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# CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

## Taking on Terrorism

Safety & Security at  
Meetings in Europe

PAGE 18

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## California Meeting & Incentive Travel Planner Guide

Golden Opportunities for Meetings  
PAGE 22

Hotels With a Rich History

PAGE 10

Top Value Destinations

PAGE 14

Las Vegas

PAGE 36



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## Contents

VOLUME 34 NO. 5

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### FEATURES

#### 8 Tribute

Memories of Michael J. Hurwitz, CITE

#### 10 Luxury Hotels With a Rich History

Setting the Tone for a Momentous Meeting Experience

By Derek Reveron

#### 14 Top Value Destinations

Fresh-Eyed Planners Discover Hidden Gems From City to City

By Mark Rowh

#### 18 Taking on Terrorism

Safety & Security at Meetings in Europe

By Christine Loomis

### DESTINATIONS

#### 22 California Meeting & Incentive Travel Planner Guide

Golden Opportunities for Meetings

By Karen Brost

#### 36 Las Vegas

The Meeting Planner's Best Friend

By Derek Reveron

### DEPARTMENTS

4 Publisher's Message

50 People on the Move

6 News & Notes

50 Reader Services

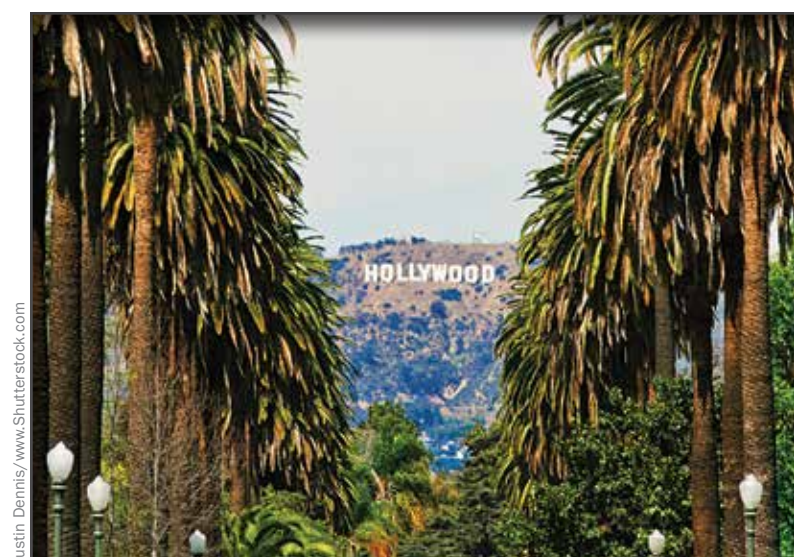
7 Snapshots

Credit: The Fairmont Copley Plaza



Boston's iconic Fairmont Copley Plaza celebrated its centennial anniversary in 2012. **PAGE 10**

Justin Dennis/www.shutterstock.com



Groups can meet time after time in the Golden State and have a new experience every time. **PAGE 22**

Credit: Lindsay Best



Performances by Blue Man Group in Las Vegas at the Luxor Hotel & Casino delight corporate groups. **PAGE 36**



Sunrise yoga at Red Rocks



Bike-sharing program



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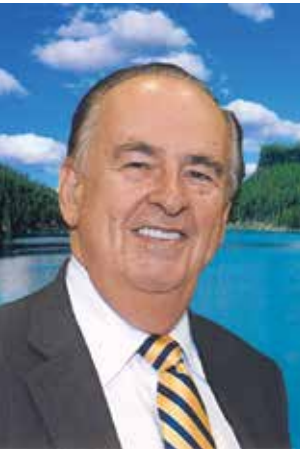


# Publisher's Message

## Controlling Our Destiny

If there is one thing that I have learned in my long and storied life, it is that none of us can control our destiny, at least up to a point. Having recently lost a few close friends and acquaintances in the industry and in my neighborhood, that message hits home loud and clear every time.

Michael Hurwitz was one of those very special friends. The incentive industry lost a champion last month when he lost his battle with cancer.



As the founder and chairman of United Incentives, Michael was an incentive industry leader and a personal friend who for many years shared his professional achievements and successes with me and numerous industry colleagues.

Many will have fond memories of him for his humor and passion for the incentive industry. His legacy includes the building of a well-respected business where he shared his passion for excellence.

