety, but in a more intimate setting. A small meeting, yet one with the potential to ripple outward with enormous impact.

Because of that, small meetings are a planner's best opportunity to demonstrate their worth. For, while planners cannot effect organizational change, they can definitely affect it. In fact, planners set the stage for every positive—or negative—outcome of small meetings, which typically bring together major decisionmakers or major customers. Small meetings are the ultimate right brain/left brain planning challenge. They require all your flair and creativity, but they also demand donning your smartest strategist's hat.

Why? It's a tough audience. The stakes are often high. There may be distracting dynamics of personality clashes or office politics in the room. Plus, seasoned executives are trained to value substance over style. They've seen it all, or think they have. They may be cynical about icebreakers, team-building activities and other tools in the planner's tool kit.

Think of the small meeting as the ultimate planning experiment. Your goal is to create the perfect petri dish in which to cultivate the most beneficial outcomes—improved teamwork and performance, and a better bottom line, whatever the goal is. Here are tips from experts on how and where to do just that.

Setting

Creating the perfect setting for change is much more than choosing where to meet. It starts with reaffirming that the right people are at the table, an analysis that planners often ignore (or are fearful of taking on), but shouldn't. As objective third parties working with an in-house HR manager or the executive who owns the meeting, planners can help hone the "why" of the gathering, which then leads to a more precise determination of the "who." For attendees to be willing to communicate openly and

"Each meeting has its own DNA, inspired by the goal." -Christy Lamagna

tackle whatever challenges are thrown at them, they need to believe that the team in the room can collectively kick the ball downfield toward the goal, say behavioral experts.

Depending on the agenda, that could mean not inviting participants an agreed-upon distance above or below other attendees on the org chart.

Helping leadership get the right people in front of them has another payoff for positive change.

Jim Collins, author of the classic business-success bible, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*, and many other books devoted to company longevity and growth, calls this putting the "who" before the "what." Great leaders, he says, decide on people even before they announce a vision or goal. The right team, his extensive research has found, stays motivated in good times and bad, and is a much more powerful business driver than any flavor-of-themonth mandate from on high. A small meeting is the perfect venue for leaders to get a focused look at the company's key leaders—particularly if the planner puts them in the right conducive setting.

"Event settings should be chosen based on the event's goals," says Christy Lamagna, CMP, CMM, CTSM, founder of New York City-based Strategic Meetings & Events and author of *The Strategic Planning Guide for Event Professionals.* "That



Clockwise: Glamping at Hyatt Regency Hill Country and Spa, San Antonio; Tree Top Spa at Hidden Pond, Maine; stables at Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort and Spa, Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico



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may mean an airport hotel to maximize time, a conference center to keep the group focused and self-contained, or a remote location to unplug, get centered and focus exclusively on the program at hand. Each meeting has its own DNA, inspired by the goal."

Staging

Hand in hand with selecting the perfect setting is staging the most effective agenda. Again, the goal of the gathering—the "why"—drives the decisions.

Lain Hensley, co-owner and head dream chaser at Odyssey Teams, a motivational team-building and leadership training company in Chico, California, is a firm believer in "getting off site, getting unplugged and getting moving."

Hensley cites a three-day facilitated leadership retreat of Gallo Glass Company, a manufacturer of



wine bottles and other glass products, that was held in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California. The goal: Find common ground and mutual understanding between seasoned hands and MBA-educated recent hires who lacked the street smarts that come with experience. A mix of activities with business and personal conversations was planned to close the culture gap. "Overnight, remote environments led to critical unstructured time for organic relationships to form and common ground to be discovered," Hensley says.

Biannual follow-up experiences, such as river rafting and sailing, acted as critical metaphors for leadership principals they would experience. "Taking a turn leading a raft down a river, for instance, has endless lessons for leading your team through a stressful day at the plant," he says.

Hensley sums up successful staging this way: "In school, you can stay up late and cram before the test and still pass. A farmer cannot cram the night before harvest by pulling an all-nighter and then harvest a crop with the other farmers who planted months before. These meetings are for planting seeds of trust, commitment, relationship and vision. The months that follow are for creating the right environment for those seeds to grow so that everyone can share in the harvest."



Ventana Big Sur photo by Ventana Big Sur, an Alila Resort

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS...

Unforgettable venues for small gatherings can be found throughout this country and beyond.

For instance, groups at Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa in Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico, can take part in a Southwestern ranching experience at Stables at Tamaya. Perfect for small groups, the Stables features a covered terrace set against the backdrop of the Sandia Mountains for the meeting, followed by a chuckwagon dinner. Attendees can also interact with horses in the resort's Tamaya Horse Rehabilitation Program, a nonprofit organization that provides shelter, care and rehabilitation to surrendered horses.

Visit Temecula Valley assists planners in choosing from among the many unexpected pleasures of Southern California wine country, with barrel rooms on wine estates for impactful meetings and events, rolling green fairways edged in oaks and horse farms ready to saddle up attendees for bonding trail rides. At a much higher altitude, Park City Chamber/Convention & Visitors Bureau in Utah, offers an all-season moun-



tain resort setting with outdoor activities flanked by some of the country's most dramatic peaks and an impressive commitment to eco-friendly lodging and farm-to-table dining.

Perched above the most iconic coastline in the country, the completely renovated Ventana Big Sur in Central California features more than 12,000 sq. ft. for meetings, including stunning outdoor spaces overlooking the rugged Pacific Coast and surrounded by towering redwoods, an environment that has fueled creative thinkers for generations. The Sur House restaurant combines two classic small meeting staples, views and locally sourced fine dining.

Lied Lodge & Conference Center, with 140 guest rooms and suites in Nebraska City, Nebraska, is located on Arbor Farm amid 260 acres of natural beauty. The intimate Marcotte Room features windows overlooking a 9-acre hybrid hazelnut field. The Executive Boardroom's French doors open to a tree-top view of the lodge's arboretum, showcasing 400 plantings of nearly 50 varieties of trees. Arbor Lodge State Historical Park includes the stately mansion of J. Sterling



Morton, founder of Arbor Day, so a tree-planting activity is a must. Henry's Hollow "glamp-

ing" at Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa in San Antonio, brings the resort's luxury

outdoors with cushy lounges and sofas, draped curtains and crystal chandeliers hanging from sweeping oak trees. In 2017, Isuzu added a Texas-themed experience with armadillo races, cowboy hat fittings, mechanical-bull riding, line dancing and live music. The resort also offers Rodeo Olympics team building.



Success

Small meetings often bring key stakeholders together to discuss the organization's strategic goals. "With those top of mind, it is easier to create meetings that are designed to meet those goals, influence behavior and act as a positive contributor to the organization's bottom line," Lamagna says.

But how to move the needle and design for success? The experts share some hacks. First, prepare for the worst.

In other words, walk yourself through the program with the eyes of your most jaded participants. Don't make it their fault that they might not want to engage. Make it your job to suck them into the experience with every detail. Don't settle for delivering a program you wouldn't want to pay money to participate in.

When choosing a venue, remember that genius inspires genius. A space in a creative setting, such as a museum, can jump-start the idea flow and engage the senses with a stimulating change of environment. Congdon Board Room at Denver Art Museum, for example, is inspiringly decorated with bold, modern artwork.

Traditional boardroom setups scream topdown hierarchy. Who's at the head of the table? Who's closest to the head? If the culture of the organization isn't frozen in the past, shun the rectangle. Round tables encourage eye contact, focus and collaboration. They connect attendees to the people they work with in a new and human way.

Next, counsel whoever owns the meeting to forget the flip chart, the 50-slide PowerPoint and charging stations at each conference table so that participants can multitask—when only their undivided attention can forge breakthroughs.

"PowerPoint will not move the needle anymore!" Hensley says. "Life point is the new way to engage leaders and drive bottom-line results. Experiences and conversations that engage the 'why' of our work and connect leaders to their values, each other and the meaning of life is the new trend that is here to stay."

Start off strong, says Katy Trost of Forbes Coaches Council, a community of business and career coaches. "To maximize engagement and effortlessness and to set the tone for the upcoming time, it's incredibly beneficial to spread positivity and build rapport with the other person or entire group," she says. "Use small talk intentionally to raise overall energy. Avoid jumping into the seriousness of the matter right away, and discuss a current win or accomplishment of the company or individual instead." No matter how crowded the agenda, it pays to take time to remind those present how much they enjoy their work and how critical they are to the process.

Even at the highest levels of an organization, it's essential in today's world to keep the meeting interactive. Everyone has been rewired to be a participant these days. Find ways to create interactions and drive engagement in every presentation. "Even if you need to discuss last quarter's numbers, create an interactive game to reveal them," Hensley says.

Small meetings and executive retreats offer planners opportunities to engage attendees on a more intense and direct level than any large gathering can. As enablers of the meeting's goals, planners become invaluable partners to operational leadership in the organizations that host the gathering. They become behind-the-scenes orchestrators of the formula for success that was articulated by Jim Collins in *Good to Great*:

"Real people in real companies want to be part of a winning team. They want to contribute to producing real results. They want to feel the excitement and the satisfaction of being part of something that just flat-out works. When people begin to feel the magic of momentum—when they begin to see tangible results and can feel the flywheel start to build speed—that's when they line up, throw their shoulders to the wheel, and push.

"And that's how change really happens."

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HEALTHY MEETINGS START IN HIGH PLACES

Designing gatherings that nurture attendee bodies and souls has become all the rage in recent years. That is music to the ears of Tonya Sweeten, vice president of group sales at Visit Park City, where wellness has long been integrated into the destination. She shared some tips from a recent white paper, Wellness & Meetings: Elevated in Park City, Utah, that could help planners and attendees on incentive trips and conventions feel better.

ACTIVATE THE GROUP

A scenic mountain destination located at 7,000 feet elevation lends itself to taking the learning outside. In addition to world-class skiing, bobsledding, ziplining, group hikes, rafting, fly fishing and biking (mountain or electric) take team-building new heights. Bring out Olympic-level sportsmanship by arranging for some friendly competition slope side in the fresh air. Time spent in nature has been shown to boost memory, inspire creativity and stimulate the senses, as biophilia—affinity for other life forms—is a powerful stimulant. Schedule some outdoor activities in the agenda and watch the collaboration in action.

FEED THE MEETING

World-class chefs have migrated to this piece of heaven on earth, making it a foodie paradise with more than 100 dining options for any taste. Many specialize in designing healthy meals using local, organic ingredients. Some even host groups in their homes to teach the fine art of mindful cuisine—cooking, savoring and sharing meals with intention. One—High West Distillery—offers ski-in/ski-out gastro experiences in the historic district of Park City.

Exploration of the local wine culture can be paired with exploring the downtown culinary scene, the community's rich history and natural resources—a Mines & Wines Tour with Fox School of Wine is a fun way to insert a sense of place in the gathering.

CONSIDER EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Give the gift of peace to attendees by offering activities that leave them a little more grounded. Numerous luxury resorts, including Montage Deer Valley, Stein Eriksen Lodge Deer Valley and Hyatt Centric Park City, offer elevated spa sessions and massage therapy to relax and rejuvenate. Yoga in the mountains has been shown to deepen the practice in ways that four walls cannot. Equine meditation invites attendees to spend quiet time with each other and these soulful creatures. The focus on calming and connecting has left some a bit tearful with the power of it.



The best meetings go beyond experiential to the transformational, leaving attendees with something that they will take back to their dayto-day lives for a lasting legacy," said Sweeten. That is the hallmark of a healthy meeting.





PENNSYLVA NIA DESTINATIONS

SPILLE.

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62 NEVADA 82 NORTHERN CALIFORNIA 90 PALM SPRINGS 94 MISSOURI 98 TUCSON

INSORFICOR WEAT

NEVADA

A GOLDEN AGE FOR ART IN THE SILVER STATE



AND RENO/TAHOE

BY DAN JOHNSON



- Destination Henderson Nevada
- Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority
- Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority



orld-class entertainment, lively casinos and luxurious hotels have lured visitors to Nevada's two major areas-Las Vegas and Reno/Tahoe-for decades. Another outstanding attraction, the diverse visual arts offerings, is not nearly as heralded but is blossoming, providing plenty of exciting options for groups.

"The arts scene in Las Vegas is as vibrant as our skyline, and the opportunities to showcase creativity in a number of forms is beyond imagination," says Cheryl Smith, CMP, HMCC, director of specialty market sales for Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

Some 440 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Reno-along with the gorgeous Lake Tahoe areahas been elevating its art offerings to unparalleled heights.

"The local arts scene has been booming for the last decade," says Mike Larragueta, vice president of sales for Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority. "Local governments have recognized the positive effect visual art has on a community."

Here's a rundown of some of the top art attractions in the two areas, along with an update of some of the best places for groups to stay and meet.

Greater Las Vegas

This city has its share of traditional art galleries, but in true Las Vegas fashion, also features a wide variety of nontraditional, imaginative art experiences.

"Las Vegas is not your typical 'look at a canvas hanging on a gallery wall'-type destination," Smith says. "Our venues offer the unique opportunity to immerse yourself in Las Vegas' history through a different lens."

AMAZING ART EXPERIENCES

Neon Museum is dedicated to collecting, preserving, studying and exhibiting iconic Las Vegas signs for educational, historic, artistic and cultural enrichment. The Neon Museum campus includes the Neon Bonevard outdoor exhibition space, with more than 150 classic neon signs from the 1930s to present; a visitors' center, inside the former La Concha Motel lobby; and Neon Boneyard North Gallery, which houses additional rescued signs and is available for group gatherings. Private tours of Neon Boneyard can be arranged.

Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone's colorful, Seven Magic Mountains is a public artwork located in the desert, near Jean Dry Lake and Interstate 15, approximately 10 miles south of Las Vegas. It consists of seven towering, dayglow totems comprised of painted, locally

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From left to right: Space Whale sculpture, Las Vegas; Neon Museum, Las Vegas



sculpture at The Venetian Resort Las Vegas

sourced boulders. Each "mountain" is more than 30 feet high to highlight the presence of color and expression in the Ivanpah Vallev desert.

A definite candidate for top "only in Las Vegas" honors, Erotic Heritage Museum, also known as Harry Mohney Erotic Museum, began as a partnership between the Rev. Ted McIlvenna and pornographer Mohney. These two men from opposite sides of the cultural spectrum worked to build a positive erotic exhibition space, resulting in the largest museum in the world for the preservation of erotic artifacts, fine art, film, education and cultural events. Rental spaces are available, including Museum Lobby (accommodating 200) The Jewel Box Theater (150), Paris Theater (40) and LGBTQ Gallery (25).

Las Vegas Arts District, located just south of downtown, was created in 1998 as an 18-block zone where artists can flourish and showcase their art. It is also known as the "18b," referring to the original size of the district-18 blocksthough it now encompasses a larger area.

Highlights include Art Square, composed of three remodeled 1950s-era buildings that house more than a dozen venues, all offering something artrelated or creative; The Arts Factory, located in a former warehouse, and including a variety of studios showcasing the creative efforts of local artists; Wonderland Gallery, featuring whimsical artwork; and 17 Moons Art Studio, where art is created out of recycled items by using a combination of collage, sculpture and assemblage.

First Friday, which began in the arts district in 2002, has grown to become the premier art event in Las Vegas. Shops and galleries feature artworks the first Friday of each month from 5 to 11 p.m. Preview Thursday, the night before First Friday, provides a sneak peek at gallery openings and new art.

MAGNIFICENT ART IN HOTELS AND RESORTS

Some of the best art in Las Vegas can be found in hotels and resorts. Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art in Bellagio Las Vegas helped to launch the city to the forefront of the art scene. The ever-changing gallery displays masterpieces from the world's greatest artists, including more than 45 of Picasso's work from the 1930s through the 1970s.

Aria Resort & Casino's world-renowned Fine Art Collection encompasses a multitude of styles and media-ranging from sculptures and paintings to other works of art, such as large-scale installations that engage guests visually and intellectually. Artists include Maya Lin, Jenny Holzer, Nancy



Rubins, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Frank Stella, Henry Moore, James Turrell and Richard Long.

The public art collection at Wynn Las Vegas and Encore at Wynn Las Vegas, curated by prominent designer Roger Thomas, is displayed throughout the property and includes

pieces in a variety of mediums, including oil paintings, tapestry, sculptures, and more by noteworthy artists such as Jeff Koons. Raoul Dufy. Miriam Schapiro, Timothy Horn and Lari Pittman.

Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa, situated off The Strip in the Summerlin area, also boasts an impressive collection of fine art. Masterpieces by artists such as Robert Indiana, Takashi Murakami, Vik Muniz and Paul McCarthy adorn the walls of the restaurants and lounges.

The Venetian Resort Las Vegas is now featuring the striking Love, a large installation in the Waterfall Atrium. Created by celebrated artist Laura Kimpton as part of her Monumental Word Series, it is perforated with bird-shaped stamps and spells "love" in steel, 12-foot-tall, ruby-red letters.

MARVELOUS MEETING AND LODGING SPACES

Eldorado Resorts announced in June that it will buy Caesars for \$17.3 billion, increasing its portfolio to 79 casinos. The deal will enable Eldorado to significantly strengthen its presence in Las Vegas, where Caesars is based. Caesars Palace Las Vegas, one of the jewels along The Strip, offers 3,960 guest rooms and 300,000 sg. ft. of meeting space, including four ballrooms.

Caesars Forum, a 550,000-square-foot conference facility, is set to open in 2020 across from Caesars Palace and alongside Ling Promenade. Caesars Forum will be directly connected to 5.000 hotel rooms owned by Caesars Entertainment and will have two 110,000-square-foot, world-class ballrooms-the largest column-free ballrooms in the world.

Located on The Strip, the 1,470-room Tropicana Las Vegas-A Double-Tree by Hilton, features a spa and a fitness center overlooking a pool and gardens. The all-new conference facility can be divided into as many as 38 breakout rooms, and includes a 24,742-square-foot ballroom as well as a 27,244-square-foot pavilion.

One of the busiest convention centers in the world, Las Vegas Convention Center is located adjacent to The Strip and provides some 2 million sq. ft. of exhibit space and nearly 250,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Adjacent to the convention center and one block from The Strip, Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino offers 2,956 guest rooms, 10 restaurants, a spa and 225,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Boasting the 16-screen Century Theatre movie complex, a 64-lane bowling center and a variety of restaurants. South Point Hotels and Casino is an attrac-



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tive option just off The Strip. It also has 2,163 guest rooms and 175,000 sq. ft. of event space, including a 70,000-square-foot conference center.

Station Casinos has reinvigorated Palms Casino Resort during a \$690 million renovation that has included the 342 rooms in Fantasy Tower and some of the 60,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, plus the addition of several new restaurants, a nightclub and a mini art museum. The 1,365-room hotel and casino is about a mile off The Strip.

Other Station Casinos properties in Las Vegas

include Red Rock Resort & Spa, with 796 guest rooms, a spa, delectable dining and more than 100,000 sq. ft. of meeting space as well as Green Valley Ranch Resort and Spa in Henderson-16 miles southeast of Las Vegas-with 500 guest rooms, a spa, a health club and 65,000 sq. ft. of event space.

Another Henderson property, Henderson Events Plaza, Nevada's first public outdoor events plaza, encompasses 2.7 acres and provides 60,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Reno/Tahoe

The art scene is popping here, largely due to the City of Reno's recent efforts and the unexpectedly enormous impact of Burning Man, an immensely popular festival held annually at Black Rock City, a temporary city erected in the Black Rock Desert, approximately 100 miles north-northeast of Reno. The festival celebrates radical self-expression and art.

"The City of Reno has made significant investments in bringing large art installations, like The Space Whale [a large, stained glass and steel sculpture of two humpback whales] and the Believe sculpture [a 70-foot-long piece made of steel that spells out the word] to downtown's City Plaza," Larragueta says. "Both of those works were created for the Playa [Playa Art Park] at past Burning Man events.

"Playa Park, in the heart of downtown, also features some smaller installations from Burning Man and is centered between large murals created by some of the region's most prominent artists."

AMAZING ART EXPERIENCES

RESORT CASINO & SPA

AKE TAHOE

The Generator is an inclusive art space in Sparks, 4 miles west of Reno, for anyone who wants to make things and be part of a creative community. Inspired by the magic and inspiration of Burning Man, artists combine forces and share resources in the space, utilizing industrial equipment and tools in the 35,000

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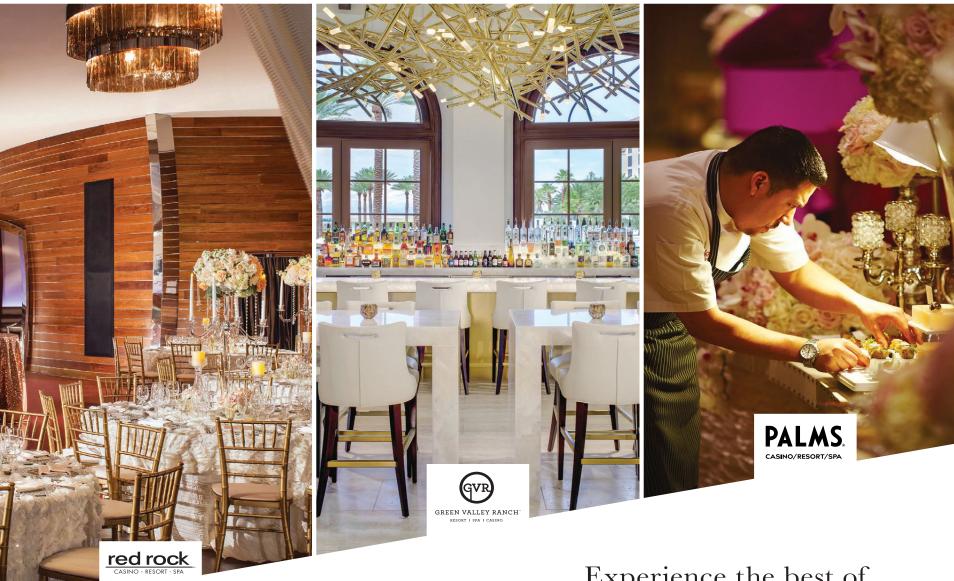


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The Generator, Sparks

sq. ft. of workspace. Group tours are available.

Jacobs Entertainment has purchased a substantial area of Reno for a \$1 billion tourism-related development that will feature a rotating collection of several large sculptures. The display will include Burning Man art and is part of the long-term strategy that Jacobs Entertainment has for what it calls the "Neon Line District" in downtown's West Fourth Street corridor.

Reno's other leading art pieces include an outdoor mural, *Nevada Row*—located in MidTown, just south of downtown Reno—which features influential figures from Nevada history. Its creators, Erik Burke and Joe C. Rock, are among Reno/Tahoe's most prominent artists.

The four-level, 70,000-square-foot building housing **Nevada Museum of Art** in Reno is inspired by geological formations in northern Nevada's Black Rock Desert, and serves as a visual metaphor for the institution's scholarly focus on art and environment.

The institution's identity is shaped by its proximity to the San Francisco Bay Area, Sierra Nevada, Lake Tahoe and surrounding Great Basin desert region. Meeting spaces can be rented for up to 1,000 and include 4,800-square-foot Nightingale Sky Room.