Mike will be greatly missed by all who ever met him. For more personal comments from Mike's industry colleagues, see "Tribute" on page 8.

Let's talk about the times when we can attempt to control our destiny, specifically the prospect of corporate groups facing the threat of terrorism. In our cover story this month, "Taking on Terrorism: Safety & Security at Meetings in Europe" on page 18, we provide pointers on how to stage group meetings in Europe in the safest environment possible. A terrorist attack may seem to be inevitable, but I was floored when I read that we are 35,079 times more likely to die of heart disease and 33,842 times more likely to die from cancer than from a terrorist attack, not to mention being killed by lightning, guns and cars. "The chance that this (Brussels attack) is going to happen again is extremely small when you compare it to people being killed by firearms in any U.S. city. ....Europe is still a very peaceful destination as a whole," exclaims Hugo Slimbrouck, director of strategic partnerships, Ovation Global DMC, MCI Group, Brussels, Belgium.

Harvey Grotsky  
Publisher

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## News & Notes

### New Rooms Debut at Loews Royal Pacific Resort

ORLANDO, FL — Inspired by the adventurous spirit and exotic destinations of the golden age of travel, designers have completed the renovation of guest rooms at Loews Royal Pacific Resort at Universal Orlando. With its onsite location at Universal Orlando Resort, the hotel offers guests a modern sense of adventure, filled with the magic and excitement of two world-class theme parks — Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure.

Now offering 132,000 sf of meeting and function space after a major expansion, Loews Royal Pacific Resort at Universal Orlando features the new Oceana Ballroom with column-free, multipurpose space and additional meeting breakout rooms. Beyond the hotel's ballrooms and meeting rooms, planners have numerous meeting options including indoor and outdoor venues and incredible dining and entertainment options across the resort. Loews Royal Pacific Resort will soon connect to the new Loews Sapphire Falls Resort, set to open this summer. Together, the two properties will form the new Loews Meeting Complex at Universal Orlando, offering nearly 250,000 sf of meeting and function space and 2,000 guest rooms. Planners will have more options and flexibility than ever before for their meetings at the onsite hotels at Universal Orlando Resort.

Guests staying at Loews Royal Pacific Resort at Universal Orlando receive an exclusive package of theme park benefits at Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure, including free Universal Express Unlimited ride access to skip the regular lines in both theme parks (theme park admission required) and Early Park Admission. [www.loewshotels.com/royal-pacific-resort](http://www.loewshotels.com/royal-pacific-resort), [www.uomeetingsandevents.com](http://www.uomeetingsandevents.com)

### New-Build InterContinental Hotel Coming to San Diego

SAN DIEGO, CA — InterContinental Hotels Group announced the development of a new InterContinental Hotels & Resorts property in San Diego. Set to open in 2018, the 400-room hotel will be part of a multiphase, mixed-use development known as BRIC, on the former site of Lane Field in the North Embarcadero area of downtown San Diego.

The InterContinental San Diego hotel will feature a signature InterContinental Club Lounge, restaurant and lounge, fitness center and spa. The hotel will offer 21 suites and 23,000 sf of meeting space. There will be a significant amount of outdoor space for guests to take advantage of the beautiful San Diego weather, including a rooftop bar and outdoor pool overlooking the bay. Located just a quarter mile from the historic Gaslamp Quarter, the property will provide guests access to the most beautiful and exciting offerings of the expanding downtown San Diego districts, including the world-renowned San Diego Zoo, Balboa Park and beaches. [www.ihg.com](http://www.ihg.com)



A rendering of the new InterContinental Hotel in San Diego.

### IACC Unveils New Conference Format

NEW YORK, NY — Capping another year of unprecedented innovation and achievement, IACC introduced a ground-breaking new conference format in April, which attracted record attendance and was the first centralized New York City conference in the association's 35-year history. The IACC Americas Connect annual conference used multiple city locations, had a shorter duration and added significant new educational content.

Said IACC's CEO Mark Cooper, "At the end of last year's annual members conference, we promised radical change to this much-loved event, and we were delighted with the attendance and feedback we received from our delegates who attended from throughout the Americas and globally. Our goals were to stage an affordable event, in an innovative and accessible destination, offering education that is relevant to the needs of our members today. Our chapter board, our annual conference planning committee and the IACC staff took this to heart from day one in planning this year's members meeting."

IACC concluded the 2016 Connect event with a unique gathering of past global and chapter presidents, an event that had not occurred in decades. The past leaders represent the historic evolution of IACC, and they gathered to lend their support, experience and expertise to the new generation of organizational leaders as they further IACC's growth and evolution to maintain strategic relevance and significance in the small-to-medium-sized meetings industry.

[www.iacconline.org](http://www.iacconline.org)



COOPER

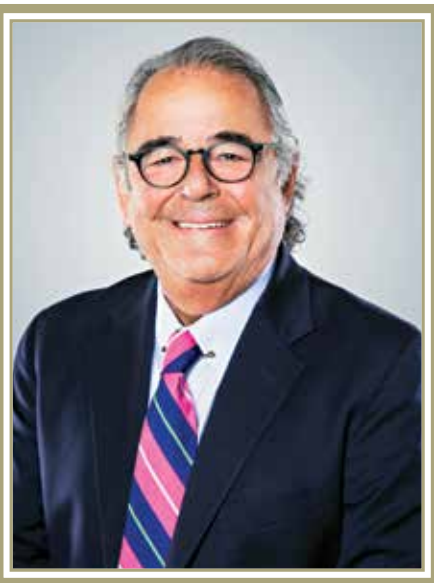
## Snapshots



Credits: 1 Caesars Entertainment 2 Jeff Anding 3,4 SITE 5 Kristina Schaefer 6 Simon Williams

**1** Roger Dow, (l) president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, with Caesars Entertainment's Senior Vice President of National Meetings & Events Michael Massari at events marking the first-ever Global Meetings Industry Day April 14 in Las Vegas. **2** Stephen Perry, president and CEO of New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, alongside Louisiana Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser as they announced the New Orleans' 2015 visitor numbers following a Mardi Gras-style parade through the French Quarter. **3** At SITE Nite Europe, hosted by the SITE Foundation, (l to r) Martin Lewis, managing director, CAT Publications; Jane Scaletta, AlliedPRA Orlando; John J. Iannini, CTC, CIS, vice president, meetings and events, America, Melia Hotels International; and Kevin Hinton, SITE Chief Excellence Officer. More than 350 SITE members, industry colleagues and IMEX hosted buyers gathered April 18 at the Kameha Suite, a magnificent villa located beside the Frankfurt Opera House. **4** Enjoying the evening of solidarity and celebration at SITE Nite Europe are (l to r) Jeannette Bangura, Your EventPlanner; Anita O'Boyle, SITE director of events; and Estefani Aguirre, SITE sponsorship and chapter relations. **5** Euromic, the destination management partnership, rebranded with a vivid new corporate identity unveiled at the euromic stand at IMEX in Frankfurt. Pictured are IMEX Group Chairman Ray Bloom (c) with Hasan Ding, president of euromic (l) and Rajeev Kohli, president of SITE. **6** Senior event professionals attended the inaugural Global Event Summit at the Gleneagles Hotel and Resort in Scotland following IMEX Frankfurt.





## Memories of Michael J. Hurwitz, CITE

Michael J. Hurwitz, CITE, the founder and chairman of United Incentives and a former president of SITE, died April 14, 2016, after a fierce fight against cancer. A graduate of Central High School and Penn State University, Mr. Hurwitz received many awards for excellence in his profession and has many business friends around the world who will remember him for his professionalism and dedication to world travel. He leaves behind his wife, Susan, his children Andy Hurwitz (Phyllis) and Lisa Hurwitz, and grandchildren Samson, Charlie and Julius Hurwitz, and Nathaniel, Henry and Eli Root.

Michael's energy, humor and dedication to his passions leave us with many profound, funny and beautiful memories. From his role professionalizing the incentive industry with his leadership of SITE, the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence, coun-

seling the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, his participation in numerous industry advisory boards, to the hundreds of thousands, or as he would often say "six figures," of smiles left on the faces of clients, Michael loved sharing those joys. His legacy includes a strong United Incentives and a team of people who share his passion for excellence and commitment to exceeding expectations. We will all miss him and hope the next time you experience a great incentive event you'll think of him fondly.

Michael authored numerous articles and lectured extensively on incentive marketing throughout much of the world. His advertising agency background brought into focus creativity that produced results. Michael earned the Certified Incentive Travel Executive (CITE) designation — the industry's highest recognition.