Nevada is home to many Native-American tribes, and their artwork can be viewed at Nevada Museum of Art and during community events such as Stewart Father's Day Powwow at the former Stewart Indian School in Carson City, 28 miles northeast of South Tahoe and 32 miles south of Reno. The three-day powwow features some 30 arts and crafts vendors.

Reno Art Works offers groups a chance to learn from instructors and then tackle projects ranging from painting to crocheting and tie dye.

South Lake Tahoe also has some excellent art opportunities for groups. The Tahoe Art League's Studio Tour, offered annually during the last weekend of July and the first weekend of August, invites locals and visitors to view the work and working spaces of individual artists and artist collectives working in a variety of media.

Top galleries in South Lake Tahoe include Marcus Ashley Fine Art Gallery, featuring a wide variety of American and international artists. It features many types of exquisite fine art, from oil paintings and fineart prints to glass art, sculpture and contemporary pieces that virtually defy categorization.

Pacific Crest Gallery in Heavenly Village offers an outstanding selection of fine art, sculpture, art glass and jewelry. From the sublime to the "totally Tahoe," there is truly something for all tastes.

Jon Paul Gallery in South Lake Tahoe highlights the





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work of Jon Paul, one of the few remaining large-format landscape photographers in the world. His self-taught style has earned him an international reputation as a master of photography.

MARVELOUS MEETING AND LODGING SPACES

Eldorado Resorts branded its three adjacent downtown properties—**Eldora-do**, **Silver Legacy** and **Circus Circus**—as The Row. Together, they offer 4,100 hotel rooms, 25 restaurants, 22 bars, 11 nightclubs and four entertainment venues. The resorts retained their original names and distinct flavor.

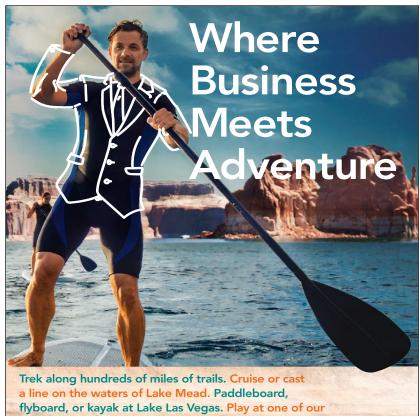
Atlantis Casino Resort Spa Reno is a AAA Four Diamond resort surrounded by sweeping views of the majestic Sierra Nevada. It includes a spa and 50,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Peppermill Resort Spa Casino, a AAA Four Diamond resort in Reno, added Windows of the World, consisting of art displayed throughout the resort on screens showing high-definition videos of exotic lands, local scenery, nature, wildlife and fashion. The canvasses are flat LED screens instead of wooden frames so that guests feel like they are actually there. Peppermill boasts 1,621 guest rooms, a fitness center and 106,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Big things have been happening at the 1,400-room **Nugget Casino Resort** in Sparks. A \$25 million makeover was completed in late 2017, including renovations to the 800 guest rooms in the West Tower and the 110,000-square-foot convention center; a steakhouse and 8,958-seat event center opened more recently.

Thoroughly renovated **Grand Sierra Resort** in Reno features many nongaming options, including a spa, a full-sized bowling alley, a driving range with floating balls that are hit into a lake with moving targets, a movie theater and an escape room. The property also has 1,990 guest rooms and 200,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Harrah's Reno Hotel & Casino in the downtown area has 928 guest rooms,



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seven restaurants and 24,000 sq. ft. of meeting space—including 14,000 square-foot Robert A. Ring Convention Center—and 62,000 sq. ft. of outdoor event space.

Renaissance Reno Downtown Hotel is a luxurious nongaming property on the Truckee River with 214 guest rooms, and 13,198 sq. ft. of meeting space. Its gaming floor recently was converted into a large indoor field with several bocce ball courts.

Situated two blocks from the Truckee River Walk and adjacent to the historic Reno Arch, **Whitney Park Hotel** in Reno features 310 guest rooms with panoramic views of the Sierras and BaseCamp, featuring the world's tallest artificial climbing wall, at 164 feet. It provides more than 20,000 sq. ft. of event space, including 5,125-square-foot Whitney Peak Ballroom.

Montbleu Resort Casino & Spa Lake Tahoe in Stateline, Nevada, boasts 437 luxurious hotel rooms, many with spectacular lake and mountain views, as well as 16,000 sq. ft. of meeting and exhibit space.

Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort, Spa and Casino is a waterfront property nestled into the Sierra Nevada Mountains that provides 422 guest rooms and 13,100 sq. ft. of meeting space. Offering top entertainment and dining, **Harrah's Lake Tahoe** is a 512-room hotel with 25,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

FABULOUS ART FESTIVALS

One of the best ways for groups to enjoy art in Las Vegas and Reno/Tahoe is by attending a local festival or another annual event, such as the following.

Life is Beautiful debuted in 2013 as part of the transformation of downtown Las Vegas into a cultural hub. During the three-day gathering, a diverse roster of artists transforms downtown Las Vegas into an open-air art gallery, full of murals, art installations and exhibits.

Located on a grassy park-like area, Summerlin Festival of Arts is a free outdoor art festival in Las Vegas featuring fine art and crafts. The festival displays the work of more than 100 artists, including oil and acrylic paintings, watercolors, clay and ceramics, drawings, glass, jewelry, metalwork, woodwork, photography, print-making and sculpture.

Artown brings the arts to life in Reno each July with nearly 500 events, 100 workshops and more than 30 ongoing programs. Distinguished artists from around the world, across the country and the local community participate.

The lively 24-hour Mural Marathon takes place each July in Reno, featuring a collection of invited artists who each have just 24 hours to paint an original, 19-foot-seven-inch by 14-foot mural on the side of Circus Circus at the Row hotel. Cash prizes are awarded to the winners and the murals remain on display for an entire year, until the next annual competition occurs.

Tahoe City's Pacific Fine Arts Festival takes place each year during two back-to-back weekends in mid-August. Art admirers and creators come together on the open, grassy Boatworks Mall in downtown Tahoe City to participate in the North Tahoe event, which includes works of photography, oil painting, ceramics, jewelry, pottery, woodwork, metalwork and wearable art.



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- Explore Altoona
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- Visit Philly



s one of the country's oldest states, Pennsylvania has a long and fascinating history and diverse population, with customs and dialects that give each region a distinct flavor. It's at once old and new, and its landscapes are as varied as the people in its 59 cities.

Perhaps that's what makes it a treasure trove of unique attractions. From beautiful farmland and parks, natural wonders and outdoor adventures to diverse museums, historic sites and modern thrills, groups have myriad opportunities to delve deep into the state's rich and vibrant culture. Here's a sampling of some of the top options.

Philadelphia

It's no secret Philadelphia is rife with history, and the City of Brotherly Love certainly has its share of noteworthy historical attractions and venues. But it's also a very modern and innovative city with a wealth of experiences—and natural beauty—to offer.

ENTICING ATTRACTIONS

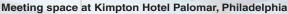
It goes without saying: The Liberty Bell, an international symbol of freedom, is a must-see when in Philadelphia. Groups can marvel at the 268-yearold national icon up close at Liberty Center, located at Independence National Historical Park. Other exhibits include historical documents and images, as well as video and educational displays pertaining to the history of the bell and the American Revolution.

Independence Hall, one of Philly's most visited attractions, is just across the street. It operates group tours most days. Attendees will have the chance to see original printed copies of the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and U.S. Constitution.

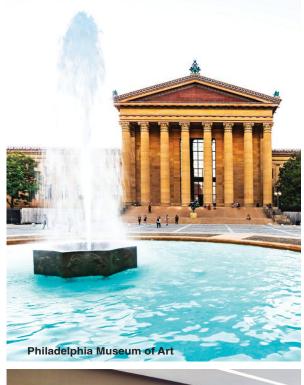
Smart fact: The Liberty Bell was originally known as the State House Bell. It acquired its current name from slavery abolitionists in the 1830s.

Groups can take in some of the best views of the

Bell, Philadelphia









city from the 57th floor of One Liberty Place at One Liberty Observation Deck. The 360-degree views give attendees a bird's-eye perspective of several local landmarks, such as The Ben Franklin Bridge, City Hall and Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Semiprivate space on the deck is available for up to 75 people-perfect for cocktail receptions, networking or post-event gatherings. Groups of up to 275 can take over the deck for up to four hours.

After seeing the city from above, attendees can pose for selfies or Instagram-worthy group shots in front of a giant sculpture of Ben Franklin before checking out #TheRealPhilly exhibit on the ground floor of the building.

Fairmount Park, a National Historic Landmark, is an attraction in itself, and it is home to several others-such as The Rodin Museum and Shofuso Japanese House and Garden-that arrange guided group tours, as well as several historical mansions.

The park is also home to America's first zoo, as well as Boathouse Row, Philadelphia Museum of Art, several music centers and public art. Its natural beauty consists of 2,052 acres of green, as well as rolling hills, trails, bodies of water and gardens. Three environmental centers and a wildlife refuge center help conserve the park's essence.

Groups can get permits to rent park space for off-sites, team picnics and team-building activities. Several of the park's facilities, museums and other attractions can be rented for events.

Smart tip: Catch a Victorian-style trolley for group tours of the Colonial-era mansions dotted throughout the park.

ATTRACTIVE ACCOMMODATIONS

Loews Philadelphia Hotel sits in the former Philadelphia Savings Fund Society building, designed in 1932 by visionary modernist architects William Lescaze and George Howe. It was the city's first skyscraper and the first International

"Fairmount Park, a National Historic Landmark, is an attraction in itself. and it is home to several otherssuch as The Rodin Museum and Shofuso Japanese House and Garden—that arrange guided group tours.



Style building in the United States.

The T-shaped building brings maximum light into the hotel's 569 guest rooms and 12 suites. The 47,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space includes 22 meeting rooms, suites and parlors, as well as three ballrooms. The hotel's industrial yet elegant restaurant, Bank & Bourbon, houses a private dining room suitable for 70 people.

Groups can sample a variety of bourbons during an intimate tasting and enjoy the true flavors of Philly through Flavor. Loews Philadelphia's culinary experience, and network over light bites and cocktails at the bar. Attendees can team up for a round of golf at Scotland Run, one of the top courses in the country, located just 30 minutes from the city. Shoppers will find several blocks of retail right outside the hotel's front doors. A spa and salon are on the way.

Kimpton Hotel Palomar provides groups with an urban retreat in the heart of Philadelphia. Located near the city's upscale Rittenhouse Square neighborhood, the 230-room, Art Deco property was once the Architects Building, built in 1929.

Many of the guest rooms provide stunning city views and each of the four suites includes a soaking tub. The 6,000 sq. ft. of meeting space is divided among three floors and includes six meeting rooms, a 1,750-square-foot ballroom and American Institute of Architects Library-perfect for receptions and breakouts. Two private dining rooms in the hotel's Square 1682 restaurant can serve up to 250. Full-restaurant buyouts are available.

Attendees can unwind with in-room spa services, connect over a glass of vino during a hosted wine hour in the hotel's Living Room, and stay healthy with Kimpton's wellness options, including a 24hour fitness center, complimentary hotel bikes and in-room yoga mats.

Hershev

Groups can't help but indulge when in the Sweetest Place on Earth. The unincorporated community, originally created in 1907 for Milton Hershey's Chocolate Factory workers, is still steeped in the

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FRANKLY PHILA delphia company's history. While many of its attractions are tied to its founder, the town offers much more than chocolate.

ENTICING ATTRACTIONS

Hershey Gardens opened in 1937, satisfying Milton Hershey's request to "create a nice garden of roses." The once-small rose garden has since blossomed into 23 acres of botanical beauty, complete with a variety of plants, trees, insects and flowers. Set in a lush indoor-outdoor landscape of ponds, fountains and green paths, Hershey Gardens provides a relaxed yet invigorating place to meet.

While there, groups can take a self-guided tour of the grounds or book a tour to learn about the heritage of the gardens and get a closer look at the flora. Attendees can walk through 11 themed gardens—including historic Hershey Rose Garden, where it all began, and hang out with hundreds of butterflies from all over the world in Butterfly Atrium, open year-round. The tropical-themed atrium also includes a water feature and colorful, exotic plants, and it is one of only 25 tropical butterfly atriums in the country.

The venue hosts educational programs and seasonal horticultural exhibits throughout the year. Teams can learn sustainable gardening techniques or experience an active bee hive—complete with more than 10,000 European honey bees (behind

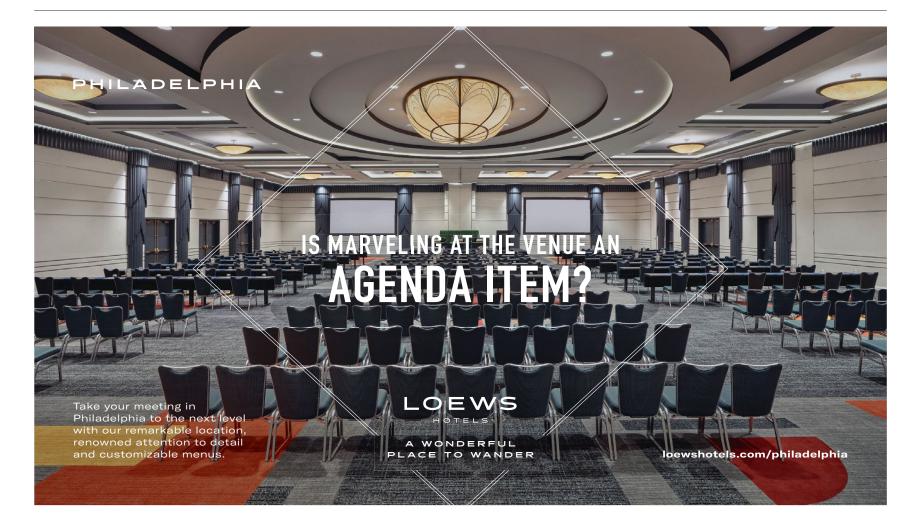


glass). The BugZone displays unique insects from around the world, and blooming art exhibits are often on display.

Events and meetings are welcome inside Milton and Catherine Hershey Conservatory or outside, in the gardens. Butterfly Atrium can be reserved for private group visits during events.

Smart tip: Be sure to take in the view of Swan Lake and surrounding rose bushes from the glass doors at the back of the conservatory building.

A trip to Hershey doesn't seem right without a visit to **Hersheypark**. It offers more than 70 rides, including 14 roller coasters and water park adventures, as well as attractions such as Hershey's Chocolate World, year-round entertainment, dining, shopping, games and seasonal events. Also providing plenty of meeting space, Hersheypark is an ideal destination for off-sites, retreats, corporate picnics, team bonding experiences, group excursions, "bizcations" and "bleisure" activities.



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Hershey's Chocolatetown, a chocolate lover's year-round paradise, will sweeten the experience when it opens in summer 2020. It promises more attractions, such as Candymonium, the park's 15th (and "longest, tallest, fastest, sweetest") roller coaster, the largest full-service themed restaurant in Hersheypark and a 10,000-square-foot flagship store. It will add 23 acres to Hersheypark's 120 acres.

ATTRACTIVE ACCOMMODATIONS

Hershey Resorts provides three distinctive properties for meetings and events: Hotel Hershey, Hershey Lodge and Hershey Country Club, offering a total of 125,000 sq. ft of meeting space.

The historic, 276-room **Hotel Hershey**, a Forbes Four Star Hotel, sits above the town atop Pat's Hill, with panoramic views of the gardens and Hershey Valley below. Built by Milton S. Hershey during the Great Depression, the resort-hotel was designed in an elegant Mediterranean style and continues to provide a luxurious resort experience for guests.

The palatial property offers 25,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space; 20 meeting rooms, many with abundant natural light, to accommodate up to 450 people; outdoor event space; three restaurants; a lounge; a coffee shop; and a poolside cafe. Accommodations include newly renovated guest rooms, large suites and 10 private cottages—each with four to six guest rooms and sweeping views.

MEET, STAY AND PLAY AT PENNSYLVANIA'S FINEST CASINO RESORTS

If you're planning to meet, stay and play all in one place, Pennsylvania is home to several casino-hotels with plenty of space for groups of all types and sizes. Here are a few top picks.

Some 14,000 sq. ft. of trade show and event space, 12,000 sq. ft. of meeting space and 3,000 sq. ft. of prefunction space await groups at the 282-room **Wind Creek Bethlehem**.

After trying their luck at some of the 200 table games and 26 poker tables, attendees can find "me time" in Steel Magnolia Spa and Salon, or spend their winnings at one of several retail outlets on site. Three bars, a lounge and an event center mean no one will ever get bored.

Mount Airy Casino Resort is in the beautiful Pocono Mountains, a few hours from Philadelphia. Attendees can try their luck at more than 70 table and more than 1,800 slot games, and place their bets against some of the best players in the region. Those who would rather kick back can sip cocktails and listen to live music at Pia's Lounge, relax by the pool or



indulge in a spa treatment. Group outings can be arranged at the 6,500-yard, 18-hole golf course.

Groups of up to 1,200 can take a break from playing to meet in the 20,000-square-foot meeting/convention center and ballroom. The hotel houses 268 guest rooms.

Valley Forge Casino Resort boasts 479 guest rooms and suites, as well as 100,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including five ballrooms ranging in size from 3,000 to 8,865 sq. ft. that can host 50–600 people. A 54,000-square-foot event center can host up to 3,000 in a variety of configurations and 39 versatile meeting rooms are located throughout the venue. Private dining for groups at Revolution Chop House is also available.

Attendees can escape to Valley Beach, the venue's 20,000-square-foot "oasis," featuring an outdoor bar, a food truck and live entertainment on weekends. Hotel guests can lounge on the sandy beach. Private cabanas are available for rent.

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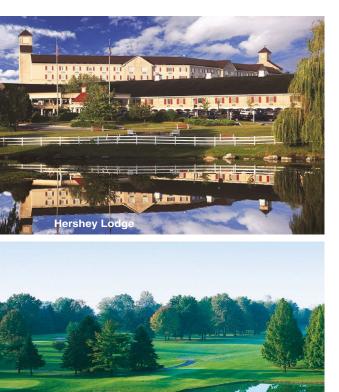
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There are plenty of things for groups to do at Hotel Hershey, with its indoor pool, outdoor pool with 14 cabanas available to rent and four golf courses. Team-building activities include Chocolate Challenge, Odyssey Ropes Course and Build a Bike for Charity. Falconry Experience gets attendees up close with powerful falcons.

The spa features Hershey-inspired treatments, such as Whipped Cocoa Bath, Chocolate Bean Polish and Cocoa Facial Experience.

Pennsylvania's largest convention resort, **Her-shey Lodge** combines a warm and homey vibe with luxury accommodations. The full-service resort provides 665 chocolate-inspired guest rooms; 100,000 sq. ft of flexible function space, including Great American Hall, billed as the region's largest and most advanced meeting space; 35 meeting rooms for 10–2,000 people; four restaurants; a poolside cafe; and a coffee shop.

Amenities include Hershey Waterworks, a 30,000-square-foot indoor pool and a 24-hour fitness center. Attendees who stay at Hershey Lodge are welcome to experience any of the activities offered at Hotel Hershey, as well as exclusive Hershey's Dark Chocolate treatments at MeltSpa by Hershey, located downtown.

Hershey Country Club is both a clubhouse and a meeting and event venue. The property provides 12,472 sq. ft. of meeting space among six rooms, "Hershey Resorts provides three distinctive properties: Hotel Hershey, Hershey Lodge and Hershey Country Club, offering a total of 125,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.



ranging from 570 to 4,400 sq. ft. Keystone Ballroom boasts panoramic views of the east and west golf courses, while the adjacent Jay Weitzel Room is ideal for smaller meetings. The all-season Picard Grand Pavilion is perfect for banquet-style events.

Altoona

The largest city in Blair County, Altoona is on the eastern slope of the Allegheny Mountains. It has a unique history as a railroad town, as well as its share of natural wonders and man-made thrills.



ENTICING ATTRACTIONS

An homage to the area's connection to trains, Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site provides a fascinating journey into the history of the area, a tribute to railroading and a closer look at the development of transportation. There are no formal tours, but groups can wander the grounds on self-guided excursions.

The visitors' center presents an in-depth video and provides background information, and there are daily historical programs and demonstrations throughout the park. Lemon House and Engine House No. 6 Exhibit Shelter are open to groups daily.

Lakemont Park has been entertaining Altoona residents and Blair County locals with amusements—such as Leap the Dips, the oldest roller coaster in the world—and activities since 1894. Recently reimagined, the park continues to offer thrill rides on Leap the Dips and other coasters; recreational options, such as brand-new mini golf courses, batting cages, go-karts, pedal boats, volleyball and The Island Waterpark; snack shacks; and plenty of events, such as Holiday Lights on the Lake.

The park provides lots of green space and pavilions for company picnics, off-sites and teambuilding exercises. Planners can reserve lawn space with stages for events, and attendees can

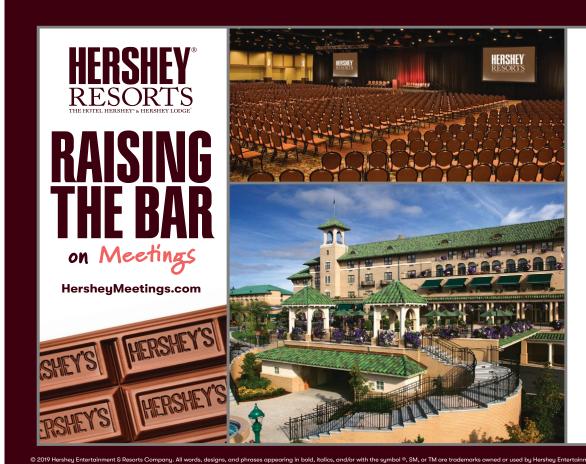


stretch their legs along trails and pathways. Park services provide amenities such as group catering and group rates for some activities.

Drive about a half-hour east of Lakemont Park, along Highway 22, for an engaging tour of **Lincoln Caverns and Whisper Rocks**, in operation since 1931. The caves are host to a stunning array of natural formations, such as crystals, stalactites and flowstones. Look for Frozen Niagara, one of the largest examples of flowstone in the Northeast, at 90 feet long and 110 feet high.

After touring Lincoln Caverns, groups return above ground to Whisper Rocks, featuring a gorgeous multiroom cave with many small passageways. Educational tours for groups of five to more than 20 occur daily, all year long (by appointment only in winter months). Ongoing geology programs, Discovery Days and events such as Bat-Fest add to the experience.

The site welcomes groups for meetings, off-



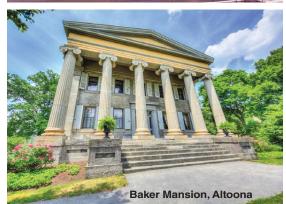
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Fairfield Inn & Suites and TownePlace Suites, Altoona





Guest room at The Grand Hotel, Altoona



sites, team building, company picnics and corporate events. Two large picnic pavilions can hold 50 and 100, respectively, and the education center accommodates 115. Event space can be reserved free of charge for groups registered for tours.

Smart Tip: The Backlight Adventures tour is a must-do for groups of 10–32.