Funeral services were held April 18 at the Roosevelt Memorial Park Mausoleum Chapel, Trevose, Pennsylvania. Contributions in his memory may be made to the Pennsylvania S.P.C.A., 350 E. Erie Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19134.



### Fay Beauchine

President  
Travel Brojure  
www.brojure.com

#### He was a gift to us all...

I am serving as historian for SITE right now, so I have been collecting information. The personal comments are flowing in about Michael...most of them centering around his passion for SITE and the incentive travel industry, his wit, sense of humor and his mentorship for so many in our industry. Personally, I will miss him. He was a gift to all of us, and I feel a great sense of loss for our industry.

Mike and I were on the board together, and I remember his quest to make SITE more global in nature. He often said, "The sun does not rise in New York and set in California." He really wanted people to think beyond the United States and

understand that incentive travel was used all over the world to improve business results.

In 1990, during Mike's presidential year, the SITE International Conference was held in New York City and the last general session was held during a live session at the United Nations. Later, on the last day of the conference, Donald and Ivana Trump led the attendees up Fifth Avenue to The Plaza Hotel (which they had recently bought) for the final night gala. Joan Rivers spoke at the dinner that evening. We were all on top of the world about this conference. The excitement of New York, the UN, our international attendees, and then....the Trumps and Joan Rivers. What a memorable couple of days!

Also during 1990, the year of his presidency, the Master Measurement Model was published by SITE in conjunction with the American Productivity and Quality Center. We also published the SITE Incentive Travel Case Study Book (Puerto Rico made it possible). These were big accomplishments for SITE. The Mexico and Germany chapters of SITE were launched in Michael's year, two chapters that have shaped SITE's future.



### Christopher Perks

President  
The Opus Group  
www.theopusgrp.com

#### A very sad day...

A very sad day when we lost Michael Hurwitz. He was a great storyteller, funny, creative and a generous person. I was fortunate to have shared many experiences with Michael over the years. During his time on the SITE board and his presidency, he made his mark in the incentive industry as a unique thinker and as a natty dresser, even going sockless as he was known to do — including at black-tie dinners.

We were blessed to have Michael join us this past October at The Past Presidents of the SITE International Board of Directors meeting. And as I recall, in his immortal words on that occasion: "It's all about the branding and lasting impressions" as we unveiled the evolution of SITE's graphics and sipped a very good bottle of champagne. He was very proud of where we were. Little did we realize that for many of us that would be Michael's send-off to his fellow P.P.s.

On behalf of The Opus Group and my business partner, Lisa, our deepest condolences to Michael's family and associates. There will never be another one quite like him.



### Louise Hall Reider, CITE

President & Founder  
Louise Hall Reider & Company  
Global Past President, SITE  
First Chairman, Council of Past Presidents, SITE

#### A visionary with a great sense of humor...

When Michael Hurwitz, CITE, left this world, he took a big piece of me with him. He was my first mentor, believing in me and putting me on the long road to the eventual global leadership of SITE.

Michael exemplified everything good about SITE and the incentive industry at large. There are no words to adequately describe our loss, but these pop up when I think of the man he was: brilliant, creative thinker, ground breaker, risk taker, image maker, great debater, instigator and innovator!

This visionary man also had a great sense of humor. I remember with a smile his "weather report" from the top of the telephone pole at a ropes course in Santa Fe — he hated heights but climbed up anyway and made us all laugh.



### Jeff Broudy

President  
United Incentives Inc.  
www.unitedincentives.com

#### "Good enough never is."

Michael Hurwitz did not invent incentives, but his love for the industry helped it grow to where it is today. Whether educating tourist boards and hotels to the fundamentals of incentives, leading as president of SITE or sitting on advisory boards, he remained a passionate ambassador for incentives. He was proud of United Incentives and fostered a culture that believes trust and loyalty are the pillars of success and that a good team beats a great person. Michael believed, "good enough never is" and that philosophy continues to be carried out by the United Incentives team toward a successful future.



### Jane Schuldt

Founder  
World Marketing Group  
www.worldmarketinggroup.com

#### This is how I will remember Mike...

In 1990, culminating five years together on the SITE board, Michael Hurwitz handed me the SITE president's gavel, punctuating his year as president and marking the beginning of mine.