As the former home of the Bakers, **Baker Mansion** shares the story of the family, who settled in the area in 1836 and became forces in the iron-making industry during the industrial era. As home to the Blair County Historical Society, the venue provides a wealth of knowledge about Blair County and the Alleghenies through its many events, programs and exhibits.

Planners will find 3,750 sq. ft. of historical space for hosting almost any type of event. Space includes a large foyer, back porch, front patio, dining room and large outdoor area with a stage in the backyard.

ATTRACTIVE ACCOMMODATIONS

The Grand Hotel, Blair County's only full-service hotel, features six meeting rooms totaling 5,962 sq. ft. of space, including four ballrooms and a courtyard. The grand ballroom holds up to 550 people and can be modified three ways. The hotel has 117 guest rooms, a pool and on-site catering.

Marriott International's dual-branded **Fairfield Inn & Suites and TownePlace Suites** provides a combined 197 rooms and 1,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. The hotels share an indoor swimming pool, a fitness center, an outdoor patio with a fireplace and barbecue grills.

Courtyard by Marriott, with 105 guest rooms and 425 sq. ft. of meeting space, is adjacent to **Blair County Convention Center**, which provides nearly 50,000 sq. ft. of space in its 11 meeting rooms, making it a flexible option for groups large and small.

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ary Danko. Charles Phan. Michael Mina. Alice Waters. This could be the lineup for an all-star list of celebrity chefs on a cooking channel, but it is actually just a sampling of the famous culinary innovators who made their mark in Northern California.

A whopping 59 Bay Area restaurants earned Michelin stars this year (plus one in Sacramento and one in Mendocino County). All that foodie fun doesn't stop at the conference room door. Meeting in Northern California is now even sweeter as new venues and renovated classic gathering places cook up creative catering experiences as the icing on the Silicon Valley hospitality cake. From San Jose to Sonoma, Northern California meetings add that dash of authentic laid-back flare that makes everything about the event meaningful.

Starting with the new Harvey Milk Terminal 1 at San Francisco International Airport (SFO), the local foodie scene is more accessible than ever. Nine new gates at one of the busiest airports in the country opened in July and no chain burger joints are in sight. From Amy's Drive Through—a healthy, non-GMO, organic ingredient-focused company based in the North Bay—to The Little Chihuahua, a street taco culinary experience with three locations in San Francisco, the culinary options go beyond the predictable.

A new, luxury, 310-room Grand Hyatt at SFO opening in October offers internationally inspired cuisine at Quail & Crane, a short Airtrain ride from the terminal.

Smart Meetings queried local catering experts to get insider tips on how to tap into all that locally sourced goodness.

San Francisco

From left: The

Dungeness crab salad at Restaurant Gary

Danko, San Francisco;

Harvey Milk Terminal

1 at San Francisco International Airport Expanded **Moscone Center**'s new, almost 505,000 sq. ft. of open area is in the heart of restaurant mecca. Attendees departing a meeting on one of the new outdoor patio areas will find themselves in SoMa (South of Market), with Union Square only a few savory blocks away.

And since Wolfgang Puck Catering announced that it would be coming back to the city this year, the

many venues put into service during massive citywides, such as Dreamforce (Nov. 19–22 this year) will be filled with more than frozen quiche. Whether your off-site takes you to Bespoke Coworking space in Westfield San Francisco Centre, City View at Metreon (31,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including a breathtaking terrace), The Regency Ballroom in Polk Gulch, Terra Gallery & Event Venue (24,000 sq.







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ft.) in South Beach or Fort Mason, the passed hors d'oeuvres could be the brainchild of the force behind the groundbreaking Postrio.

Moving into a city where the residents are fiercely proud of the local food scene and tech workers are catered to at work every day is not for the faint of whisk, said Hannah St. Clair, senior catering sales manager for Wolfgang Puck Catering. She loves serving people who appreciate good food. "Wolf-gang Puck started the open kitchen trend that changed what people expect," she said. That has led to lots of multiethnic fusion cuisine, creative presentations and interactive chef stations.

The Bay Area-raised foodie rattled off some of her favorite places to gather in the city. She tends to gravitate to historic spaces that have retained their original vibe—two examples are **The San Francisco Mint**, a building that opened in 1854 that has 92,000 sq. ft. of high-ceilinged and intricately detailed space, including the original brick gold vaults in the basement; and **The Hibernia**, a former bank building dating back to 1892 with 16,330 sq. ft. of Neoclassical Revival-style charm.

The Ferry Building is another gem dating back to 1898 that leverages waterfront views, artisan vendors and the creative management of the company behind venues at Chicago Board of Trade Building, New York City's Governors Island and Los Angeles' The Armory—Skylight Studios.

St. Clair suggests getting out into San Francisco's neighborhoods. Potrero Hill is known as one of the sunniest parts of the city, even during "fogust," foggy August. The Armory is 40,000 sq. ft. of Moorish castle in the middle of the hip Mission District. The newest emerging neighborhood is Dogpatch, where Chase Center, home of NBA's Golden State Warriors, is unveiling an 18,000-seat arena in the fall that will spark an event campus with a planned hotel and Bay Bridge views that sweeten the deal.

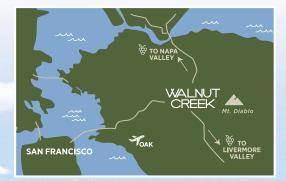
Michelin-starred State Bird Provisions serves its award-winning take on fresh fusion at The Workshop, a meeting space above the restaurant.

SLEEP, MEET AND INDULGE

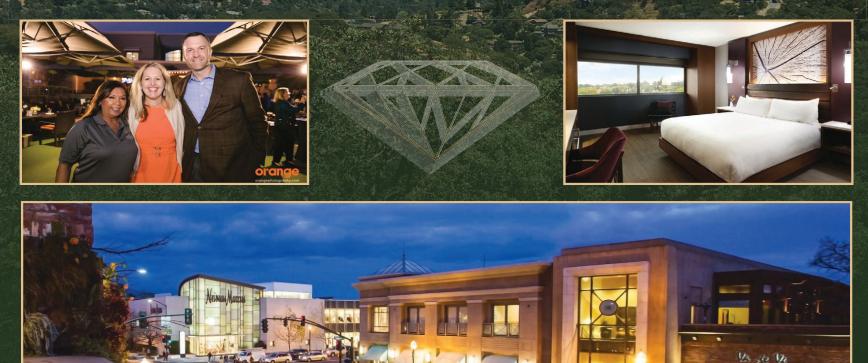
While Moscone Center was busy adding mouth-watering convention space, many of the historic hotel properties took the time to do their own reboot. **The Kimpton Sir Francis Drake in Union Square** cooked up an \$11 million renovation of its 1928 Gothic Revival landmark building. The property freshened up 416 guest rooms, but preserved the elegant woodwork and chandeliers in the 18,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Hyatt Regency San Francisco on the Embarcadero waterfront recently refreshed its Regency Club VIP accommodations—57 suites and a 17th-floor urban retreat. The property boasts 72,000 sq. ft. of meeting space and 804 guest rooms.

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RENAISSANCE*





Viceroy Hotel Group offers four ways to have your meeting and eat in style, too. The 202-room Hotel Zelos is home of Dirty Habit, which offers shareable punch bowls. The 196-room Hotel Zeppelin boasts Rambler, a restored brick enclave that serves up brunch specialties such as Gulf shrimp and smoked cheddar grits with tomato and smoked bacon.

The 116-room **Hotel Zetta** offers London-inspired brasserie interpretations from the chefs behind Park Tavern, in a vibrant red dining room. While the 96-room **Hotel Emblem** is of boutique proportions, the hand-crafted cocktails at Obscenity Bar & Lounge pack a punch.

New to the scene is 194-room **Virgin Hotels San Francisco**'s Commons Club, where a meal might start with caviar bites, include duck confit agnolotti, and end with a nightcap called Culture Club (Aviation Gin, hibiscus and blood orange).

What would a visit to San Francisco be without a stop at Tonga Room and Hurricane Bar for a Fog Cutter (rum, gin, cognac, orange, lemon orgeat, amontillado sherry and simple syrup) in **Fairmont San Francisco**?

Embassy Suites by Hilton San Francisco Airport Waterfront in nearby Burlingame provides 340 guest rooms, a 3,762-square-foot ballroom and complimentary evening receptions.

When groups step up to the bar at **Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco**, a world of celebrity chefs has contributed to the seasonal menu.

East Bay

The seeds of the local food movement were planted in Berkeley by Alice Waters' Chez Panisse. **Visit Berkeley** now counts more than 350 restaurants in the city, with plenty of plant-based options Clockwise: Dyafa, Oakland; Craneway Pavilion, Richmond; Commons Club at Virgin Hotels San Francisco



to fit any palette. The abundance of authentic culinary experiences in this ultimate college town has earned the destination the tag line, "Come for the culture; stay for the food."

St. Clair is loving the new vitality at Oakland's Jack London Square. Acclaimed chefs are bringing sustainable meat (Belcampo), Arab delicacies (Dyafa) and Thai street food (Farmhouse Kitchen) to the waterfront area. Bring your own culinary take on the meeting to new **Bloc 15**, an open-air venue with a fun street vibe.

In nearby Richmond, **Craneway Pavilion** is 45,000 sq. ft. of vaulted space in a former Ford assembly plant on the waterfront. Assemble Restaurant caters health-conscious menus, with some ingredients coming from the on-site Victory Garden.

The outdoors is the star in East Bay's jewel, Walnut Creek, where the annual Walnut Creek Chamber Art & Wine Festival brings locals and visitors together. New to town is Bounty Hunter Walnut Creek, a Napa transplant that pairs the food-and-wine experience with a retail shop that allows visitors to take home a taste of the region.

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Harbor House Inn in Elk had the distinction

of being one of the few destinations outside a big city to receive a 2019 Michelin Star. Chef Matt Kammerer (pictured) hails from two-starred Saison in San Francisco and oversees the kitchen at the wood-paneled retreat in Mendocino County overlooking the ocean.

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SLEEP, MEET AND INDULGE

For an upscale experience, check out **Claremont Club & Spa, a Fairmont Hotel** (23,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, 276 guest rooms), where you can order in classic afternoon tea for a brainstorming meeting, followed by drinks on the verandah, overlooking the entire Bay Area.

For those attending events at **Oakland Convention Center** (64,000 sq. ft. of meeting space), the redesigned urban oasis of **Oakland Marriott City Center** (500 guest rooms and 100,566 sq. ft.) is a gateway to artfully prepared American fare at Iron & Oak Restaurant and Bar.

South Bay

San Jose has become its own foodie destination, with **Adega** earning a Michelin Star for chef Jessica Carreira's elevated takes on Portuguese classics.

St. Clair loves The Tech Interactive museum in San Jose and Computer History Museum in Mountain View for venues that combine Silicon Valley history, inspiration and hands-on activities. "It is like an Exploratorium for adults, and aligns with a lot of the companies meeting in the area," she said.

Can't decide where to take the group? Lip Smacking Foodie Tours has added group walking and eating tours of the emerging Santana Row restaurant scene.

SLEEP, MEET AND INDULGE

Closer to the ballroom, **Santa Clara Marriott** is putting the finishing touches on a multimillion-dollar renovation that includes tech-inspired 29,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor meeting space, 759 guest rooms and Bosc & Bartlett restaurant, which specializes in California cuisine with Asian flavors.

WANT TO READ MORE?

Read more about the Northern California foodie scene at smartmeetings.com



The largest meeting property in town, **Fairmont San Jose**, offers 805 guest rooms and 65,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, with easy access to McEnery Convention Center. But the foodie draw is on the ground floor, where executive chef Marcelo Salinas offers a seasonal VIP chef's table dinner inside Fountain restaurant.

Wine Country

The ultimate Northern California culinary meeting would probably have to include **Meadowood Napa Valley**. This boutique property was designed to put guests in a relaxed frame of mind with its beckoning terraces, cozy gas fireplaces, luxury pampering spa, world-class golf and attentive service. Chef



Christopher Kostow was practically born with a Michelin rating and the restaurant now boasts three stars (meaning go out of your way to experience it). The same care lavished on meals in The Restaurant carries over to the catering staff, which can be enjoyed in the 3,592 sq. ft. of meeting space or on one of the outdoor patios.

Nearby, **Silverado Resort and Spa** has renovated the 150-year-old mansion since the fires two years ago. It offers 100,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor event space, and 340 guest rooms. Closer to downtown, **Meritage Resort and Spa** almost doubled in size when it opened the new Vista Collina Resort, bringing the total meeting space on the 467-room campus to 80,000 sq. ft., including The Vintner's Room, a rugged space connected to the outdoors via levered glass doors and the wine country through a necklace of tasting rooms adorning the venue's plaza.

Up Highway 29, **The Estate at Yountville** opened the doors this year on Hotel Villagio, with 112 cozy guest rooms and the 15,608-square-foot The Social at The Estate, a free-standing, barn-style venue. The property neighbors the much-heralded The French Laundry by Thomas Keller, another Michelin three-star experience.

New in St. Helena is Las Alcobas, a Luxury Collection Hotel, which comes equipped with

AND SPEAKING OF THAT CAPITAL REGION MICHELIN STAR...



Sacramento rightly bills itself as the farm-to-fork capital of the world, andnow has the foodie cred to prove it. Randall Selland and Nancy Zimmer's **The Kitchen Restaurant** (pictured) has been earning kudos since it opened in 1991 with a locally sourced, interactive chef experience.

The Capital City comes together once a year to celebrate the harvest with a Tower Bridge Dinner that raises money for the Farm-to-Fork Festival and celebrate all the local culinary star power.

Smart Meetings asked Vickie Housholder, general manager of Classique Catering, exclusive caterer to **Sacramento Convention Center Complex**,

for tips on designing sweet meetings while the facility is getting an extreme makeover. It reopens in late 2020 with a new 40,000-square-foot ballroom and a 15,300-square-foot, outdoor activities plaza designed to take advantage of the beautiful Sacramento evenings. In the meantime, Memorial Auditorium is open and some of the largest conferences have moved to Cal Expo fairgrounds. Historic **Sheraton Grand Sacramento Hotel** is shouldering much of the capacity, with 503 guest rooms and 29,520 sq. ft. of meeting space.

The new center of activity is DoCo (Downtown Commons), which is built around the new **Golden One Center**, home of NBA's Sacramento Kings, with capacity for more than 17,000, and the adjoining **Kimpton Sawyer Hotel**'s 22,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. The local food movement is evident in the authentic options from the stadium's vendors and Revival at the Sawyer pool deck nightclub.

a fun event barn, vineyard backdrop and muchlauded Acacia House restaurant, fronted by celebrity chef Chris Cosentino.

In Calistoga, **Solage, Auberge Resorts Collec**tion encourages attendees to "detox, retox and repeat." Solbar restaurant is executive chef Gustavo Rios' way of paying respect to local food culture. With 89 boutique cottages and a 260-capacity event lawn fronting a secluded meeting space, this is incentive trip headquarters.



We're a city of freethinkers and dream chasers, innovators and game changers. We're the capital of culinary and the hub of homegrown. Just 20 minutes from San Francisco, Berkeley offers more than 40 event venues, over 300 restaurants, and 1,400 guest rooms. Come mix flavors, change tempos, and break molds. Be bold. Meet in Berkeley.

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BY DAN JOHNSON

roups meeting in Greater Palm Springs enjoy its laid-back atmosphere, as well as its impressive collection of luxury hotels and boutique hideaways, trendy bars and restaurants, and host of recreational options, including outstanding golf courses. But those who want to dig deeper discover much more, including amazing surrounding landscapes, an intriguing Native-American heritage, a world-renowned architectural history and a rich Hollywood celebrity legacy.

"Many attendees and groups that come here expect to see a desert landscape, but we are an oasis in the desert, surrounded by mountains," says Mark Crabb, FCDME, chief sales officer for Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau. "That is the first thing most people convey—that they had no idea that the mountains were so close and how green it is here. We want them to experience the outdoors as much as possible by doing early-morning yoga or by enjoying golf, hikes or a Jeep excursion to the San Andreas Fault.

"Attendees can get the full 'oasis experience' while chilling in the desert."

Arguably the best way to sample the city's many unique features is through the many tours, which include everything from thrilling rides into the San Andreas Fault to drives by the homes of Frank Sinatra, Elizabeth Taylor and other famous stars. Planners not only have plenty of tours from which to choose: They also include lots of transportation options—including bus, van, bicycle, Jeep, Hummer, ATV and hot-air balloon—along with walking tours. So, it's easy to arrange for a tour that fits the interests and needs of each group.

Walking and Hiking Tours

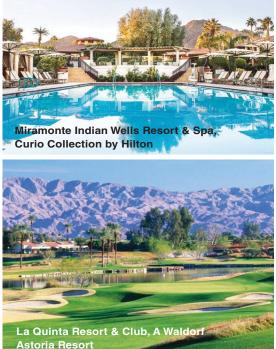
Palm Springs Historical Society offers historical walking tours focusing on the city's historic neighborhoods, distinguished by the celebrities and local pioneers who called them home, and the architects and builders who shaped their development. Tours last from 1 to 2 1/2 hours and cover three-quarters

of a mile to 2 miles, depending on the tour. During the hot summer months (June to September), walking tours are offered by foot or vehicle as private outings arranged by the museum. The regular walking tour season resumes in October.

P.S. Walk with Me tours draw on the insights and

RESOURCES

- Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism
- Visit Temecula Valley



experiences of Jade Thomas Nelson, who was born and raised in Palm Springs, and has a lifelong passion for its historical and social legacy. His two-hour walking tours include an introduction to some of the city's most iconic homes and sites, as well as stories about surprising celebrity connections, eclectic architectural styles and fascinating historical details.

Established in 2002, Tallgrass Hiking and Tours, based in Palm Desert, features custom hiking and sightseeing tours throughout Greater Palm Springs, accommodating from two to more than 50 participants. Hikes range from easy to strenuous. Planners can choose from tours of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, Homestead Trail Loop, Carrizo Canyon, 1000 Palms Oasis, Willis Palms Mesa & Oasis, Joshua Tree National Park, Ryan Mount, Indian Canyons Coffman Murray Loop and many more.

Desert Tasty Tours offers a three-hour, guided culinary and cultural stroll along Palm Springs' Palm Canvon Drive and Palm

Desert's El Paseo. It combines food tastings at five to seven locations with historical, cultural and architectural insights from guides. Private tours for small and large groups can be arranged.

The self-guided City of Coachella Walk-



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ing Tour highlights the city's unique cultural fabric. Groups visit scenes of Chicano political activism, tour historic religious sites, visit locations where movies were filmed and view beautiful murals. Along the way, they pass by many local shops and authentic Mexican restaurants.

Bicycling Tours

Social Cycle offers groups the opportunity to rent bicycles for six to 15 people and pedal their wayalong with a "captain" from the company-around Palm Springs, stopping at three bars. Private tours can also be arranged on an hourly basis, with a twohour minimum. During the popular downtown tour, groups pedal along Palm Canyon Drive and visit tiki bars to enjoy creative cocktails.

Offered by Big Wheel Tours, Earthquake Canyon Express Bicycle Tour is a 20-mile trek that descends 1,200 feet through the heart of the San Andreas Fault zone on a paved road to the heart of grape country, near Mecca. It's a relaxing sightseeing adventure, with no cross roads or turns, and very little traffic.

Bus and Van Tours

For more than 100 years, artists, designers, architects and Hollywood stars have been drawn to Palm Springs, making it a hot bed of creativity. Some of the tours, including Palm Springs Mod Squad, tap into this creative heritage. Owned and operated by Kurt Cvr. a local celebrity, designer and mid-century modern architecture expert-Palm Springs Mod Squad offers 90-minute van tours in which Cyr regales groups with tales of Hollywood and architecture.

Led by Trevor O'Donnell, one of the area's most knowledgeable, experienced and entertaining guides, PS Architecture Tours also explores the city's fascinating architecture. He discusses Palm Springs' remarkable architects, builders and Hollywood celebrity clients, and tells back stories that add life, humor, intrigue and awe to the area's extraordinary concentration of modernist buildings.

The Midmod Design Tour offers groups the chance to view the city's architecture through the eyes of designer Lyle Boatman, the only tour guide working in Palm Springs who has a professional degree in architecture. He communicates intricate concepts of modern architecture in easy-to-understand language. Boatman accentuates his tours by providing participants with individual digital tablets preloaded with aerial photos, vintage and contemporary interiors and exteriors, and plans and sections (when available).

Celebrity Tours offers the Celebrity Grand Tour, a 2 1/2-hour bus ride that passes by the former estates of Frank Sinatra, the Marx Brothers, Elizabeth Taylor, Sonny and Cher, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Liberace, Nat King Cole, Dinah Shore and more. Private group tours can be arranged that travel into areas that restrict commercial buses and show



Joshua Tree National Monument

areas not seen in other tours.

The U.S. Department of Energy expects that by 2030, windmills may supply as much as 20 percent of the country's electricity. Groups can view a high concentration of windmills during Palm Springs Windmill Tours outings. Group bus tours can accommodate six to 28 people and private tours can be arranged.

Five Star Adventure Tours offers several bus tours, including Mid-Century Movie Star Home Combo

Tour, Legends & Icons Tour, Modernism Tour of Palm Springs, It's All about Palm Springs Tour, Mobs & Stars and Palm Springs Golden Era 360.

Jeep, Hummer and ATV Tours

During Big Wheel Tours' Joshua Tree National Park Jeep Adventure, Wrangler Jeeps navigate a rugged backcountry trail through the Little San Bernardino Mountains to take groups from the Colorado Desert to above 4,000 feet elevation in the

Mojave Desert. Along the way are magnificent unspoiled desert vistas, spectacular rock formations, unique plant and animal life, and striking geology.

The San Andreas Fault Tour from Big Wheel Tours shows participants where earthquakes are born. Riding in Jeeps, they see first-hand what is sometimes referred to as "the most tortured landscape on earth" as they visit backcountry trails of a Bureau of Land Management Wilderness zone, the most colorful part of the San Andreas Fault in California. Sheer canyon walls, abundant native desert plant and animal life are among the highlights.

Desert Adventures, based in Palm Desert, offers a variety of Jeep tours, including Indian Canyons Jeep & Hiking Eco-Tour, Joshua Tree National Park Tour, Mecca Hills-Painted Canyon Jeep Eco-Tour and San Andreas Fault Jeep Eco-Tour. Each Jeep

holds seven people; team-building activities can be added and private tours can be arranged.

The Indian Canyon Tour takes groups on a 2 1/2-hour adventure through the various canyons of the Coachella Valley. Visitors ride in open-air jeeps and go on a 30-minute nature walk, during which an experienced guide discusses the plants, geology, animals, native lore and local earthguakes. The tour also teaches visitors about the history of the native Cahuilla Indians and how they

> survived in the desert's harsh heat.

> Adventure Hummer Tours takes groups into the canyons of the San Andreas Fault and Joshua Tree National Park. It now provides free, airconditioned shuttles to its open-air Hummers on all the Joshua Tree National Park tours. The company's special permits and equipment enable groups to avoid the onehour drive to get to the main entrance of Joshua, and thereby see more of the park. The tour climbs 1 mile to Eureka Peak, lo-

cated in the heart of the some of the oldest and largest Joshua trees in the park. Private tours in

five- or nine-passenger vehicles can be arranged. ATV Experience, Inc. offers tours in its three- and six-seat ATVs that traverse through the wilderness

and desert landscapes surrounding Chiriaco Summit, just south of Joshua Tree National Park, 40 minutes east of Palm Springs along Interstate 10.

A guide accompanies the groups on one of its several trails, and can drive the vehicle, although participants 21 and older also are invited to drive. Groups of up to 24 can be accommodated.

Hotels and Resorts

Palm Springs Convention Center offers 92,000 sq. ft. of carpeted exhibit space in its Oasis Hall, 20,016-square-foot Primrose Ballroom, an

am able to place a conference in Greater Palm Springs. All of the properties I have sited and/ or worked with are wonderful. Palm Springs is truly a desert paradise that I will continue to encourage my clients to consider any time I have the opportunity to do so. 99

It's always a pleasure when I

-Tracy Newell, MeetingWise

18,000-square-foot lobby with stunning mountain views, a 20,000-square-foot event lawn and 21 meeting rooms.

The city's 1950s roots and post-modern eclecticism are on full display at **Parker Palm Springs**, an upscale hotel with 144 guest rooms, two red clay tennis courts, acclaimed Palm Springs Yacht Club spa and more than 10,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including a 3,700-square-foot grand ballroom.

The Riviera Palm Springs features 398 guest rooms, five restaurants with locally inspired cuisines, a spa and 45,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor event space, including 23 meeting rooms and a 19,670-square-foot grand ballroom with nine crystal chandeliers.

Featuring two chef-driven restaurants, the seven-story **Kimpton The Rowan Palm Springs Hotel** also has 153 guest rooms, a rooftop pool and bar, and 16,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor meeting space, including the 2,300-square-foot Sky Ballroom. Jacinto, a rooftop event room and outdoor terrace, offers amazing view of the desert and mountains.

Centrally located on the historic Palm Springs downtown strip, **Hyatt Palm Springs** is the only all-suite property in the city, boasting 197 rooms with sweeping views of downtown and the San Jacinto Mountains, It also provides 12,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Rejuvenated **Renaissance Palm Springs Hotel** is set against a backdrop of swaying palm trees and the majestic San Jacinto Mountains. It features 410 newly renovated guest rooms, large outdoor pools with private cabanas, a spa and 26,788 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Set amid a spectacular setting of citrus groves and flowers at the base of the majestic Santa Rosa Mountains, **La Quinta Resort & Club, A Waldorf Astoria Resort** is a 45-acre property in La Quinta—18 miles southeast of Palm Springs—with 718 guest rooms, seven restaurants, a spa, a salon, 41 pools(!), five golf courses, tennis courts and 190,000 sq. ft. of indoor/outdoor event space.

Omni Rancho Las Palmas Resort & Spa in Rancho Mirage, 12 miles southeast of Palm Springs, features 444 guest rooms, five restaurants a 20,000-square-foot spa and 84,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. It's known for its excellent recreation options, including a 450-foot-long lazy river, waterslides, a cliff-side jacuzzi, a 27-hole golf course, 25 tennis courts and a fitness center.

Set on 360 acres, **The Westin Mission Hills Golf Resort & Spa** in Rancho Mirage showcases awesome mountain views, a secluded natural desert landscape and Mediterranean architecture. Listed as one of *Golf Digest*'s Top 75 Golf Resorts in North America, it also includes 512 guest rooms, three pools and a 60-foot slide, a spa, a fitness studio, 65,000 sq. ft. of indoor event space and 26,000 sq. ft. of outdoor event space.

The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage, which sits atop a 650-foot bluff, provides 260 guest rooms,



The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage

spectacular views (especially from the cliffside The Edge Steakhouse), 16,000 sq. ft. of indoor meeting space and 15,000 sq. ft. outdoors.

The 450-acre **JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa** in Palm Desert, 14 miles southeast of Palm Springs, features 884 guest rooms, eight restaurants, two championship golf courses, tennis courts, a spa and more than 234,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor event space.

Miramonte Indian Wells Resort & Spa, Curio Collection by Hilton—located in Indian Wells, 20 miles southeast of Palm Springs—boasts stunning views of the Santa Rosa Mountains, world-class golf and tennis, and more than 35,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Set within the beautiful Coachella Valley, 560room **Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa**, **Indian Wells** is in the midst of a transformation that included a redefined lobby experience that debuted in August. Attendees now can share

A Jewel Off the Beaten Track

Located 69 miles southwest of Palm Springs, Temecula features a historic Old Town with buildings from the 1800s, and plenty of antique shops and restaurants. But it's perhaps best known for the surrounding Temecula Valley Wine County, which includes more than 40 wineries and many golf courses.

Local tours enable groups to comfortably experience the wine country, gorgeous landscapes and other features.

Destination Temecula Wine Tours & Experiences offers the area's only professionally guided tour, following a scenic bus drive to local wineries. Guides share interesting details about Temecula's history, wine culture, wine tasting and quirky nuances of the unique valley.

California Dreamin', Magical Adventures and A Grape Escape offer hot-air balloon rides over the area's citrus groves and vineyards, with stunning views of the mountains. All of the companies offer packages for groups, including breakfasts after morning flights.

Temecula Valley also features plenty of lodging and meeting options, including bed and breakfasts, hotels and resorts. Newly renovated **Pechanga Resort Casino**, a AAA Four Diamond property, is an outstanding option for groups. The luxury resort features 1,080 guest rooms, 14 restaurants, a comedy club, a pool complex, a golf course, a two-story spa the largest casino floor in California (188,000 sq. ft.) and 275,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including the 39,150-squarefoot Summit Ballroom.



stories and create memories over hand-crafted cocktails from an enhanced bar experience, and the new cocktail menus feature locally sourced ingredients, with a nod to the timeless traditions of the destination.

In October, modernized guest rooms will begin featuring walk-in showers and refreshed interiors. The resort also features five restaurant and bar options, two pools, 36 holes of golf, a fitness center and 213,439 sq. ft. of meeting space, divided among 55 rooms.

Andaz Palm Springs is slated to open downtown in early 2020 with 7,300 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor meeting space, including nine event venues and a 2,300-square-foot outdoor terrace.

In La Quinta, Montage International is scheduled to open two hotels—the 140-room Montage La Quinta and 200-room Pendry La Quinta. They are slated to open in 2021, with a conference center attached to both properties.



BY KELLIE HANNA

andlocked and bordered by eight different states—Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska—Missouri's culture is an intriguing blend of Midwest and Southern elements, strongly influenced by the distinctive heritage of the Ozark Mountains.

At the beginning of the 19th century, early settlers in Missouri were American pioneers from the Southern Appalachians, and the state was a jumping-off point for people traveling west from all over, due to its accessible location. Those people, along with the state's colorful sociopolitical history, have left their marks on Missouri's development.

Yet the state has a vibrant character all its own. Its cultural relevance is obvious when we listen to ragtime music, and it's where St. Louis blues and Kansas City jazz were born. It's also home to Anheuser-Busch, one of the largest beer producers in the world, and it's the birthplace of Route 66 (in Springfield). Some of the most notable names in history—such as Mark Twain, Walt Disney and Harry S. Truman have called it home.

Little wonder, then, that its three most populous cities—Kansas City, Springfield and St. Louis—each sport their own unique styles in just about everything they do. Let's explore a bit of what each has to offer.

Kansas City

Kansas City is enjoying a \$7.3 billion renaissance, including new cultural attractions, new hotels and a streetcar—making it a very popular meeting destination. The recently renovated **Kansas City Convention Center** boasts more than 800,000 sq. ft. of space, including a 46,484-square-foot grand ballroom—the largest "green" ballroom in the United States—and 48 meeting rooms. While there, groups

can get a feel for the City of Fountains through its festivals and food.

FABULOUS FESTIVALS

Every year, Kansas City unofficially welcomes fall with Plaza Art Fair, one of the city's longest-running art festivals. Encompassing nine city blocks, the topranked, national art event allows attendees to unwind

RESOURCES

- Explore St. Louis
- Springfield, Missouri, Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Visit Kansas City





and mingle while sampling the fare from 20 featured restaurant booths, the music of a variety of bands and the works of more than 240 artists.

Groups can get together for pretzels, brews and entertainment at KC Oktoberfest, one of the newer festivals to hit Kansas City. Now billed as "The Munich of the Midwest," KC Oktoberfest began in the biergarten of KC Bier Co., Kansas City's largest locally owned brewery, in 2014. The festival quickly grew to be a local favorite and is now the city's largest Oktoberfest event.

With room for more than 1,800 celebrants, there's plenty of space under the Bierhalle tent for team bonding or merrymaking at the end of a long meeting. Attendees can enjoy traditional music, polka dancing, German wine, gluten-free pear cider and beer from KC Bier Co., which brews its beers according to the tenets of the Bavarian Beer Purity Law of 1516 and upon tradi

of 1516, and uses traditional German recipes and brewing processes. Games and competitions include the traditional Masskrugstemmen (stein-hoisting competition) and Hammerschlagen (Bavarian-Style best-dressed competition) and a mar-

ketplace features a vari-

ety of local shops.

TRENDING ONLINE

Tips for Experiencing the Real St. Louiis Springfield, Missouri: Endless Journeys 11 Cities on The Rise You Can't Pass Up

smartmeetings.com

DELICIOUS LOCAL FLAVORS

Omnivores can't pass through Kansas City without at least trying the barbecue. Arguably the barbecue capital of the world (or at least in the top 10 list for U.S. cities), Kansas City is proud of its culinary claim to fame. Its barbecue's unique, regional style is steeped in history, rooted in a tradition dating to the early 20th century. It is characterized by its use of a wide variety of meats (and sometimes fish), rubbed with spices and slowly smoked over a variety of woods.

But perhaps the most integral element is the thick, sweet-and-spicy, yet tangy tomato-based sauce. There are more than 100 barbecue restaurants in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Here are a few favorites.

Arthur Bryant's KC Barbecue traces its roots to Henry Perry, "The Father of Kansas City Barbecue," who started the sensation in 1908 with his smoked meats, which he served to workers from a stall in the garment district, and then eventually in a restaurant that was taken over by a former employee and became Bryant's after Perry died.

The restaurant's fame stretches over several decades, all the while honoring Perry's legacy. Meats are smoked to peak flavor over a combination of hickory and oak woods, then splashed with sauce made from a secret recipe. Both locations in Kansas City provide in-house services as well as a wide variety of banquet and catering options.

Arthur Bryant's KC Barbecue's main rival, Gates Bar-B-Q, is a Kansas City original family restaurant that started in 1946. It has grown from a single storefront at 19th and Vine to a family of six restaurants throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area, and is widely known for its award-winning sauces.

Planners who want to elevate their group's barbecue dining experience can opt for Fiorella's Jack Stack Barbecue. Now in its third generation of the Fiorella family, Jack's is billed as having the "largest, full-service wood cookery in the industry."

Group menu options for relaxed reception dinners or team lunches include Taste of Kansas City, which includes pork spare ribs, beef brisket, pulled pork, "fire-kissed" wings and a choice of three classic-style sides; and The Pitmaster, with offerings of beef, pork and sausage burnt ends,

PERFECT MEETING SPOTS

Up-level your meeting at one of Kansas City's newcomers, **21c Museum Hotel**, a \$50 million reinvention of Savoy Bar and Grill, built in 1888. The luxury, 120-room boutique property is a unique, hybrid combination of a contemporary art museum, chic lodging, plentiful meeting space and a chef-inspired restaurant—all in one historic, landmark setting.

Rotating art exhibits provide thought-provoking eye candy and inspired conversation starters for the next breakout session. And there's 6,200 sq. ft. of meeting space, including a ballroom for seated groups of up to 120 and receptions as large as 150.

Another newbie and art-themed presence in Kansas City, **Crossroads Hotel** was once a Pabst Brewing Co. bottling plant, built in 1911. Redesigned as a boutique hotel in October 2018, the building blends historical elements with contemporary features. Works from local artists and makers are infused throughout the property—in its 132 modern guest rooms and luxury suites; bars, restaurants and lounges; and 8,746 feet of meeting space, to get attendees' creative juices flowing. It is located only 1 mile from downtown and **Kansas City Convention Center**.

Be on the lookout for the upcoming Loews Kansas City, slated to debut in spring 2020. It will house 800 guest rooms, a lobby bar, a signature restaurant and an indoor lap pool. The property promises 60,000 sq. ft. of meeting space and will connect via connector bridge to the convention center, making travel to and from meetings a breeze.

St. Louis

St. Louis, Missouri's independent city, beckons groups with its array of attractions, such as its iconic arch, myriad parks and active nightlife. But the real St. Louis can be found where locals tend to gather time and time again.

FABULOUS FESTIVALS

It wouldn't be a trip to St. Louis without music and barbecue. Gather your group around the pits while the titans of barbecue smoke 18,000 pounds of meat at Q on the Lou, the city's yearly festival celebrating the culinary craft. Attendees can learn tricks of the trade from champion pit masters while savoring their perfectly smoked ribs or steak. Add some live music and a little lager, and you've got the perfect setting for a team-bonding experience that attendees will not forget.

Smart tip: Grab pit passes to secure a spot in the lounges along pit row so you and your group can eat your way through the festival while enjoying pit master-inspired cocktails, uninhibited.

Mention Mardi Gras to St. Louisians and they'll likely think of Soulard—a lively neighborhood known for its active nightlife, blues scene, restaurants serving Southern fare and a beloved farmers' market. It's also home to Soulard Mardi Gras, thought to be one of the biggest Mardi Gras festivals in the United States (second to New Orleans' Mardi Gras festival).

Festivities run the gamut and include a winter carnival, a snowman softball tournament, a 5-mile run, a Cajun cook-off and a chance to experience music, drinks and food from the 1920s through the future at the brand-new Bacchanalian Ball. Celebrations culminate with the Bud Light Grand Parade.

Rent a climate-controlled, 20-by-20-foot tent for up to 50 people at Corporate Village VIP Experience to share unobstructed views of the parade with your attendees. The experience includes a staffed bar, an all-you-can-eat creole lunch and lots and lots of beads.

Plan for some team bonding at The Blues Alumni Experience, where blues legends gather in a private tent along the parade route to share tales from the road. Or give attendees an unforgettable parade experience with a spot on the Mardi Gras, Inc Float. "Kansas City is enjoying a \$7.3 billion renaissance...making it a very popular destination. 99



St. Louis

DELICIOUS LOCAL FLAVORS

St. Louisians do interesting things with food: They deep-fry ravioli, use Provel cheese on pizza and deep-fry foo young, then eat it between sliced white bread (a St. Paul sandwich), for example. While St. Louis' twists on traditions might seem odd to some, they're part of what makes St. Louis unique—and give The Gateway City's food a fun, flavorful flair.

St. Louis has its own take on barbecue, too. Instead of dry-rubbed and slow-smoked cuts of meat, it's all about the grill—and the sauce. The sauce is so important to St. Louis-style barbecue that residents consume more barbecue sauce per capita than people anywhere else in the United States. The grilled substance can be just about anything, but it's usually spareribs, trimmed to a rectangular shape and doused in a sweet, sticky, tomato-based sauce.

Groups can share a rack at Salt & Smoke, a favorite among locals. Both modern, bright and airy locations—one with plentiful outside seating—serve halfor whole racks, as well as pulled pork and brisket burgers, a falafel burger for vegans and vegetarians, and shareable delights such as hush puppies with maple butter, fried house pickles and toasted ravioli, a St. Louis staple. If you can't bring your group to the restaurant, don't despair: It will cater just about any event and can serve five to 500.

Missouri has its share of Ozark Mountain influence. Traditional Ozark cuisine varies and has been colored by 200 years of history, influenced by indigenous and enslaved peoples, and the land on which they lived. It's a marriage of the Midwest and the South rooted in local game, pork, wild mushrooms, berries and greens. Groups can get a taste of this tradition with an upscale flair at Bulrush STL.

Located in the Arts District, Bulrush STL provides contemporary interpretations of historic Ozark recipes. Rob Connoley—a James Beard semifinalist chef, cookbook author and Missouri native—features fresh, locally sourced and foraged organic food, steeped in local tradition. The menu is created daily, but groups can expect fare to include staples such as bacon, venison, collard greens, beans and okra. Bonus: The restaurant is committed to a waste-free philosophy.

PERFECT MEETING SPOTS

Overlooking the iconic Gateway Arch, the 910room **Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch** is within walking distance of several downtown attractions, such as Enterprise Center, America's Center Convention Complex and the Mississippi Riverfront. Groups can comfortably collaborate in more than 83,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including dedicated boardrooms, terraces, expansive ballrooms and prefunction space.

For planners interested in landmark properties, the historic Mayfair Hotel, originally opened in 1925, was completely renovated in 2014 as **The Magnolia St. Louis**. The Mayfair was the site of many firsts, including the first female general manager in St. Louis, and it is the birthplace of "chocolates on a pillow," thanks to the legendary



Cary Grant. Today, the boutique hotel continues its tradition of sophistication, from its 182 luxurious guest rooms and suites to its 8,000 sq. ft. of elegant meeting space.

Another property with a historic past, **The Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel** sits on the site of the Statler Hotel, built in 1917 as one of the grandest hotels in St. Louis. After several iterations, the building was renovated in 2014 to its present state, with 874 chic guest rooms, 43 luxury suites and more than 55,000 sq. ft. of versatile event space, including the 20,000 square-foot Majestic Ballroom, one of the largest event facilities in St. Louis.

The property is ideally located across the street from **St. Louis Convention Center**.

Springfield

Far from a small, sleepy town, Springfield—aka The Queen City of the Ozarks and the Birthplace of Route 66—is Missouri's third-largest city. It is home to a growing hospitality industry as well as thriving businesses. While Springfield has all the amenities of a big city, it welcomes groups with its friendly, laid-back charm.

FABULOUS FESTIVALS

Groups can get a taste of Missouri at Springfield's annual Food Truck Festival. The best and brightest street-food stars park their gourmet food trucks, carts and trailers downtown, ready to feed hungry foodies. Attendees can sample a variety of cuisines, satisfy sweet cravings and browse vendors while enjoying live music performances. Trucks compete in four categories: finger food, sweet treat, main dish and people's choice. The event is held next to **Springfield Expo Center,** which provides 45,000 sq. ft. of configurable event space, as well as seven breakout rooms.

PrideFest makes its way to the Ozarks in October. Billed as the largest LGBT event in Southwest Missouri, the annual festival attracted more than 4,500 people in 2018. Attendees can celebrate equality and diversity together while enjoying live music, vendors and activities.

Great Historic Venues for Groups

Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield also feature some great historic venues that provide meeting space for groups.

KANSAS CITV: Built in 1914, Union Station Kansas City (pictured) is an 850,000-square-foot marvel of historic preservation. The venue provides several options for meetings and events, which include: Arvin Gottlieb Planetarium (hosts 150), Bank of America Gallery (100 seated, 250 standing), Grand Plaza (2,000 standing, 1,300 banquet) and Regnier Extreme Screen Theater (400 seats).

ST. LOUIS: Opened in 1894, **St. Louis Union Station** (pictured) soon became one of the largest

and busiest passenger rail terminals in the world. Today, the station houses attractions such as a historic carousel and the dazzling Light and Fire Show, The venue is undergoing renovations to some of its features and will soon house the 120,000-square-foot St. Louis

Aquarium. Next door, The St. Louis Wheel will open this fall to take groups 200 feet over the city's skyline in 42 glass-enclosed gondolas. The station has its own AAA Four Diamond Hotel, **Union Station Hotel**, Curio Collection by Hilton, which boasts 130,000 sq. ft. of flexible space.

SPRINCFIELD: Constructed in the early 1900s after the original firehouse burned down, Historic Firehouse No. 2 operated as a firehouse until 1987. Now, it functions as an event venue with indoor and outdoor meeting space. Two gardens feature graphic art and sculptures, while **an** on-site "saloon" provides everything a planner needs to set up a custom pre- or postfunction service. S

image

Calling food truck

-ondon

Get attendees moving in support of Springfield nonprofits during Bass Pro Shop's Fitness Festival in the fall. Groups can Run Across Springfield together, team up for a relay or race to the finish line in a 15K, 25K or 50K run in Dogwood Canyon Nature Park. Proceeds from these events are shared by Big Brothers Big Sisters, Ozark Greenways and Wonders of Wildlife.

DELICIOUS LOCAL FLAVORS

When you think of guintessential Springfield cuisine, you probably don't think of Chinese food. But Springfield-style cashew chicken is a thing, thanks to David Leong, who invented it in 1963 at his restaurant, Leong's Tea House. His son, chef Win Yee Leong, keeps the dish alive at Leong's Asian Diner.

The regional favorite is a twist on traditional Cantonese cuisine-a blend of Midwestern-style cooking and traditional Asian flavors, featuring a local staple: fried chicken. Groups are welcome to try it along with other freshly prepared items, such as teriyaki salmon, Land and Sea (bacon-wrapped beef tenderloin and jumbo grilled shrimp), pork belly sliders and classic fried rice dishes.

Another Springfield staple, Lindberg's Tavern, the oldest pub in the city, is steeped in local history dating to 1865, Today, it is popular with locals for its live entertainment and artfully crafted burg-

ers, such as The Lindburger, a double-beef patty seared in duck fat and topped with mayonnaise and Provel cheese. The brunch menu showcases Southern-style favorites, such as poutine, biscuits and chicken, and waffles. The Lindberg Bloody Mary is a must-try for its fresh herbs, smoked sea salt and house-made beef jerky.

PERFECT MEETING SPOTS

Built in 1906 as a Masonic temple, Springfield Historic Site and landmark Hotel Vandivort was reinvented in 2015. The 50-room, boutique property pays homage to the past in its design, while it is decidedly contemporary with high-efficiency LED lighting, water conservation fixtures, and locally sourced food and beverages.

Smaller groups of up to 160 will find inspiration in the 2,800-square-foot, flexible ballroom, which has more than 100 years of experience hosting events. Space also includes the 850-square-foot, adjustable Cornerstone Room and the 250-square-foot Pillar Room. Stay tuned: The hotel plans to unveil 48 more guest rooms and a rooftop bar this year.

Oasis Hotel and Convention Center, an Ascend Hotel, was made for meetings. The 173-room property can accommodate 10 to 1,500 in more than 30,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space, including six ballrooms and a fully equipped convention center.



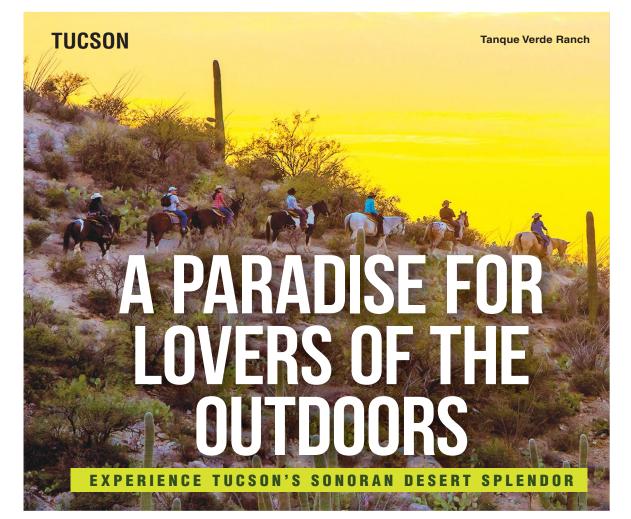
The experience is heightened by an indoor and an outdoor pool; and private dining rooms at Fire and Ice, the hotel's restaurant and ice bar.