But before this, Mike handed me so much more. His love of life, the joy of family, a passion for the business, a penchant for teaching others, a talent for written communication, a flair for the dramatic, a wicked sense of humor, a love of speed in boats and cars, an endearing self-deprecation, an ability to not take himself too seriously, and a fierce loyalty for his friends and staff.

On one of my last visits with Mike in his office, he walked me to a specific photo on the wall, one of many in his SITE memorabilia-filled office. It was a photo taken on the occasion of SITE's 25th anniversary — a client invitational held in Stockholm, Sweden, intentionally positioned the day after Nelson Mandela received his Nobel Peace Prize. He said it was his favorite photo because the people in the photo were his favorite people. His face revealed this same sentiment, one of genuine fondness for his friends and for an industry which he loved. He would look at this photo, his gaze lingering as the memories returned. His eyes would twinkle and a slight grin would appear as he recalled some pleasant, private moment, before he turned and sat down again to continue the conversation. That's how I choose to remember Mike. R.I.P. Michael. **C&IT**



## Hotels & Resorts

# Luxury Hotels With a Rich History

## Setting the Tone for a Momentous Meeting Experience

Meeting in historic, high-end resorts can leave attendees (and planners) feeling like they're being treated like royalty, with white-glove service, culturally rich, idyllic settings and experiences, and classic architecture and ambiance that evoke bygone eras.

The royalty rub-off is real: Many historic properties have hosted world leaders, and social and business events for celebrities and renowned corporate families such as the Vanderbilts, Fords, Morgans and Astors. Experience catering to the rich and famous is a big reason why these top-drawer hotels continue to be prime locations for corporate VIP guests, board members and clients.

The celebrated hotels provide plenty of local flavor with fascinating stories about famous people and events associated with the properties. The rich origins of historic hotels range from a hospital during the Civil War and a girls-only school to an army bachelors quarters and the home of a signer of the U.S. Constitution.

Many properties are National Historic Landmarks and have been recognized by the National Trust of Historic Hotels of America.

### Unique & Idyllic Settings

Some planners choose a historic property hotel because of its unique setting. That's a prime reason why Mary Kay Inc. returns year after year to Montauk Yacht Club Resort & Marina, located on a private waterfront in the East Hampton hamlet of Montauk, Long Island. The property specializes in small meetings and offers 106 guest rooms and two suites, including 23 villas.

Mary Kay has held a sales meeting at Montauk Yacht Club for the past 13 years. "We continue to have our function at the Montauk Yacht Club because it's beautiful, peaceful and tranquil," says Donna Clark-Driscoll, independent elite executive senior sales director and meeting planner for Mary Kay. "We love the quaintness and warmth of the property, being by the water and the lighthouse. My sales

force and visiting guests from all over the U.S. over the many years are in awe of the location."

Montauk Yacht Club's rich history was also attractive. The property was built in 1928 by businessman Carl Fisher, whose construction projects helped transform Miami from a small town into a major resort city. Fisher brought his vision to the sleepy seaside village of Montauk to create a resort destination for the rich and famous. Montauk Yacht Club's original membership included business greats J.P. Morgan, Vincent Astor, Edsel Ford, Harold Vanderbilt and Nelson Doubleday.

A tradition of catering to the rich and famous is still reflected in Montauk Yacht Club's service. "They remember and appreciate our business and it is evident each year," says Clark-Driscoll. "The hotel has always met our needs, from the doorman, onsite crew for AV and maintenance, to setup and picking up people at the train station if needed. They are also very professional in dress and appearance. That is extremely important to me."

Clark-Driscoll also was impressed with the property's nearly 10,000 sf of meeting space, which includes the newly renovated Farmhouse Ballroom and four other meeting rooms as well as breakout and outdoor spaces. "Ballrooms are open, spacious, bright and alive, and overlook the water," says Clark-Driscoll. "We had most of our activities on the premises, other than shopping, visiting the historic lighthouse and local restaurants."

Montauk Yacht Club's cuisine was also key factor. "The food is fabulous," she says. "Over the many years, they are always on trend and staffed properly with the finest chefs. All of my needs are met, including any food restrictions or allergies. Any time there may have been a small issue, it was taken care of immediately with no questions. I've never been disappointed."

Feedback from attendees is excellent every year. "I will continue to recommend the property," says Clark-Driscoll. "The staff has always been on top of making sure my event runs in a professional and fun way. On a personal note, I have also stayed there as a vacationer and loved it."