Another property perfectly suited for meetings is University Plaza Hotel & Convention Center, which offers groups 46,818 sq. ft. of versatile space, including 35 meeting rooms, a business center and two ballrooms for up to 2,000. Nearby Springfield Expo Center provides an additional 123,182 sq. ft. of space for extra large groups.



Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium, voted America's best aquarium and best new attraction.

SPRINGFIELDMO.ORG/MEETINGS



BY COURTNEY PETER

verflowing with otherworldly desert beauty and bathed in sunshine 350 days per year, Tucson can't help but enchant groups that appreciate the outdoors. The five mountain ranges that ring the city set it apart as a secluded enclave within the lush Sonoran Desert, a 100,000-square-mile expanse covering parts of Arizona, California and northwestern Mexico. Its mammals, birds and reptiles, in addition to its spectrum of plant life 2,000 species strong, upend the notion of a desert as a barren wasteland. Fortunately, Tucson offers myriad modes of exploration to match its ecological variety.

"You can go from desert terrain to a forest at an elevation of 9,000 feet within a couple of hours. Trail runners, mountain- and road-bike riders, rock climbers, horseback riders, hikers, spelunkers and even skiers fill their days with endless adventure," says Cindy Aguilar, public relations and communications manager at Visit Tucson.

Throughout Tucson, major meetings properties adeptly showcase the singular setting by not only offering outdoor-oriented group excursions and experiences, but also allowing attendees to mingle with the desert dreamscape in open-air and indoor/outdoor event venues.

Read on for a primer on the magic of meeting in this outdoor-lover's oasis.

Overland Exploration

The mountain ranges and desert expanses in and around Tucson exert a powerful pull. Hiking and biking, two of the most accessible modes of regional recreation available, lure groups into desert surroundings guaranteed to leave attendees awestruck.

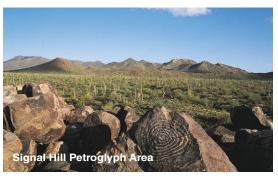
The crown jewel of the region's public lands, 92,000-acre Saguaro National Park, bookends

Tucson: The Rincon Mountain District sits about 10 miles east of the city and the Tucson Mountain District lies about 10 miles west. More than 165 miles of hiking trails, divided between the two districts, include flat, easy strolls as well as challenging ridge climbs, giving planners their pick of trails to suit attendees' level of activity.

RESOURCES

- Arizona Meetings and Events
- Arizona Office of Tourism
- Greater Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Tucson Convention Center
- Visit Tucson





Saguaro cacti, the headlining attraction of their namesake park, are plentiful in both districts. Cactus gardens adjacent to each visitors center afford easy access to the Sonoran sentinels, which are also found farther afield alongside trails, roadways and overlooks. Time an excursion for the golden hour just before sunset to watch the waning rays set the saguaros aglow.

Cooling twilight temperatures also increase the likelihood of spotting wildlife such as javelinas, jackrabbits and Gila monsters—one of the world's two species of venomous lizards, and the only one living in the United States. Any time of day, groups can set out to see remnants of inhabitants long gone. The trail through Signal Hill Petroglyph Area in Tucson Mountain District offers views of many of the site's 200-plus prehistoric Native American petroglyphs, created 550 to 1,550 years ago.

But groups need not rely solely on foot power to quench their thirst for desert scenery. Rincon Mountain District's 8-mile Cactus Forest Loop Drive traverses steep hills and tight turns on its way past scenic vistas, overlooks and trailheads. Bicyclists may also use the loop. Apart from the road, a select few multiuse trails allow mountain biking and horseback riding.

Beyond the national park, Tucson's plethora of hiking destinations include Sabino Canyon Recreation Area, about 15 miles from downtown, and





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downtown, where a paved 3.1-mile path reveals spectacular city views. For help narrowing down the options, planners can turn to the pros. Companies such as Southwest Trekking and South-

only 4 miles from

Tumamoc

Hill,

west Discoveries offer professional guide services for half-day and full-day hikes in the Tucson area, as well as desert day trips and multiday trips.

Whether they're paved lanes or rugged mountain terrain, pathways for pedalers get plenty of traffic, too. King among them is The Loop, a 131-mile trail system built upon former riverbed access roads and completed in spring 2018. The flat, paved carfree network, also open to pedestrian and eques-

trian use, connects the Pima County communities of Oro Valley, Marana, Tucson and South Tuc-

"A number of underground caves, rock climbing walls and astronomical observatories await the arrival of groups that want to explore new depths and reach new heights."

son, not to mention the many parks, trailheads, hotels, restaurants, shops and entertainment complexes found along the route. The possibilities for customized outings are limitless. Attendees can pedal their way through a taco crawl, a bird-watcher's scavenger hunt or a tour of historic Tucson neighborhoods.

Groups with a wilder ride in mind will find some of the world's best mountain biking in southern Arizona. Head 14 miles southeast of Tucson to Fantasy Island Mountain Bike Park, where a 19mile network includes six loops of varying lengths and levels of difficulty, or ride the 5-mile Honeybee Canyon Loop, just north of Oro Valley.

Tucson Bike Rentals and Tours has a fleet of road, mountain and hybrid bicycles—including specialty sizes—waiting to outfit any group's cycling adventure. The company even offers bike pickup for rentals in Tucson, Oro Valley and Marana. Groups opting to stick close to Tucson can make use of the local Tugo Bike Share program.

Overhead and Underground

Plentiful though they may be, ground-level activities only skim the surface of the outdoor recreation options on offer in Tucson. A number of underground caves, rock climbing walls and astronomical observatories await the arrival of groups that want to explore new depths and reach new heights.

Two natural limestone caverns illuminate that

which is typically shrouded in darkness, offering groups a dramatic departure from the familiar. Co<image>

lossal Cave Mountain Park, set 20 miles southeast of Tucson, offers guided tours of a crystal-encrusted tavern reputed to be an Old West bandits' hideout. The arrestingly disordered environment is a visual carnival. Like subterranean snowflakes, no two stalactites, stalagmites or mineral deposits are exactly alike. And no matter how hot it is above ground, in the cave it's always 70 degrees.

The cave itself is only one part of the 2,400-acre park, which also includes scenic La Posta Que-



mada Ranch, stables, horseback trail rides, a gemstone sluice and, a variety of meeting, dining and gathering spaces available for corporate events. Groups can easily fill a full day here, touring the cave, riding National Mail Stagecoach Route, making friends with adopted desert tortoises, panning for gold and discussing it all during a cocktail reception or seated dinner.

Discovered in 1974 by a pair of spelunking college roommates, the 2.4-mile Kartchner Caverns is the centerpiece of Kartchner Caverns State Park, located about 50 miles southeast of Tucson. In addition to touring the cave, groups can peruse discovery center exhibits, hike the property's four trails and view wildlife.

If gazing upon steep Sonoran rock faces activates attendees' Spiderman fantasies, consider a rock-climbing excursion. Mount Lemmon, a 9,157-foot peak in the Santa Catalina Mountains, 45 miles northeast of Tucson, is the region's can't-miss climbing destination. From August to December, climbers reign over the mountain's 1,500-plus climbing routes; many of them close seasonally from January to July to protect the peregrine falcon and bighorn sheep populations. Book a guided climb with Pangaea Mountain Guides or Arizona Climbing and Adventure School, and watch your group rise.

Newbie climbers looking for a safe place to practice can visit indoor rock-climbing facility Rocks and Ropes. Attendees' eyes will register that they're not outside, but their muscles won't. Honing their balance, flexibility, strength and problem-solving skills indoors will tire them out all the same.



Thanks to its high elevation, exceedingly clear skies and strict limits on light pollution, Tucson boasts ideal conditions for astronomical observation. Home of International Dark-Sky Association and National Optical Astronomy Observatory, the city earns its title of Astronomy Capital of the World. Groups can train their eyes on the sky and learn about the latest in celestial research at facilities such as Kitt Peak National Observatory, which contains the world's largest array of optical and radio telescopes, and Mount Lemmon Sky Center Observatory, located at the summit.

Nancy Reich, director of operations for Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, knows starry attractions such as these make Tucson a favorite meeting destination. So far this year, she has brought groups of 25 to 100 attendees to Tucson on four separate occasions. The May and June itineraries included visits to Kitt Peak for three tours, a meal and a gift shop stop.

"Attendees loved the hands-on experience and the pure joy of talking to the people running those facilities," Reich says. "Especially in the colder winter months, attendees like to get away to someplace warm. The mountains, desert and scenery are all beautiful. Without a doubt, we will be returning to Tucson multiple times."

Meetings Playgrounds

About 12 miles north of Tucson, just outside the town of Oro Valley, **El Conquistador Tucson, A Hilton Resort** lies cradled between the Santa Catalina Mountains and Pusch Ridge. Throughout the 250-acre property, the hovering peaks heighten the effects of the twice-daily desert light shows known as sunrise and sunset.

"What's always fun is when guests arrive after dark, then wake in the morning and see the awesome scenery. The amazement on their faces is priceless," says Robin Wilczynski, the resort's director of events.

Linda Vista Trail, a 2.5-mile loop hike, is accessible from the resort grounds, and eight more hiking,

biking, birding and equestrian trails await within Catalina State Park, just 3 miles away. El Conquistador's nightly resort fee covers a two-hour bike rental each day, leaving no excuse to leave Oro Valley's 30 miles of paved bike paths unridden.

But attendees don't have to leave the property to experience the spirit of the Southwest. El Conquistador's 100,000 sq. ft. of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting space includes Last Territory, a uniquely Southwestern venue that harkens

back to the Old West. A rustic faux-frontier town complete with picnic tables, fire pits, string lights and space for a band, a dance floor or both—the indoor/outdoor venue provides a dream backdrop for desert revelry.

It's also a logistical luxury. "Often, meetings have a fairly tight agenda. Last Territory allows the best of both worlds. You truly feel like you have left the property and are in the Old West, without the hassle of transportation," Wilcyznski says.

Amenities at the only IACC-approved venue in southern Arizona include five swimming

pools, three golf courses and tennis courts. Elements Wellness Center, the on-site spa, is about to get an upgrade: A new \$3.1 million spa facility currently under construction is expected to open in early 2020.

Planners who make use of El Conquistador's meeting spaces, such as the 11,000-squarefoot conference center, will find working with the event staff to be a true partnership. Count Michael Nave, a regional sales manager at Johnson Matthey, among those loyal customers drawn back to El Conquistador again and again.

His company sponsors an annual industry conference for Nitric Acid Users Group (NAUG), which typically draws 65 to 80 attendees from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. More than half of the 26 conferences held to date have taken place at El Conquistador, including NAUG XXVI, held May 5–9.

> Attendees have toured a cave, a missile silo and a desert museum, and participated in golf outings, tastings and mixology events on the resort grounds. Through it all, El Conquistador has been a constant. "The resort and location never get old," Nave says.

> Communicating early and often sets the stage for success. "We hold pre-event meetings on-site a few months before the event and have a regular conference for finetuning heading into the event," Nave

says. "It's nice to have our banquet event orders in advance to review what is planned versus what we need and want at each stage of the conference."

Maximizing a group's strengths is a point of focus at **Miraval Arizona**, a luxury 400-acre Santa Catalina Mountain resort featuring 12,000 sq. ft. of creative indoor and outdoor event space. But it's the property's focus on mindfulness and wellness that sets it apart.

"Miraval Arizona is an ideal locale for business retreats and private events for its programming, curated to help foster growth, leadership and

13

new ideas. Through individual and team-building exercises, participants rise to new challenges and help generate healthy, lasting change in their company or group," says Senior Event Planning Manager Maggie Bronkie. The on-



"[NAUG] attendees

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grounds."

events on the resort

IMMERSIVE EVENT VENUES THREE GATHERING SPACES WITH ENVIRONMENTS ALL THEIR OWN

When a destination captivates the senses the way Tucson does, expectations for excursions can run almost impossibly high. Yes, there is pressure to deliver. But remember: Attendees are ready to be wowed. These three crowd-pleasing attractions are ready to rise to the challenge.

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum combines elements of zoo, botanical garden, art gallery, natural history museum and aquarium into one hybrid venue.



In addition to tours, planners can book onsite events for groups of up to 450. The 97acre grounds—which are half-curated, half-wild—contain an array of garden, terrace, cafe and theater

spaces to dazzle attendees. Visits from educational ambassadors for animals, such as a porcupine, Harris' hawk or desert tortoise are an optional, but unforgettable, addition.

Nothing compares to **Biosphere 2**, located about 30 miles from downtown Tucson. Beneath a roof



containing 6,500 panes of glass, the world's largest living research center houses a replicated mini-world, complete with a rainforest, a million-gallon ocean, a coastal fog desert and much more. Its mission is equally

vast—to serve as a center for research, outreach and education related to Earth's living systems and their place in the universe. Arrange a 90-minute private tour for up to 120 attendees, or book a 90- to 120-minute, behind-the-scenes tour for smaller groups.

An expertly executed mash-up of nature, art and culture, **Tohono Chul** inspires attendees to engage with and learn from the natural and manmade masterpieces



in their midst. Set on 49 vibrant acres, 10 miles north of Tucson, the site can accommodate up to 300 attendees for events in the garden or bistro. Lecture space and group tours are available,

too. The heady mix of Sonoran stimuli on display at Tohono Chul may awaken attendees' minds to new ways of thinking.



site Challenge Course builds trust and fosters cooperation through high-flying stations such as a 45-foot tall zipline. Soar at sunset for maximum effect. In Miraval's renowned equine experience, both horses and humans help attendees identify personal patterns. Mindfulness and relationships are central to all available equine activities, which range from photography workshops to painting a live horse.

"These activities are a major reason groups come to Miraval—to incorporate some of the more unusual and adventurous options to excite their employees," Bronkie says. The opening of Miraval Austin Resort & Spa in February gave groups access to a Texas version of the Miraval experience. Western Massachusetts will follow suit when Miraval Berkshires Resort & Spa opens in Lenox this winter.

Adventure is also a hallmark of **Tanque Verde Ranch**, a 151-year-old guest ranch on 640 acres overlooking the foothills of Saguaro National Park's Rincon Mountain District. Activities on offer include horseback riding lessons, guided hiking and biking, and team cattle working.

Last December, in partnership with adventure hospitality company Under Canvas, Tanque Verde debuted 26 safari-style glamping tents. The resort's commitment to rustic luxury continues with the construction of The Barn. Set to open in late 2019, the new 12,400-square-foot indoor/ outdoor event venue will include a rustic bar, panoramic sliding doors in the massive dining room and a sprawling lawn.

In May 2019, **Casino del Sol** completed a 9,600-square-foot expansion of its existing conference center, which pushes the property's event capacity above 3,000. Highlights of the 100,000 sq. ft. of available indoor and outdoor event space include an 18,000-square-foot grand ballroom, a conference center terrace and a pool deck.

Sunny days, starry nights, outdoor recreation and luxurious meeting venues combine to cast a powerful Sonoran Desert spell over planners, as Visit Tucson can attest.

"While there are some restrictions, Visit Tucson's You Fly, We Buy program will cover accommodations, transportation and airfare to give talented destination experts a chance to show you why eight out of 10 meeting planners choose Tucson after a site visit," Aguilar says.

Planners, rest assured: Attendees will happily follow.

••• SITE INSPECTION : CHICAGO

Adding to the Awesomeness

THE WINDY CITY KEEPS BOLSTERING ITS MEETINGS APPEAL

BY DAN JOHNSON

Groups visiting Chicago are awed by the stunning views of Lake Michigan, downtown architectural marvels, awesome art collections at renowned institutions, amazing restaurants and legendary blues scene, among other things. And it's hard to beat a day of baseball at iconic Wrigley Field or an evening dinner cruise down the Chicago River.

Yes, Chicago has a well-deserved distinction as one of the world's great cities and a meetings magnet, with a tremendous variety of unique attractions, many of which reflect its rich diversity.

A key ingredient to the city's success is that it keeps evolving, consistently mixing new venues and attractions in with established ones. This blending was evident throughout a recent trip that *Smart Meetings* took at the invitation of Marriott Convention & Resort Network (CRN).

MEET AND SLEEP

The trip included visits to all five members of CRN in the Chicago area.

We spent the first two nights at **Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile**, a trendy destination on Michigan Avenue offering chic comfort in a dynamic urban setting. The property provides 1,194 guest rooms and 66,400 sq. ft. of meeting space. Distinctive American cuisine is offered at Harvest Restaurant Rush Street Pantry and Reviver, a new lobby bar.

The group also stayed for two nights at **The Westin Michigan Avenue Chicago**, another Magnificent Mile property, which features all the standard Westin wellness options, including a WestinWorkout Fitness Studio and a boutique spa. And its restaurant, The Grill on the Alley, was named to the Fine Dining Hall of Fame by *Nation's Restaurant News*.

We also toured **JW Marriott Chicago**, a luxurious hotel housed in a historic building in the financial district that soon will be undergoing a major renovation; and **Sheraton Grand Chicago**, the city's premier riverfront hotel, offering stunning views, 1,218 guest rooms and 125,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

The final property we toured, **Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel**—situated 30 miles northwest of Chicago—is imaginatively designed and blends impeccably with its natural surroundings. The meeting areas—which cover 117,310 sq. ft.—are creatively and tastefully arranged, and are ideal for inspiring groups.

EAT

Chicago's restaurant scene reflects the city's diversity. Groups will find a bit of everything, from comfort food and dive bars to international flavors and Michelin-starred spots.

Labriola Chicago opened on North Michigan Avenue in 2015, but feels like its been a part of the city's fabric for decades. The restaurant offers its own take on Italian favorites, including some of the best deep-dish pizza in the city. Its main dining room can accommodate 100 and its private dining room is suitable for up to 36.

Located on the Chicago River, **River Roast** also has the look and feel of a longtime Chicago staple, though it opened in 2014. It offers dramatic city and water views from every seat. Menus consist of contemporary American tavern fare—meat, fish and vegetables are roasted and carved tableside. It's big and lively, and its six meeting rooms can accommodate up to 1,200 people.

DO

Planners seeking a "wow" experience for their group can hit the target by booking flights over the city through Chicago Helicopter Experience. Flights are offered seven days a week, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., weather permitting.

Another highlight of our trip was a high-spirited dinner cruise on the Chicago River. A guide gave a running commentary on the historic buildings we passed, providing interesting insights into the city, as we enjoyed drinks and food. The soothing beauty of the river on that summer evening was very memorable.

The trip was also filled with impressive views of the city from hotels and other buildings, including **Willis Tower**, which at 1,450 feet is the second-tallest building in the Western Hemisphere. It also has more than 16,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.



SITE INSPECTION: SEATTLE

New Views TAKE MEETINGS TO **NEW HEIGHTS BY ALLISON FAZIO**



et's be real: Seattle's beloved Alaskan Way Viaduct is-was-no doubt iconic, but also an incredible eyesore. After 66 years on the waterfront, it is now being dismantled piece by piece, with chunks of the raised roadway being incorporated into nostalgic memorabilia by the craftspeople of Pike Place Market and its absence revealing remarkable new views of Elliot Bay and glimmering downtown (depending on which way you look).

The full waterfront revitalization program, which started earlier this year, will connect downtown and the highly anticipated Washington State Convention Center (WSCC) Summit building to 20 acres of improved parks, public spaces and pedestrian walkways by 2024. A win-win. And that's just the beginning.

New views are popping up all over Emerald City, from the Space Needle's revolving glass floor and its never-before-seen downward view over Seattle to the recently opened, 45-story Hyatt Regency Seattle and its 360 take on the city and its meeting spaces. Our advice: Check "happy attendees" and "conquering fear of heights" off your to-do list and get high on the action rising in this premier Pacific Northwestern meetings destination.

MEET AND SLEEP

Seattle's largest hotel, the LEED Gold-certified Hyatt Regency Seattle, opened in December with 1,260 guest rooms and 103,000 sq. ft. of meeting space—and it still has that "new car" smell. Its high-ceiling lobby is pristine and flooded with natural light and cityscapes from floor-to-ceiling windows; its Regency Ballroom, one of two meeting rooms with more than 19,000 sq. ft., features customizable icicle lighting, earning its nickname as the "Harry Potter Ballroom." Its northeast side overlooks what will soon be the bustling Summit center.



Other perks (and views) include the Regency Club's wraparound outdoor terrace on the eighth floor, a very VIP-worthy presidential suite experience on the 45th floor and an app that allows meeting planners to make requests during an eventplus, three distinct on-site dining options.

The expanded WSCC Summit (open for business in spring 2022) will double the city's convention capacity with 570,290 sq. ft. of total event space, 59 meeting rooms and 248,450 sq. ft. of total exhibition space-plus, a cascading wooden staircase with seating areas and amazing views over Pike Place Market and Puget Sound. The 58,000-square-foot main ballroom will feature a wall of windows looking over the city and an outdoor terrace for receptions.

For alternative accommodations, the affectionately named Hyatt Row near the convention center contains the 346-room Hyatt Olive 8-and spafor a hipper, more casual crowd, as well as Grand Hyatt Seattle, with 457 guest rooms, nearly 25,000 sq. ft. of event space, a Ruth's Chris Steakhouse and a generally swanky air. Between all three Hyatts, planners can work with more than 2,000 quest rooms within two blocks of each other and Summit.

EAT

The seasonal and hyper-locally sourced Aerlume sits on Seattle's central waterfront and opened with the viaduct's removal in mind. It's windowed west wall now features unadulterated views of Elliot Bay, as well as two private dining rooms overlooking Puget Sound, accommodating groups from 16 to 250. Smart tip: Order twice as many plates of crispy cauliflower as you think your group needs, let the bartenders craft personalized attendee cocktails and arrive at sunset for dinner with a show.

Andare Kitchen and Bar, located inside the Hyatt Regency Seattle, not only serves pizza that tastes like you're in Italy, but also accommodates small group pizza-making lessons on the other side of the open kitchen.

nn

Visit the new and renovated Space Needle's revolving glass-floored level-or rent it out (complete with rotating bartender.) for your event. Or consider hosting a reception below at Chihuly's Garden and Glass, which offers its glass house and outdoor terrace for buyouts, seating up to 1,500 people.

You can also take your attendees for a ride on Seattle's Great Wheel at the downtown waterfront, with VIP carriages and the best opportunities for portrait-mode photos in the city. The wheel is covered in more than 500,000 LED lights. Colorful light show displays usually run every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from night.

Need to Know

104

570.290 space coming to WSCC Summit in spring 2020 sq. ft.

available at three 2(0)0 properties on Hyatt Row guest rooms



and pedestrian walkways Waterfront by 2022

The Luxurious Side of San Lucas WHERE EVERYONE IS A VIP **BY JT LONG**

On the southern tip of the Baja California peninsula on Mexico's west coast, one of the world's most popular bachelor and bachelorette spots draws its northern neighbors by the millions for fun in the sun-in fact, an estimated 3 million tourists visited in 2017, according to Los Cabos Tourism Board. But beyond Senor Frogs is a sophisticated meetings enclave that caters to incentive groups and board retreats with all the attention to detail and creativity of Cake Boss contestants.

The two cities-Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo-are 20 minutes apart and house some 17,000 guest rooms. More than 5,000 new rooms are expected by 2023.

ARRIVE

Los Cabos International Airport (SJD) welcomed 5 million passengers in 2018, a 7 percent increase from the year before, and new direct flights are launching from Las Vegas, St. Louis, Milwaukee and Cincinnati. A total of 500 flights to 39 cities arrive weekly, so getting to the peninsula couldn't be easier

MEET AND STAY

Los Cabos International Convention Center reopened last year, after hurricane repairs were completed, with 67,779 sq. ft. of meeting space and a focus on sustainability. More than 1,000 solar panels produce 412,000 kilowatts to power events in this sunny locale. The exhibition hall is also home to a 29,000-square-foot living green wall as a testament to its focus on sustainability.

Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal, formerly The Resort at Pedregal, is a beachfront retreat built into granite rock, with a private tunnel separating it from the rest of Cabo San Lucas. All 115 guest rooms include infinity pools and elevated service levels that anticipate needs-from eucalyptus-scented towels and a beverage of choice on disembarking from the car and VIP escort through screening at the airport.

Overlooking the premier snorkeling waters of Santa Maria Bay, Montage Los Cabos opened in May with 122 quest rooms and more than 30,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor event space. This allinclusive property, on what is known as "The Golden Corridor" on the highway between the two Cabos, beckons with warm, modern luxury style.

Also new to the scene this spring was Nobu Hotel Los Cabos, a 200-room property that pairs minimalist Japanese design with a beachfront location, and you guessed it—a Nobu restaurant and Malibu Farm's fresh ingredients. The 14,389 sq. ft. of meeting space includes two view-drenched ballrooms.

The much-anticipated opening of the all-new, 145-room Four Seasons Resort Los Cabos at Palmas ends in November.

EAT AND DRINK

While fine dining is a given at Nobu hotels, liquid refreshments are also a focus, as six bars offer creative takes on classics that can be enjoyed in the dining room or by the pool. At Waldorf Astoria's El Farallon, fine dining is perched on a cliff, with sunset views and live music in the background. At Grand Velas Los Cabos. Michelin-starred chef Sidney Schutte serves up 10-course tasting menus at Cocina de Autor.

nn

Today's Los Cabos trip is all about relaxation, hence the focus on body treatments. All these properties offer elevated spa experiences. At Luna y Mar at Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal, massages are designed around the cycles of the moon, ancient healing practices (including a footcleansing ritual), and hot and cold steam rooms. Renewal is the theme at the 35,000-square-foot SE Spa by Grand Velas, where a blue agave candle massage restores all the senses.

Just beyond the 24,210 sq. ft. of meeting space at Paradisus Los Cabos lies a wash of green that will bring a smile to golfers of every skill level.

It would not be a Mexico trip without getting out on the water, so arrange for some time in a vacht for a catered visit to the Arch to look for schools of jumping manta rays. Snorkeling, fishing and sailing cruises-even pirate ships-can also be arranged from the convenience of the concierge at Grand Fiesta Americana Los Cabos All Inclusive Golf & Spa



Poolside at Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal, previously The Resort at Pedregal, Cabo San Lucas



Guest room at Grand Velas Los Cabos

Need to Know

8,000 Capacity at Los Cabos International Convention Center

92/78

The average high and low temperature in September

Dec 15- Guaranteed April 15 time

whale-watching

••• SITE INSPECTION : ORANGE COUNTY



Crystal Cove State Park



Balboa Park Pier

Orange County Delivers

CASUAL CHIC MEETS HIGH-END SOPHISTICATION

BY KELLIE HANNA

Encompassing more than 30 cities, Orange County offers the best of just about everything. Forty-two miles of golden coastline, top-rated surfing spots, high-end shopping, a vibrant arts and entertainment scene, thriving businesses, and attractions such as Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm make "the OC" one of California's most iconic destinations—and a go-to spot for meeting groups.

MEET AND SLEEP

Orange County's Irvine Company owns several residential and commercial properties in the county, including three high-end hotels, which make up its Coastal Collection.

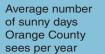
Hotel Irvine, the collection's lifestyle property, is located approximately 3 miles from John Wayne Airport (SNA), just off highway 405-close to the area's many tech and financial businesses, universities and neighboring cities.

The newly refreshed hotel houses 520 guest rooms and 16 suites, as well as several indoor and outdoor meeting spaces. The flexible 15,000-square-foot grand ballroom-the largest ballroom in Orange County-accommodates up to 2,100 people. It has its own prefunction foyer. Groups looking to soak up the SoCal sunshine and ocean air will find their happy place in the 10,000-square-foot Backyarda great spot for team-building experiences, group meals, and pre- or post-event networking events. The adjacent, customizable pavilion adds an extra 6,000 sq. ft. of space. Poolside cabanas are ready for afternoon breaks or evening toasts.

Just 5 miles west, in Newport Beach, is Fashion Island Hotel, with its upscale-beachy vibe and chic, sophisticated style. The luxury property offers 295 guest rooms, ranging in size from 435 to 600 sq. ft., as well as 82 suites. All rooms have walk-out balconies or furnished patios. Multiple bright and airy, indoor and outdoor meeting spaces include an 8,710-square-foot ballroomthe largest in Newport Beach-and can accommodate groups in a range of sizes. The ballroom provides a private prefunction area.

Nestled above the Newport coast, about 15 minutes south of Fashion Island Hotel, is Resort at Pelican Hill. Groups will find a relaxed yet lavish coastal setting for meetings, team building, and incentive and corporate retreats. The resort's 23,000 sq. ft. of function space includes three ocean-view terraces, a flexible 4,560-square-foot ballroom, a 3,200 squarefoot golf pavilion and a circular lawn providing 4,950 sq. ft. of outdoor space.

The property boasts three distinct pools and two world-class golf courses, totaling 36 holes.





Restaurants in Newport Beach

miles make up the circumference of **Balboa Island**

EAT AND DRINK

Wine and dine seafood-craving attendees at Harborside Restaurant and Ballroom in Newport Beach's most famous landmark, the iconic Balboa Pavilionone of California's last surviving examples of turn-ofthe-century waterfront recreational facilities. The Harborside serves fresh, local seafood as well as Alaskan King crab, prime steaks and California wines. Groups can mingle during the "longest happy hour in town" while taking in incredible views of the harbor at The Harborside Saloon. The spacious Grand Ballroom can accommodate between 50 and 500.

Planners who want to provide more dining options will find a treasure trove of quaint restaurants and bistros for group lunches and post-meeting meals on nearby Balboa Island. Just a short ferry hop or bike ride from all three hotels we've profiled, the island offers a variety of cuisines-from traditional Italian fare to the spicy flavors of Thailand-to suit everyone's tastes.

DO

Orange County offers an abundance of activities for groups. Bring attendees together in a Duffy Boat for an unforgettable networking experience in Newport Harbor or create a memorable teambuilding experience at beautiful Crystal Cove State Park. Besides one of the most stunning stretches of beach in the area, the park offers 2,400 acres of woodland for hiking and horseback riding, as well as several tidepools and coves for exploring. While there, help attendees find their sea legs with a yacht cruise, or give them an eyeful on a whalewatching excursion—a must-do activity for visitors to SoCal.

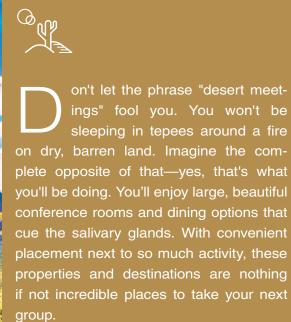
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Need to

Know

smartmeetings.com | SEPTEMBER 2019

A Guide to Desert Meetings



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EL CONQUISTADOR TUCSON, A HILTON RESORT

Tucson, Arizona

ike no other destination, El Conquistador Tucson, A Hilton Resort features a thoughtfully blended atmosphere of local and indigenous offerings paired with an evolving portfolio of touches. Allow their highly trained and welcoming team to help you and your event-goers discover the magic of Oro Valley and the legends of gold hidden behind the Lost Iron Door Mine in the nearby Catalina Mountains. Let them delight you with the flavors of their regionally-inspired cuisine and the harmony of their tranquilizing environment, and captivate you with a meeting experience that is Uniquely Southwest.

Recently Named Best Experiential Hotel

Recently named a *Smart Meetings* Platinum Choice Award-winner and the Best Experiential Hotel in the Hotel Interactive® Lodging Industry Elite Awards, and the only resort in Arizona to achieve the AAA Four Diamond designation for 35 years in a row, El Conquistador Resort understands how to engage people and embrace the local culture. Imagine a Southwest hideaway where desert beauty surrounds you and 428 recently remodeled guest rooms and suites wrap you in luxury and comfort.

When it comes to hosting important conferences, El Conquistador Resort is your ultimate destination to experience the best of the Southwest. Spanning 50 acres, this world-class resort boasts amenities you won't find anywhere else—including a mini Western village that's perfect for private events, an organically flowing function space that makes interaction a breeze, and a breathtaking visual experience that brings to life an idyllic Southwest atmosphere.

Come dusk, a Native American flute player delights all with the soothing sounds of indigenous music, which has been described as one of the greatest expressions of spirit, heart and healing. As you sit back and relax, you'll feel the stresses of your day lift as peace and serenity surround you.

Unlimited Venue Options

Your meetings and events at El Conquistador Resort span far beyond the ballroom. Here, your attendees can engage in impromptu networking sessions **EXPERIENCE-BASED** TRAVEL IS BECOMING **A SIGNIFICANT DETERMINANT IN** SELECTING VENUES FOR CONFERENCES AND EVENTS. WE **ARE SO PROUD TO BE LEADING AN EFFORT** THAT CELEBRATES **BOTH OUR WONDERFUL LOCAL CULTURE AND OUR SUPERB NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.**"

-DAVID TOLER, DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING EL CONQUISTADOR TUCSON



10000 N. Oracle Road Tucson, AZ 85704 520-544-5000 hiltonelconquistador. com

- 428 guest rooms and suites
- 6 dining options plus in-room dining
- 100,000 sq. ft. of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting and event space
- 11,000-squarefoot IACCapproved executive conference center
- Full-service catering, audiovisual and event planning
- Banquet menus showcasing the flavors of the Southwest
- Uniquely Southwest event venues
- 300 days of sunshine a year



around a fire pit or recap a conference while sitting next to the chef's herb garden. With more than 100,000 sq. ft. of exceptional and versatile indoor and outdoor space, El Conquistador Resort offers more meeting and event options than anywhere else in southern Arizona.

Host a convention or seminar in the Turquoise Ballroom or Presidio Ballroom, or plan a more intimate board meeting in the Coronado Ballroom. Last Territory is a Western-style mini-town, great for barbecue-centered team-building events and receptions. For something extraordinary, treat your guests to a cocktail soiree at Sunset Point amid painted sunsets and inspiring mountain landscapes. Whatever you choose, the resort promises your event will be uniquely yours and one your guests will talk about for months.

A Totally Contained Environment

With the spectacular Sonoran Desert setting, you won't find a more beautifully situated resort in Tucson, or a better laid out space for activities or private time to relax and recharge.

From yoga to nature walks, they offer daily wellness activities that further guests' connection to the beauty and natural surroundings of their picturesque desert setting. Escape to Elements Wellness Center, where expert therapists offer a wide spectrum of customized, specialty massage services. All you need to do is sit back, relax and rejuvenate.

From the Oro Valley Trails to the Linda Vista Trails, miles of paths take guests through the beautiful highdesert landscape. Don't miss the nearby self-guided hiking trails that enter the adjacent Catalina State Park, a true nature-lover's paradise. With more than 30 miles of marked bike paths in Oro Valley, exploring the beauty



and wonder of the Sonoran Desert on two wheels is just a pedal away.

Open year-round, the five swimming pools are a favorite gathering spot. Looking for serenity? Head to the adults-only Acacia pool to swim and soak up the sun.

Offering great golf on three exceptional courses nearby, the resort is a dream destination for anyone seeking a true desert golf experience. Surrounding the resort, the nine-hole Pusch Ridge Course winds, dips, and climbs through 175 feet of vertical drop on a challenging 2,788-yard layout.

Ranked among the top tennis resorts in the country by the United States Tennis Association, El Conquistador Resort enjoys fantastic weather and top-notch facilities for year-round play. Professionally trained staff is also available for clinics, tournaments and lessons.

TROPICANA LAS VEGAS-A DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

Las Vegas, Nevada

3801 Las Vegas Blvd. South Las Vegas, NV 89109 702-739-2581 troplv.com

- Located near
 the airport, the
 Las Vegas Strip,
 convention
 centers and
 stadiums
- 1,470 luxurious
 and affordable
 rooms and suites
- 100,000 sq. ft. of meeting space adjacent to Club Tower
- Up to 38 breakout rooms
- A variety of special-event venues, including the Havana Room and Sky Beach Club
- World-class restaurants, including Robert Irvine's Public House
- Hilton Honors
 benefits for group
 planners and
 attendees

ropicana Las Vegas-a DoubleTree by Hilton continues to surprise meeting planners and their attendees with a convenient location, just minutes away from Las Vegas' McCarran International Airport (LAS), major convention centers and top entertainment stadiums. The resort provides a luxurious yet affordable group experience on the Las Vegas Strip. Additionally, as part of the Hilton family, we offer Honors points for both guests and meeting planners, making each guest stay and group booking even more rewarding!

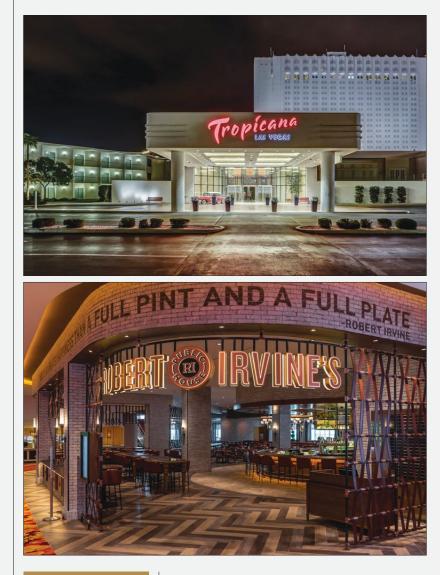
Accommodations

Each of the Tropicana Las Vegas' 1,470 residentialstyle guest rooms features luxurious amenities, such as Wi-Fi and 300-threadcount linens. Guests can opt to stay in the bungalows, many which come with balconies overlooking the lush landscaping and waterfalls that surround our award-winning pool; the casino-adjacent rooms in Paradise Tower, providing quick access to the world-famous Strip; or our Club Tower rooms. For VIPs, the Pool and Sky Villas offer an entirely new level of luxury.

Meeting Space

Tropicana Las Vegas' conference center now offers more than 100,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space that can be broken down into 38 breakout rooms. The Trinidad Pavilion and meeting rooms provide 55,000 sq. ft. of meeting and exhibition space with groundlevel access. The Cohiba Ballroom offers 25,000 sq. ft. of space just off the foyer of our Club Tower and is divisible into 11 meeting rooms.

Additionally, Barista Cafe is located outside of the Cohiba Ballroom, serving coffee, tea, specialty drinks, handmade pastries and sandwiches, making it the perfect addition to the conference center. The awardwinning pool and gardens and the Tropicana Theater offer unique spaces for upscale events. Other special venues for group functions include the Havana Room, a stunning backdrop for galas and receptions with its chandelier, dark-wood dance floor, custom seating and premium audiovisual technology; and Sky Beach Club's pool setting, also set up to accommodate outdoor events with up to 2,000 guests.



TROPICANA

LAS VEGAS-A DOUBLETREE BY HILTON CONTINUES TO SURPRISE MEETING PLANNERS AND THEIR ATTENDEES WITH A CONVENIENT LOCATION...THE RESORT PROVIDES A LUXURIOUS YET AFFORDABLE GROUP EXPERIENCE ON THE LAS VEGAS STRIP.

Dining and Entertainment

When it comes to dining, on-property restaurants include indoor and outdoor dining at Savor The Buffet and Oakville Steakhouse, for a reinterpretation of a classic upscale steakhouse. Robert Irvine, host of Food Network's *Restaurant: Impossible*, debuted a new restaurant, Robert Irvine's Public House. At Red Lotus Asian Kitchen, you can enjoy unexpected Western twists on traditional Asian cuisine. The newest opening is Trago Lounge, featuring a world-class selection of spirits, as well as talented craftspeople who can create a host of inventive cocktails.

When it comes to gaming, Tropicana Las Vegas' 50,000-square-foot casino includes an assortment of slots and table games. Entertainment options include the Laugh Factory Comedy Club and live entertainment in the Tropicana Lounge. The Tropicana Theater features Reign Entertainment Productions Inc.'s "Purple Reign, the Prince Tribute Show," which captures the imagination and raw energy of Prince in his prime.

CAESARS FORUM

Las Vegas, Nevada

Las Vegas, NV 89109 855-633-8238 caesarsforum.com

- More than 300,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space
- Conference space accommodating more than 10,000 attendees
- A 100,000-squarefoot, dedicated outdoor plaza, ideal for receptions, wellness breaks and meals
- Direct access to the Linq Promenade, anchored by the High Roller
- Direct access to Harrah's Las Vegas, The Linq Hotel and Flamingo Las Vegas
- Accessibility to more than
 20,000 rooms at 8 of Caesars
 Entertainment's Las
 Vegas properties

Caesars Entertainment broke ground on Caesars Forum, a brand-new 550,000-squarefoot conference center, coming to Las Vegas in 2020. The \$375 million investment will feature the two largest pillarless ballrooms in the world, located at the center of The Strip. Scheduled to officially open in 2020, Caesars Forum will be the ideal location for anyone looking to host meetings and events in Las Vegas.

Meeting Space

Caesars Forum will feature more than 300,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space, with two 110,000-squarefoot ballrooms, two 40,000-square-foot ballrooms and six boardrooms. The conference center can hold meetings for more than 10,000 attendees, with more than 100 breakout rooms, but is flexible enough to still accommodate small meetings.

The ballrooms will be perfect for any event, including general sessions, breakouts, meals and exhibit space. The ballrooms will be beautifully appointed, offering carpet, lighting fixtures and a finished ceiling. The conference center can hold meetings for more than 10,000 attendees and will offer the latest in technology, a modern design, natural light and a neutral pallet. In line with the Caesars Entertainment's environmental initiatives, the conference center will be LEED Silver-certified. Caesars Forum will be built all on one level, with two loading docks, making it easy to set up and tear down meetings.

Accommodations

Caesars Forum will have direct access to the 5,000 rooms at both Linq and Harrah's hotels through the Forum Sky Bridge. Flamingo Las Vegas is accessible through the Linq Promenade and offers another 3,500 hotel rooms. In addition, the conference center will be walking distance to eight of Caesars Entertainment's Las Vegas properties, providing accessibility to 20,000 rooms. With so many options, planners can offer a range of hotel rates to their attendees, providing complete flexibility. The Forum Sky Bridge will feature a monorail stop, giving attendees an effortless way to get around the Las Vegas Strip.





THE \$375 MILLION INVESTMENT WILL FEATURE THE TWO LARGEST PILLARLESS BALLROOMS IN THE WORLD, LOCATED AT THE CENTER OF THE LAS VEGAS STRIP.

Unique Features

The conference center will feature Forum Plaza, a 100,000-square-foot, dedicated outdoor plaza. The plaza will be perfect for breakfast, lunch or dinner under the stars. The outdoor space can also be used for wellness breaks, receptions and corporate social responsibility activities. The Forum Plaza will be connected to the Linq Promenade, anchored by the world-famous High Roller.

The High Roller can accommodate 40 attendees per cabin and is perfect for cocktail receptions and coffee breaks, offering the best view of Las Vegas. The Linq Promenade features shopping, dining and entertainment. Groups can buy out the Linq Promenade for a private event or even utilize Brooklyn Bowl, a concert venue located at the center of the promenade. Caesars Entertainment is already taking reservations for this state-of-the-art conference center.

VISIT TUCSON

Tucson, Arizona

115 N. Church Ave., Ste. 200 Tucson, AZ 85701 800-638-8350 tucsononus.com

Tucson is bordered on two sides by the Saguaro National Park, home to the nation's largest cacti.

Home to the Best 23 Miles of Mexican Food and an exciting modern food scene.

Canyon Ranch and Miraval, Tucson's two celebrityendorsed destination spas, specialize in group events and corporate retreats.

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum serves as a zoo, botanical garden, art gallery, natural history museum, aquarium and unique meeting space. o beyond the ballroom in Tucson, located in the heart of the beautiful Sonoran Desert.

Why Tucson?

Savvy meeting planners choose Tucson for its wealth of experiences that go beyond the ballroom—yes, we boast world-class resorts and destination spas, but we also have working cattle ranches, beautiful desert gardens, a thriving art community and historic theaters.

Many of the city's resorts are tucked into the foothills surrounding the city, creating stunning backdrops for events. Surrounded by five mountain ranges, Tucson's scenery transports visitors to another world.

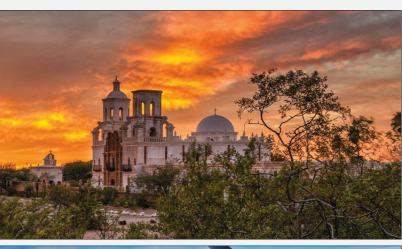
Easily move from the ballroom to hiking through unique landscapes such as the Saguaro National Park, to exploring attractions including the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum and Mission San Xavier del Bac, a National Historic Landmark. Or embark on a journey through more than 350 historic aircrafts at the Pima Air & Space Museum. At the end of the day, relax under Tucson's breathtaking night skies—from mountaintop observatories to viewings at local resorts.

Our resorts reflect the big brands you've come to trust—JW Marriott Starr Pass, Loews Ventana Canyon, Westin La Paloma, Omni Tucson National, Westward Look Wyndham Grand—and we have guest ranches and boutique properties with loads of character and history.

The city's center offers a bevy of moderately priced (and recently renovated) full-service hotels that cater to small and midsized meetings. You might be surprised to find these spaces mingled among native gardens, integrated into wellness retreats and spread over Old West attractions.

Master Account Incentive

Site selection isn't solely a matter of who has rooms and where. It's an opportunity to experience the culture and character of a destination. It's the connection between a planner and the Visit Tucson staff going the extra mile to make your event spectacular. This connection is evident in the fact





STEP FROM INDOOR MEETINGS INTO AN OUTDOOR MECCA WITH STUNNING VIEWS AND TEAM-BUILDING ADVENTURES. that eight of 10 meeting planners choose Tucson after a site visit. Find out about our award-winning "You Fly, We Buy" program and Master Account incentive.

Revitalized Urban Core

Stay in Tucson's revitalized downtown urban core for a faster pace that keeps the heart pumping, featuring an AC Hotel by Marriott, a renovated convention center and Sun Link Streetcar, allowing for easy exploration. Rent a Tugo bike or set out on foot and see vibrant murals, sample the culinary scene, drop into a power yoga class or listen to live music on the patio at the historic Hotel Congress.

Award-Winning Food

Tucson is the first UNESCO City of Gastronomy in the United States, an honor our resorts and hotels have embraced. You'll see local influences and ingredients on the menu nearly everywhere. Book a culinary tour or consider an off-site event at acclaimed restaurants and discover why several James Beard Award-winning chefs call Tucson home. Special Promotional Section - DESERT MEETINGS

M RESORT SPA CASINO

Henderson, Nevada

12300 Las Vegas Blvd. S. Henderson, NV 89044 702-797-1000 themresort.com

- Forbes Four Star accommodations, with 351 guest rooms and 39 suites
- More than 92,000 total sq. ft. of dynamic and flexible meeting space
- 100,000-squarefoot outdoor piazza with 4,000-seat capacity
- 3 outdoor terraces offering nearly 17,000 sq. ft. of dining and entertainment space
- Multifunction facilities, including an expansive 16th floor with a rooftop cocktail lounge and Vegas Valley views
- 25,000-square-foot, pillarless pavilion

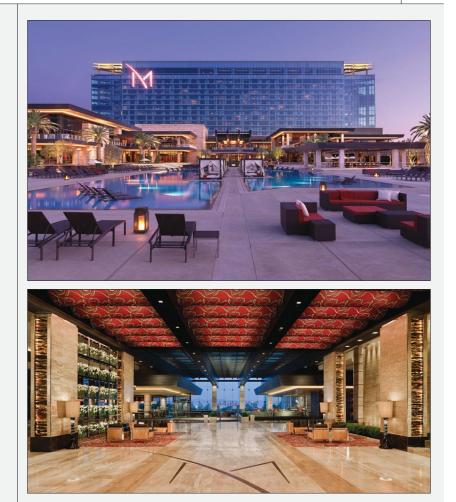
Positioned at the south end of the Las Vegas Strip is M Resort Spa Casino, a chic and contemporary boutique Forbes Four-Star retreat, perfect to host your next meeting or conference. With more than 92,000 sq. ft. of open and dynamic conference space, state-of-the-art technology, impeccable service and breathtaking views, M Resort delivers a unique experience sure to impress your guests. This well-appointed resort offers natural lighting and outdoor terraces throughout the resort, exceptional dining options sure to satisfy any palate and world-class amenities in a relaxing, friendly environment. M Resort is an epic getaway, any day.

Meeting Space

The more than 92,000 sq. ft. of state-of-the-art conference and meeting space at M Resort includes a pavilion, grand ballroom, multiple reception areas and a convenient business center. The conference space is perfectly equipped for small- to mid-size meetings and events. Many vantage points feature natural lighting and overlook the pool area with views of the Las Vegas skyline. In addition to the conference center, there are alternative venues throughout the resort that may be used to enhance visitors' conference experience, such as: LUX, the expansive 16th floor function space, Hostile Grape Wine Cellar and the M Pool, which includes outdoor event terraces.

Forbes Four Star Accommodations

The inviting 390 rooms and suites at the resort deliver the best amenities for the best value. The well-appointed rooms, complete with floor-toceiling windows, provide views of the spectacular pool and Las Vegas skyline, creating the ultimate luxury experience. Each room offers a living space that includes high-technology amenities. The spalike bathrooms offer guests a marble vanity with double sinks, inlaid mirror television and separate bathtub and shower. All resort rooms and suites feature automatic lighting controls for energy efficiency. M Resort offers 351 exceptional guest rooms and 39 suites varying in size from 1,440 to 2,400 sq. ft.



M RESORT SPA CASINO IS AN EPIC GETAWAY, ANY DAY-OFFERING **FORBES FOUR-STAR GUEST SERVICE** EXPERIENCE. **EXCEPTIONAL DINING OPTIONS** AND AMPLE **MEETINGS AND** CONVENTION SPACE IN A **RELAXING.** FRIENDLY **ENVIRONMENT.**

Revitalizing Spa

The world-class spa is sure to provide you with a relaxing and refreshing experience. M Resort uses the highest-quality products and latest techniques to transport you to a tranquil state of mind, offering 16 treatment rooms, sauna, steam and hot tub.

Delectable Dining

M Resort features the next generation of dining, taking the total guest experience to the next level. From atmosphere, culinary expertise and quality, to presentation, service and value, M Resort provides the ultimate culinary experience with 11 restaurants and bars.

Each restaurant was developed to allow for innovative social environments and the majority feature outdoor dining terraces with views of the Las Vegas Strip; including their newest addition, 16–A Handcrafted Experience, which provides spectacular rooftop views 16 stories above the Vegas Valley. Perfect for a small group or aftermeeting get together, guests can enjoy fresh, handcrafted cocktails and innovative shared plates while enjoying spectacular views..

Smartmeetings

Save your seat for one (or more!) of our allnew 2019 event line-up! With a long list of the hottest hotel names, thriving destinations, popular industry speakers and our best set of swag and luxury prizes yet, we can't wait to welcome you to the ultimate industry events—all designed to make your job so much easier.

2019 EVENTS CALENDAR

JAN 23	1-DAY	NORTHERN CALIFORNIA Fairmont San Francisco
FEB 28	1-DAY	SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Sheraton Grand Los Angeles
MAR 14	1-DAY	NORTHWEST Hotel Interurban, Seattle
APR 23	1-DAY	SOUTHWEST Omni Frisco Hotel, Texas
MAY 5-7	3-DAY	NATIONAL 3-DAY Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino, Las Vegas
MAY 8	1-DAY	SMART WOMAN SUMMIT Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino, Las Vegas
JUN 27	1-DAY	MID-ATLANTIC Kimpton Hotel Monaco Washington D.C.
JUL 11	1-DAY	NORTHEAST The Roosevelt Hotel New York City
AUG 18-20	3-DAY	NATIONAL 3-DAY JW Marriott Marco Island Beach Resort
SEPT 26	1-DAY	MIDWEST Convene, Chicago
OCT 9	1-DAY	CALIFORNIA SUMMIT Golden 1 Center, Sacramento
NOV 3-5	3-DAY	NATIONAL 3-DAY The Stanley Hotel, A Grand Heritage Hotel, Colorado

SMARTMEETINGS.COM/EVENTS

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This is a place where roots run deep and pride is apparent. A place where the heart and mind roam in the beauty and splendor of the pristine Sonoran Desert. Come to a place where Tucson's unique and artistic spirit live in perfect harmony. Come to Casino Del Sol. Welcome to a world-class resort casino hotel and all that comes with it - a spectacular gaming experience, amazing restaurants, vibrant lounges, southern Arizona's finest golf course and a magnificent pool and spa. All in your own backyard. **Casino Del Sol. The** Sol of Tucson.



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I-19, EXIT VALENCIA WEST • AN ENTERPRISE OF THE PASCUA YAQUI TRIBE

WALDORF ASTORIA LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas, Nevada

3752 Las Vegas Blvd. South Las Vegas, NV 89158 702-590-8888 waldorfastorialasvegas.com

- Luxury nongaming, nonsmoking hotel
- Located in the heart of the Las
 Vegas Strip
- Striking views
 of The Strip and
 surrounding desert
 landscape
- 27,000-square-foot spa
- Varied culinary offerings
- Personalized service
- Sleek meeting spaces featuring natural lighting

Aldorf Astoria Las Vegas, formerly Mandarin Oriental, offers unforgettable experiences in the heart of an unforgettable city. The nongaming, nonsmoking luxury hotel is located in the center of The Strip, just steps away from the city's signature entertainment and nightlife.

Meetings in the Center of It All

The hotel is walking distance to Aria Hotel & Casino, the T-Mobile Arena and The Shops at Crystals. The hotel offers 389 modern guest rooms and luxurious suites, offering striking views of the glittering Strip or surrounding mountains and desert landscape, due to the hotel's high-rise structure.

Luxury Accommodations

Waldorf Astoria Las Vegas offers groups unparalleled service, timeless amenities and natural light through floor-to-ceiling windows in all its meeting spaces. The hotel is also home to a sleek ballroom featuring a balcony overlooking the Las Vegas Strip. The hotel's experienced catering and culinary teams are on hand to make every event exceptional.

Culinary, Spa and Pool

Varied culinary offerings range from the Forbes Five Star Twist by Pierre Gagnaire—the celebrity chef's only North American restaurant, which serves up modern French cuisine—to Skybar, which offers handcrafted cocktails 23 floors above the world-famous Las Vegas Boulevard. The Tea Lounge features a traditional afternoon tea experience, with the Las Vegas Strip as a striking backdrop. On the third floor, Zen Kitchen offers fresh, seasonal American cuisine, including salads, sandwiches and a signature rotisserie chicken, in a relaxed environment for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The Waldorf Astoria Spa is a soothing respite, comprised of 27,000 sq. ft. of health-and-wellness offerings, including a traditional Turkish hammam, private fitness center, salon and separate Zen Foot





THE LUXURY, Nongaming Waldorf Astoria Las Vegas offers Unforgettable Experiences in The Heart of the World's Most Dynamic City. Spa, where pedicures and reflexology treatments take center stage. Guests can experience private yoga and Pilates lessons in an adjacent yoga studio.

On the chic eighth-floor pool deck, guests can relax with two pools, two whirlpools, and private daybeds and cabanas available for daily rental. The adjacent Pool Cafe serves up light, refreshing offerings such as salads, sandwiches and smoothies. Special Promotional Section - DESERT MEETINGS

RED ROCK CASINO, RESORT & SPA

Las Vegas, Nevada

11011 West Charleston Blvd. Las Vegas, NV 89135 702-797-7777 redrock.sclv.com

- A short,
 20-minute drive
 from McCarran
 International
 Airport (LAS)
- 100,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space
- Conference center, VIP event space in suites, entertainment venues, gourmet restaurants and bowling lanes
- 800 guest rooms and suites
- Choice of 5
 distinct ballrooms
 and 15 breakout
 rooms

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A Unique Setting, with Everything You Need to Plan The Perfect Meeting

Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa is where luxury and service come together to create unforgettable events. With 100,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space, our stunning conference center can accommodate groups of 15 to 1,500. We offer unlimited options for the perfect Las Vegas meeting, convention, banquet or private party. And our award-winning team of catering professionals will help you plan, create and deliver the right set-up for your group. At Red Rock, no two events are ever the same, and we can customize the room, the food, the entertainment and the mood to perfectly suit the needs and wants of your particular group.

A Top Event Destination in Las Vegas

Set against the scenic beauty of the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, many of our banquet halls and meeting rooms offer

breathtaking views, and private balconies. You can choose from five distinct ballrooms or 15 breakout rooms, depending on the size and theme of your event. All are conveniently located just steps from guest rooms, with direct access to the hotel lobby via elevator or escalator. And all are equipped with the latest audiovisual technology to create powerful presentations



ONE OF THE World's Best New Hotels.

-CONDE NAST

A True Gem in the Middle of the Desert

In addition to our conference center, Red Rock offers VIP Event Space in our suites, entertainment venues, gourmet restaurants and bowling lanes. Here we can create unique experiences for your invitees, with food, drink and activities that most convention-goers find to be a welcome escape. T-Bones Chophouse is an elegant steakhouse and bar, with a private dining room that's perfect for a special dinner or VIP event. Crimson—a nightclub and private pool area—is a great setting for a rousing party. And Rocks Lounge is an entertainment venue that creates an exciting backdrop for a corporate event. Our VIP Bowling lanes are available for a unique group experience, and our private movie booths may be reserved for special screenings.

VISIT PHOENIX

Phoenix, Arizona

400 E. Van Buren St., Ste. 600 Phoenix, AZ 85004 602-254-6500 visitphoenix.com

- The Greater Phoenix area offers more than 41,000 acres of desert parks and mountain preserves, with more than 200 miles of trails.
- The Desert Botanical Garden is a 140-acre venue that showcases a variety of arid plants, from towering saguaros to delicate blooms.
- Downtown Phoenix boasts local restaurants by two James Beard Awardwinning chefs. Chef Chris Bianco serves up his nationally acclaimed artisanal pizza at Pizzeria Bianco, and chef Nobuo Fukuda creates a Japanese cuisine experience at Nobuo at Teeter House.
- Arizona Wilderness DTPHX, a newly opened beer garden, celebrates the Grand Canyon State through a variety of local vibeinspired brews.

U nhurried and wholly unexpected, Phoenix is a place where connections are forged in boardrooms or on urban trails. As a premier destination for meetings and events, Phoenix offers an award-winning convention center, convenient airport access, sun-drenched beauty, distinguished hotels and resorts, and a downtown core that offers a burgeoning dining and nightlife scene.

Thanks to an influx of entrepreneurs, visionaries, students and artists, the city is brimming with new investment and youthful energy. As a result, new bars and restaurants are coming on the scene regularly, downtown Phoenix's first grocery store will open this year, and more hotel rooms are on the horizon.

Getting Around

Phoenix is home to one of the most accessible, affordable and welcoming major airports in the United States. Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) is served by 18 airlines, with more than 1,200 daily flights.

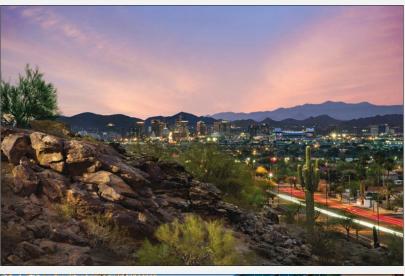
Passengers arriving at Sky Harbor Airport can use the PHX Sky Train and Valley Metro Rail to travel downtown in about 15 minutes, for a total cost of \$2. The 28-mile rail system carries riders to hotels, restaurants, museums and sports arenas in Phoenix, and the nearby cities of Mesa and Tempe.

Meeting Facilities

Inspired by the Grand Canyon, the Phoenix Convention Center's natural colors and textures mirror the surrounding desert and canyon landscapes, while incorporating energy-efficient design principles and ongoing sustainability programs.

The Phoenix Convention Center, one of the nation's most-acclaimed buildings of its kind, offers 900,000 sq. ft. of flexible space plus 312,500 sq. ft. of continuous exhibit space, 99 breakout rooms and a 2,300-seat performance hall.

This year, the convention center is expanding its offerings with the introduction of Canyon on Third—80,000 sq. ft. of urban outdoor event space that can accommodate a variety of activities and pair them with downtown Phoenix energy and iconic Arizona ambiance.





UNHURRIED AND WHOLLY UNEXPECTED, Phoenix is a place where connections are forged in boardrooms or on urban trails.

Accommodations

Ranging from boutique to business chic, downtown Phoenix hotels offer more than 3,840 guest rooms. Additionally, Greater Phoenix is home to nearly 40 resort properties that offer spas, golf, meeting spaces and unforgettable views. In total, the destination has more than 68,000 rooms.

Dining

From speakeasy-inspired craft cocktail bars and local breweries with beer gardens to nationallyacclaimed eateries, and ambitious and chef-driven restaurants, Phoenix's dining scene is in full bloom. Within walking distance from the convention center and surrounding hotels, dining and entertainment districts include Heritage Square, CityScape and Roosevelt Row.

Attractions

Art, culture and history aficionados will want to check out Phoenix Art Museum, the largest art museum in the Southwest; the Musical Instrument Museum, an auditory tour of the world; and the Heard Museum, which showcases the region's American Indian cultures.

RENAISSANCE ESMERALDA RESORT & SPA

Indian Wells, CA

44400 Indian Wells Lane Indian Wells, CA 92210 760-773-4444 renindianwells.com

Spacious accommodations (among the largest in the greater Palm Springs area) welcome guests with new configurations, including a larger selection of suites and complete floor-to-ceiling transformations in every room category.

Discover more than 213,000 sq. ft. of event space complemented by top-tier catering and planning services.

Perfect your swing at Indian Wells Golf Resort, relax by our sandy beach pool or indulge in a massage at Spa Esmeralda.

6 different restaurants and lounges for dining and socializing in style and comfort. Pollowing an extraordinary, multimilliondollar design transformation, Renaissance Indian Wells has officially relaunched as the desert's most dazzlingly reimagined luxury resort. A complete makeover of its 560 guest rooms, including 104 suites, remastered corridors, a new multi-story lobby and arrival experience, creation of an industry-leading fitness center, vibrant pool area enhancements, establishment of a dozen mature olive trees to create an intimate grove and the debut of a magical new outdoor gathering spot are among the widespread enrichments introduced by the property.

Building on a 30-year heritage in Indian Wells, the resort is celebrating its rebirth by taking on a beloved new (old) name, moving forward as of today as Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa. The "Renaissance Esmeralda" label is a nod to the hotel's storied legacy under that earlier name, and to a treasured, star-studded history which is newly incorporated into the property's fresh take on both midcentury modern design and timeless Mediterranean architectural inspiration.

Welcome to the Next Chapter

We're crafting new spaces for new traditions at Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa, starting by focusing on the heart of our resort. With a redefined lobby experience, which debuted in August 2019, guests will gather in comfort with friends and family to share stories and create memories over handcrafted cocktails from an enhanced bar experience. The new cocktail menus feature locally-sourced ingredients with a nod to the timeless traditions of the destination. In October of this year our guestrooms will emerge modernized with walk-in showers, refreshed interiors, all set to perfectly frame the same stunning views. Return to our resort this fall and discover all that is new.

Elevated and Re-energized

The poolside experience and fitness center have already been improved to offer a revived wellness





THE 'RENAISSANCE **ESMERALDA' LABEL** IS A NOD TO THE **HOTEL'S STORIED** LEGACY UNDER THAT EARLIER NAME, AND TO A **TREASURED, STAR-**STUDDED HISTORY WHICH IS NEWLY INCORPORATED INTO THE **PROPERTY'S FRESH** TAKE ON BOTH **MID-CENTURY MODERN DESIGN** AND TIMELESS **MEDITERRANEAN** ARCHITECTURAL INSPIRATION.

escape. Guest can elevate their workouts with a low impact TRX session or Peloton® class, or just relax while enjoying a unique poolside experience with dedicated VIP lounge and beachfront cabanas.

The Post Oak Hotel, Houston



new entry to the growing Preferred Hotels & Resorts Legend Collection portfolio is The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston, a majestic destination in itself, featuring 250 contemporary guest rooms, 20 residential suites, a 35,000-square-foot conference facility, and a Rolls-Royce, Bentley and Bugatti showroom. A VIP reception in the 5,000-square-foot Presidential Suite can be accessed through a private elevator and includes an outdoor terrace with a helipad for big entrances.

Got a hot spot you'd like to submit? Contact editor@smartmeetings.com.

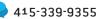




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The Platinum Choice Awards honor outstanding properties and CVBs that are raising the industry's standards of excellence. These crème de la crème venues helped make your event a smashing success and deserve to win the coveted trophy—show them some love and cast your vote today! Vote now through August 21—you'll be automatically entered to win a \$250 gift card! Winners will be announced in the December issue.

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SPECIAL ADVERTISING

SECTION

Visit**Orlando**

Special Advertisement Section

With new enhancements coming to our Convention Center and airport, as well as the addition of new venue space, attractions and exciting dining options, Orlando's continued investment in the meetings and conventions industry ensures our position as a top meetings destination.

-George Aguel, President & CEO, Visit Orlando

NOW TRENDING: ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER

Announces \$605M North-South Building Improvement & Expansion Project

See plan details on Orange County Convention Center page.

Special Advertisement Section

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CREATING experiences

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of a popular entertainment district

The nation's No. 1 mega airport

> 150-plus meeting hotels

Constantly evolving convention center and more to come

There are many reasons why Orlando is the country's most visited destination — and ranked by Cvent as the No. 1 meetings destination in the U.S. for five straight years.

For starters, we have an ever-growing range of lodging options, superior airlift and unparalleled dining and entertainment, including world-famous theme parks and attractions. And we continue to raise the bar with renovations and enhancements, both at the state-of-theart Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) and throughout the destination.

"With new enhancements coming to our Convention Center and airport, as well as the addition of new venue space, attractions and exciting dining options, Orlando's continued investment in the meetings and conventions industry ensures our position as a top meetings destination," says George Aguel, President & CEO, Visit Orlando. "But what's further fueling the excitement in Orlando is our commitment to launching new experiences which focus on the emotional connections visitors have with Orlando."

BIGGER & BETTER

Orlando's hotel inventory is expanding every year, with more than 122,000 rooms — 7,500 of which are within a 1-mile radius of the Convention Center — at over 450 hotels and resorts, including 150-plus meetings hotels. In addition, the 2.1 million-square foot Orange County Convention Center wrapped up a \$187 million renovation to add a new pedestrian bridge, upgraded food areas and ballrooms, an outdoor terrace, and a hydroponic urban garden serving farm-fresh fare. And the OCCC isn't done yet, with more next-gen meeting enhancements on the horizon to continue to meet the needs of the more than 1.3 million annual attendees.

Meanwhile, Orlando International Airport (MCO), named J.D. Power & Associates' No. 1 mega airport in the U.S. for customer satisfaction offering more than 150 non-stop flights, is introducing a new, high-speed Automated People Mover and a refurbished North Terminal ticket lobby. And in 2020, work on the South Terminal will be complete, including 16 brand-new gates.

The entertainment scene continues to evolve as well. In the Convention District, more than \$1 billion in high-profile development is planned through 2020, offering even more dining and entertainment experiences for your group.

"There's no doubt that Orlando has all of the elements meetings planners need in a venue, from space to value to a convention partner like Visit Orlando that really 'gets it," says Lisa Kaplan, an independent meeting planner who has coordinated dozens of conferences in Orlando. "But it's also a place that makes you feel like a kid. With 'experiential meetings' as the big buzzwords these days, planners are under the gun to wow attendees with special memories. Orlando delivers on this like nobody else."

Cover Photo: SeaWorld® Orlando

WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT ROSEN HOTELS & RESORTS?

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Askrosen

Announcing the Ask Rosen[™] skill for Amazon Alexa. Created by Rosen Hotels & Resorts, it helps meeting planners get instantaneous access to the many facts, stats and differences that set Rosen Plaza, Rosen Centre and Rosen Shingle Creek apart. So, go ahead. Explore.

And feel free to Ask Rosen just about anything, like:

"Alexa, Ask Rosen to tell me about Rosen Hotels & Resorts" three meeting properties."

Harris Rosen President & COO Rosen Hotels & Resorts



Rosen Plaza

delivers the discerning features you look for, including 800 guestrooms and suites, 60,000 sq. ft. of diverse meeting space and direct skybridge access to the Orange County Convention Center.



Rosen Shingle Creek is one of Orlando's largest full-scale convention properties, boasting 524,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting and event space, 1,501 guestrooms and suites and amenities that include a full-service spa and championship golf course.



Rosen Centre

is conveniently situated on I-Drive and offers 150,000 sq. ft. of event space, 1,334 ultramodern guestrooms and suites, as well as a full-service spa and direct access to the Orange County Convention Center via skywalk.



AskRosen.com | 407.996.4890

ENDLESS space & value

Successful Meetings & Conventions start with Visit Orlando

Perfecting meeting hotels

With more than 450 hotels and 122,000 guest rooms and growing, it's no wonder Orlando is home to some of the largest conventions in the country.

The diversity of venues and affordable accommodations make Orlando an attractive option. That's one reason The National Plastics Show has committed to making the Orange County Convention Center its home until at least 2027, according to Bill Carteaux, Plastics Industry Association President & CEO. Previously, the event took place in Chicago.

"When we took a look down here, we thought we could save a lot of money on the exhibitors' side and on the attendees' side, from the hotels to the center," he says. "Not only did both groups save a lot of money, but the personal touch afforded by Visit Orlando made the destination stand out compared to past experiences."

"When I walked in the door here, the sign on the door says, 'Center of Hospitality,' and that is what makes the difference," says Carteaux. "The whole city — and Visit Orlando is the epitome of that — has really become family to us. They offer us marketing support, [and] they do things at the airport,

making sure that our folks feel welcome as soon as they touch down."

The hospitality extends beyond the Convention Center, too. "[Orlando] offers dining, entertainment and activities, so that attendees and partners can enjoy themselves after the show," says Vivian Eickhoff, event director for Microsoft Ignite, which came to Orlando in 2018 and will come again in 2019. "They also have opportunities for their families to come with them and be able to do something."



Caribe Royale All-Suite Hotel & Convention Center

Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort

NOTEWORTHY HOTELS

Benefitting from an \$8 million renovation, **Caribe Royale All-Suite Hotel & Convention Center**, located 1.5 miles from *Walt Disney World*[®] Resort, boasts 1,218 one-bedroom suites, 120 two-bedroom villas, 150,000 square feet of flexible space, and a host of dining options, including an awardwinning, AAA Four Diamond restaurant.

DoubleTree by Hilton at the Entrance to Universal Orlando is located in front of Universal Orlando Resort[™] and close to other popular attractions. The hotel has finished a \$30 million renovation, refreshing the lobby, guest rooms and its 62,800 square feet of meeting and event space.

Having also completed a significant expansion, **DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld** now has 100,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space, including a new, 20,000-sq.-ft. ballroom and outdoor event venue.

Following a \$13 million redevelopment project, **Embassy Suites by Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista Resort** has an upscale, contemporary feel, complete with 10,000 square feet of meeting and event space.



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Loews Royal Pacific Resort at Universal Orlando^T

Some of Orlando's most unique meeting hotels can be found at Universal Orlando Resort[™], starting with more than 6,000 square feet of flexible event space and living rock history at Hard Rock Hotel[®] at Universal Orlando[™]. Other options include 42,000 square feet of stylish meeting space at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando[™], 115,000 square feet at Loews Sapphire Falls Resort at Universal Orlando[™], and 132,000 square feet at Loews Royal Pacific Resort at Universal Orlando[™]. These Universal Orlando Resort hotels boast state-of-the-art A/V services, awardwinning catering and other extras.

The recently expanded ballroom at **Hilton Orlando** includes eight new meeting rooms adjacent to the 14,900-sq.-ft. Florida Ballroom, as well as pre-function space. Steps away is the 50,000-sq.-ft. outdoor Promenade, ideal for events and meetings large or small.

In addition to unique restaurant and lounge experiences, **Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek** has over 170,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, including the exclusive Signature Island and the Bonnet Creek Pavilion with 10,000 square feet of covered space.



Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress



Just 1 mile from *Walt Disney World*[®] Resort, **Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress** is adding a new, 25,000-sq.-ft. ballroom, plus 38,000 square feet of ancillary meeting and event space. The expansion will increase the property's event space footprint to more than 90,000 square feet, including additional room for backstage operations.

Scheduled to open in early 2019, **Margaritaville Resort Orlando** will be one of the destination's most unique resort properties, with casually luxurious guest rooms and world-class amenities spread out over 300 acres close to the theme parks. It will also offer much for meeting planners, including 40,000 square feet of technology-forward spaces perfect for meetings, conventions and corporate retreats.

With more than 60,000 and 150,000 square feet of meeting and event space, respectively, Rosen Plaza and Rosen Centre are two of four hotels connected directly to the Orange County Convention Center via pedestrian skybridges. Within minutes on Universal Boulevard and designed with meetings in mind, Rosen Shingle Creek offers more than 524,000 square feet of innovative meeting and event space. Recent refurbishments and upgrades among the three hotels include contemporary new furnishings and trendy decor enhancing guestrooms and suites, where guests always enjoy complimentary in-room Wi-Fi and no resort fees.

Fresh off a \$140 million renovation, the **Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort** has announced a 14-story tower expansion. With an expected completion of fall 2020, the tower will feature more than 22,000 square feet of meeting space, including two ballrooms, 12 meeting rooms, a rooftop reception space, a 16,800-sq.-ft. elevated deck, plus guestrooms, dining and other amenities.



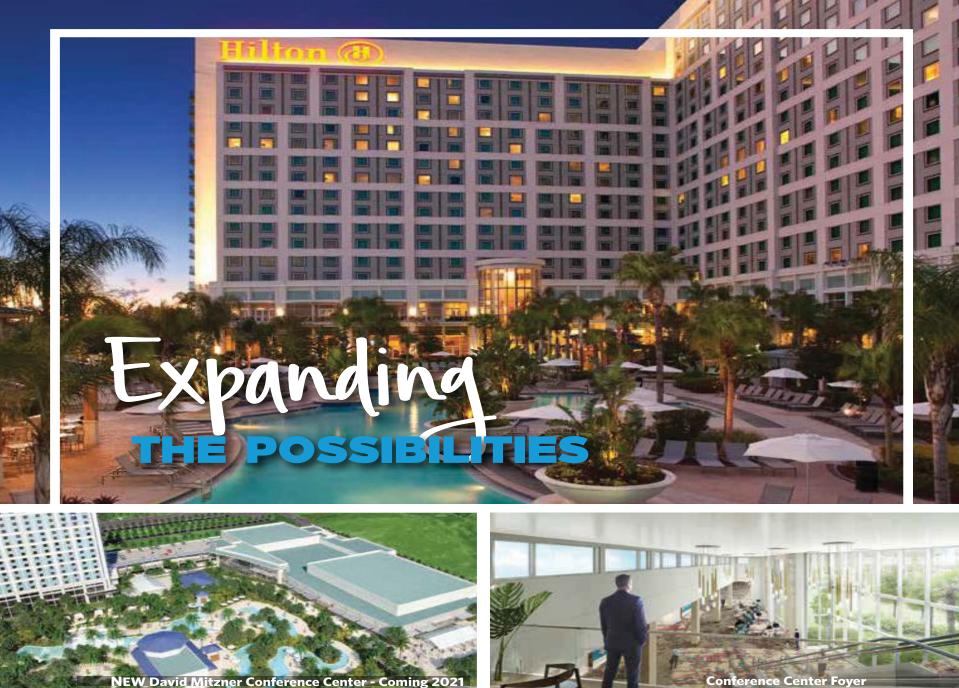
Rosen Shingle Creek



Margaritaville Resort Orlando

With a \$5 million renovation complete, **Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek** has a new, 3,500-sq.-ft. foot ballroom with room for up to 360 people, and a 2,155-sq.-ft. meeting room. The renovation also brought a wraparound balcony and terrace overlooking the 10-acre lake, sustainable LED lighting across the hotel, updates to three restaurants, and a refresh for all 400 guestrooms.

Wyndham Orlando Resort International Drive has more than 60,000 square feet of flexible meeting space to accommodate events of all sizes. With its proximity to the airport and the Convention Center, the resort is a hub for business travelers, and it provides easy walkability to International Drive's famed dining and entertainment venues.



Discover Hilton Orlando, a vibrant, contemporary hotel with an exciting personality to complement an exceptional location, and a team of meetings experts to exceed your expectations. Everything starts with your vision, a blank canvas and a partnership to creatively bring your objective to life. The hotel features 249,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space and picturesque outdoor venues, so your options are endless.

Hilton Orlando is expanding the possibilities and will open its doors to the **NEW** David Mitzner Conference Center, a 100,000 sq. ft. facility available to groups starting in January 2021.



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MORE connectivity

\$605M North-South improvement plan

New Grand Concourse

New Multi-purpose Venue

The world-class Convention Center continues to improve and enhance the experience for its guests. Raising the bar for convention standards.

Close to Orlando International Airport, the Orange County Convention Center is in the heart of Orlando's tourism corridor. With a focus on connectivity, it's directly linked to four hotels with a system of pedestrian bridges and is within walking distance of thousands of hotel guestrooms.

The country's second-largest convention center, which recently celebrated its 35th anniversary, continues to dazzle clients and guests, boasting 2.1 million square feet of exhibit space and offering 1,100 access points to its wireless network. Walkability to more than 42 hotels and 75 world-class restaurants and tourist attractions within a 2-mile radius adds to the center's appeal.

The next five years are sure to elevate the OCCC into an even more dynamic and sought-after event space. In late 2018, leaders received approvals to move forward with North-South Building Improvements and Expansion project, including the Convention Way Grand Concourse and new Multipurpose Venue. These projects will expand it's meeting and exhibit space with more options for clients looking to deliver a top-notch event experience for attendees.

The **Convention Way Grand Concourse**, an enclosed connection between the North and South concourses, includes additional meeting space and an 80,000-square-foot ballroom with grand entrance to the North-South building along Convention Way.

The new **Multipurpose Venue** is a 200,000-square-foot, flexible, divisible, column-free space with a combination of retractable and floor seating to accommodate between 18,000-20,000 guests while incorporating connectivity between the North and South concourses.

"We spent years working with valued clients to best determine what improvements should be made to keep us competitive and top-of-mind in the convention and trade show industry," said Yulita Osuba, the OCCC's Deputy Director. "This priceless feedback and strong relationships will help us lay the groundwork for the next 35 years."

NEW & IMPROVED

The OCCC is in the process of creating Wellness Rooms and Networking Spaces that will be located around campus. A Wellness Room is defined as a dedicated, private space that can be used for nursing mothers, meditation, prayer and more. Each room will be outfitted with a chair and table, ensuring comfort when the space is in use. A Networking Space, either a formal room or an open gathering space, can be used for informal gatherings and meetings. These areas also provide basic charging and connectivity capabilities.

Dedicated rideshare pick-up and drop-off locations have been established at the OCCC. These locations, easily identifiable using the unique OCCC-developed rideshare logo and banners, make it easier for attendees to know where to go to catch their ride.

The dressing room located behind Valencia Ballroom D was recently updated and equipped with all-new lighting, flooring and bathroom design. One highlighted feature is new lighting around the mirrors, with lighting that can be adjusted to different LED colors, giving a realistic visual for performers on how they will look on stage in various light settings.

EXPERIENCE MORE ORANGE PROJECTED 2023!

Multipurpose Venue

- 200,000 sf column-free space
- Contiguous to existing exhibit floor
- Accommodates 18,000 20,0000 (seated)
- Enclosed Connection to North Level 3

Convention Way Grand Concourse

- Ballroom (80,000 sf)
 Meeting Rooms (60,000 sf)
- New Entrance Plaza



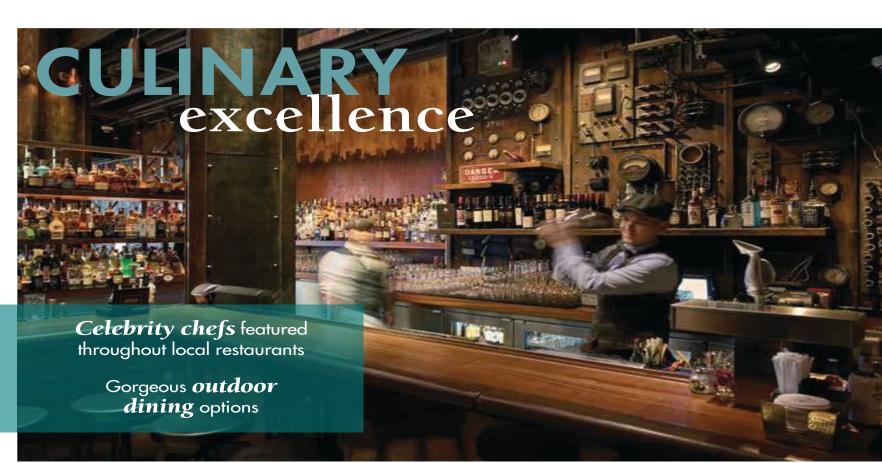
Orange County Convention Center

After celebrating a milestone anniversary and the recent completion of a \$187 million Capital Improvement Program, the Orange County Convention Center sets its sights on even MORE change and growth. With the planned North-South Building Improvements, Convention Way Grand Concourse and Multipurpose Venue, the Center of Hospitality will maintain its competitive edge as well as position itself to remain the No. 1 meetings destination in the country. **To follow our progress, visit www.occc.net/improvements**

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Orlando's culinary scene continues to expand with more than a dozen new, high-profile dining establishments arriving in the destination in recent years.

Meeting-goers can easily find popular restaurants, famed steakhouses and seafood outlets, they'll also be able to enjoy unique, local experiences curated by celebrity chefs in Orlando, which was selected as a "**Best Foodie City**" by WalletHub.

"Orlando is home to an amazingly diverse group of people, and those who visit us are often surprised to find what a variety of great food we have here," says Greg Richie, executive chef at Soco. A modern Southern food spot in the trendy Thornton Park neighborhood



Photography via Patina Restaurant Group/Morimoto Asia

on the edge of downtown Orlando, Soco specializes in such delicacies as chicken-fried cauliflower "steak," slow-roasted, barbecue-glazed pork belly biscuits, boiled peanut hummus, and crispy macaroni and cheese croquettes.

A popular after-hour spot is the reimagined **Disney Springs**[®] (formerly Downtown Disney), which serves up 60-plus crowd-pleasing dining and entertainment venues, as well as more than 100 eclectic retailers, and continues to expand. Disney Springs' newest hotspot is The Edison, an industrial-style building adorned with a smokestack that is fashioned to resemble an old power plant. One Instagram-worthy menu item: the Clothesline Candied Bacon, which features thick, juicy slabs of bacon slathered in a sweet sauce that are hung on a line with clothespins.

Disney Springs[®] is also home to celebrity chefs and James Beard

Photography via Patina Restaurant Group/The Edison

Award winners, including Masaharu Morimoto's Morimoto Asia, Art Smith's Homecomin' Florida Kitchen, Rick Bayless' Frontera Cocina and Guy Fieri's Chicken Guy!, with more on the way. What's more, Master Sommelier George Miliotes holds court at Wine Bar George, while famed Chef José Andrés brings his Spanish restaurant Jaleo to Orlando.

For dining in a relaxed atmosphere, attendees flock to the **Convention District**, where you will find two retail, dining and entertainment complexes within walking distance of the center along famed I-Drive.

Pointe Orlando features restaurants and a range of exciting entertainment, including local live music at venues such as Lafayette's Music Room and B.B. King's Blues Club. This gorgeous complex is also home to Orlando's Improv Comedy Club, the Blue Martini lounge, and numerous other ways for meeting attendees to play after hours.

ICON Orlando 360[™] is Orlando's newest dining and entertainment complex, offering restaurants, shopping and family-friendly attractions anchored by the 400-foot ICON



Orlando[™] observation wheel (formerly the Orlando Eye). After taking selfies with their favorite celebrities at Madame Tussauds, attendees will want to check out local live bands at Tin Roof or try a margarita-sangria swirl at the new Uncle Julio's Mexican Restaurant. With a beautifully landscaped courtyard, this area has also become a popular private event venue for small and large groups. While you're in the area, enjoy world-class dancing while you dine at Mango's Tropical Cafe. Mango's talented culinary team offers an extensive menu of gourmet fare and specialty drinks to complete your event.



If you're looking for an upscale spot for an intimate dinner or a series of dine-arounds, head to "**Restaurant Row**," a swanky dining and entertainment district on Sand Lake Road just a short ride from the Convention Center.

This area features nearly 30 topflight restaurants within a mile-long stretch. While you'll discover several familiar, upscale steakhouses and other high-end eateries here, you'll also find one-of-a-kind local venues like Urbain 40, an American Brasserie and Lounge that features chef-crafted cuisine for brunch, lunch or dinner. Or, if you want something more casual, check out The Whiskey for gourmet burgers and rock 'n' roll with a great live music scene.

Another incredible dining area is **Universal CityWalk™**, which features imaginative themed dining like The Cowfish Sushi Burger Bar, The Toothsome Chocolate Emporium & Savory Feast Kitchen™, NBC Sports Grill & Brew, Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville, and others.

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VIBRANT entertainment

Whether you want to plan an event outside of the Convention Center or hotel, or simply want to unwind with the crew after a day of meetings, Orlando delivers one-of-a-kind entertainment experiences.

One much buzzed about hotspot is **Mango's Tropical Cafe**, located on International Drive within walking distance of area hotels and near the Orange County Convention Center. Whether you're hosting an intimate event for 20 people or a full-venue corporate soiree for 3,000 guests, Mango's can adapt to your needs with 55,000 square feet of meeting and event space, complete with some of Orlando's most unique live entertainment.

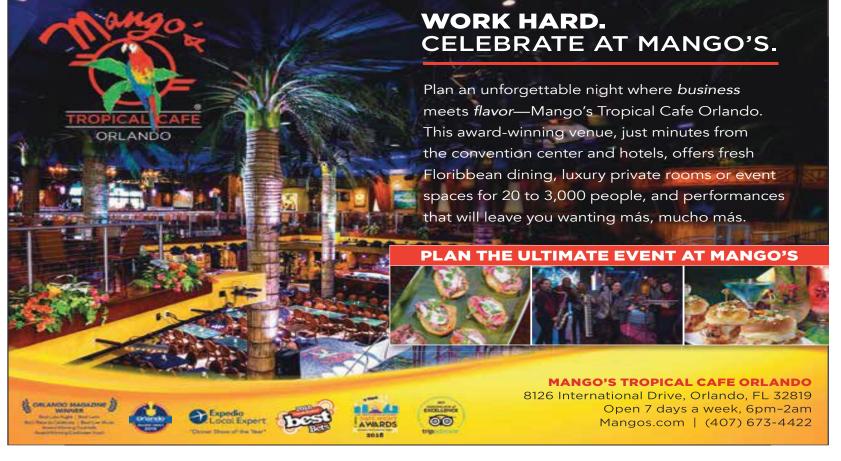
Also on International Drive, locals and visitors alike are raving about **'The Rock Show**'. An unrivaled, one-of-a-kind, dining and entertainment experience that brings audiences of all ages through a high-energy musical journey of the most iconic rock and pop artists of all time.

You'll feel like royalty as you join the Kings of Rock and Pop for an unforgettable night that will amaze the senses. An evening full of energizing music that will transform you to another place and time, sensational dancing that will captivate your eyes, and electrifying visual effects that have earned '**The Rock Show**' a standing ovation each and every time.

For low-key fun, take a cue from the locals and enjoy one of the many craft breweries located throughout the city. One favorite: **Sea Dog Brewing**, a full-service restaurant and brewery in the heart of Orlando's major attractions with a rotating tap of more than 15 beers to choose from.



Mango's Tropical Cafe



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Imagine kicking off a corporate keynote where your CEO is interrupted on stage by larger-than-life characters from the movie Transformers. It's something that Barb Bowden, complex managing director for Loews Sapphire Falls Resort at Universal Orlando[™], has witnessed several times.

Through its partnership with Universal Orlando Resort[™], Bowden's team has been able to incorporate popular characters into the resort's meetings through Universal's Meeting Enhancements Program, which empowers planners to add unique options designed to create engagement and excitement, such as branded character moments, inspirational themes and custom characters.

"Meeting Enhancements are an incredible option available to planners who host a meeting at our onsite hotels," says Eric Marshall, vice president of park sales at Universal Orlando Resort[™]. "This offering is all about bringing the thrills of Universal Orlando Resort's theme parks into the meeting space to create compelling experiences that inspire, excite and engage attendees. Imagine attending a meeting where Optimus Prime introduces the keynote speaker or the fun-loving Minions make an appearance during lunch for photos and meet and greets. All of our Meeting Enhancements help to ensure that program messages resonate with the attendees."

Another popular experience offered at select Universal Orlando Resort[™] onsite properties is Flavor by Loews Hotels, a partnership that allows meeting guests to enjoy menus from local eateries without having to leave the property.

Experiential meetings are also

SeaWorld® Orlando

popular at **SeaWorld® Orlando**, where groups can go behind the scenes with customized educational programs. Meeting planners can host educational events in the park's Manatee Rehabilitation Area, where attendees can watch veterinarians nurse rescued sea cows back to health.

Before you hold an event at the park, SeaWorld will send an ambassador to a meeting to explain more about the resort's conservation efforts. Furthermore, SeaWorld's corporate social responsibility program donates 1 percent of all net revenue from an event held at the park to the SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund.

"SeaWorld Group Events are truly events that matter, because a visit to our parks helps support our animal rescue and rehabilitation programs, which have already resulted in over 33,000 animal rescues in our company's 50 year history," says Tim Swan, senior leader – sales for SeaWorld Orlando. "By supporting us, you support this cause, and you'll have a whole lot of fun doing it!"



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What's New What's Next

Orlando is constantly adding new options for meeting attendees.

NEW MEETING SPACES

Discover the dramatic transformation of the reimagined Disney's Coronado *Springs* **Resort** with a new 15-story, 545-room tower bringing new guestrooms, meeting space and even a rooftop restaurant in the Summer 2019. Looking for more ballroom space, find it starting in February 2019 at the Renaissance Orlando SeaWorld adding 41,000 sq. ft. of new meeting including the 16,224-square-foot Peninsula Ballroom. Also coming in Fall 2019, the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress will open a new 25,000 sq. ft. ballroom adding 32,000 square feet of pre-function and event space at the iconic Orlando resort.



Disney's Coronado Springs Resort



NEW EXPERIENCES

The widely anticipated *Star Wars:* Galaxy's Edge will open in late 2019 at *Disney's Hollywood Studios®* adding to the draw and excitement of Orlando. Meeting attendees can live out their own 'Star Wars' story, fly the Millennium Falcon and explore a remote outpost where adventure awaits at this incredible new, themed land. Elevate your meeting experience to another galaxy at this one-of-kind immersive experience attendees won't soon forget.

Disney's Hollywood Studios®

NEW HIGH-END HOTELS

Lush accommodations and swanky service with a local vibe await you at downtown Orlando's newest boutique hotel, **The Delaney Hotel**, opening Spring 2019. Or just around the corner from the convention center, your attendees will enjoy the new 259-room **Tru by Hilton Orlando** hotel, opening late 2019. And if you're looking for luxury, you'll find it at the new 16-story, 516-room **JW Marriott Orlando Bonnet Creek Resort** offering 50,000 sq. ft. of elegant meeting space complete with a rooftop bar with panoramic views of local evening fireworks.



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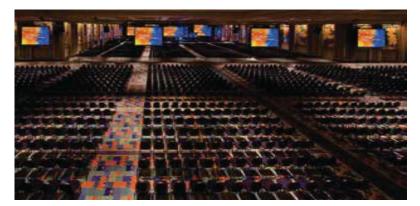
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