Another historic hotel with an idyllic setting is The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, at the southern edge of the Rocky Mountains. With Pikes Peak as a dramatic backdrop, this five-star grande dame of the Rockies was constructed and opened in 1918 by entrepreneur Spencer Penrose. The 5,000-acre property includes three championship golf courses, a spa, salon and fitness center, renowned tennis program, 26 shops and 185,000 sf of meeting and event space. Among the hotel's 20 restaurants is the Penrose Room, Colorado's only AAA Five Diamond, Forbes Five Star restaurant.

For incentives and executive retreats, the new Broadmoor Wilderness Experience features offsite venues including Cloud Camp, which just debuted The Overlook, a 1,500-sf meeting space. Situated atop Cheyenne Mountain, 3,000 feet above The Broadmoor, Cloud Camp is anchored by an 8,000-sf main lodge that accommodates 60 guests. The Wilderness Experience also features The Ranch at Emerald Valley and The Broadmoor Fishing Camp.

### A Milestone Meeting

A hotel doesn't have to be a centenarian for planners to consider it a historical landmark that perfectly matches a meeting. A Fortune 500 business held a gala meeting at the half-century-old Washington Hilton because of its modern historical significance and for another reason: The meeting, a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the company, coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Washington Hilton, which offers 110,000 sf of indoor and outdoor event and function space, including the 36,000-sf International Ballroom complex, which accommodates up to 2,670 guests.

The property also complemented the company's vision for the event. "Both spacious and affordable — and historically significant — the Washington Hilton offered the exact environment, staff and amenities we needed, all in an attractive, central location," says the event's planner. "All staff members seemed to go out of their way — in both big and small ways — to make sure we had a terrific meeting. The service was excellent."

The Washington Hilton's status as a property rich in late 20th century culture also was a factor. The hotel was seared into the national consciousness in part due to the failed assassination attempt of President Ronald Reagan in 1981 just outside the property. The ballroom hosts annual iconic events, including the National Prayer Breakfast and the White House Correspondents' Association dinner, which is attended by the sitting president of the United States, politicians and top celebrities. Rock music icons such as Jimi Hendrix and the Doors have performed in the ballroom.

The meeting at the Washington Hilton included several touches related to the hotel's history. "The first night, we had a cocktail reception that included a tour of the President's Walk (the path the president takes from the Presidential Holding Room to the International Ballroom, and features the Library of Congress' official portrait of every U.S. president and first lady)," says the company's planner.

Attendees also received a light historical touch: blueberry jelly beans. The flavor was created in honor of President Reagan's 1981 inauguration, which involved an inaugural ball held in the hotel's International Ballroom.

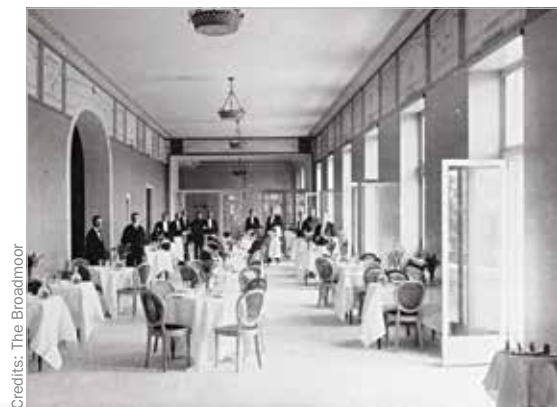
The meeting was a big hit. "Our attendees expected an inspiring event in a memorable location, and we truly believe that they received that," says the planner. "From the feedback we received, the attendees really enjoyed the hotel, as well as its staff, service, amenities and food."

### Iconic Stature and Service

Historic hotels that have it all — good rates, a great setting and ample meeting space — are attractive to planners, and that is precisely why one company chose The Fairmont Copley Plaza in Boston for a two-day meeting for 80 attendees. "Rate played a role in the selection, as well as the phenomenal location in the heart of Boston's Back Bay," says Jennifer Squeglia, CMP, owner of RLC Events Inc., a Warwick, Rhode Island full-service event and meeting planning company. "However, the iconic stature of The Fairmont was also a factor. About one-third of the attendees were from Europe, and we felt The Fairmont and its historic beauty would be of great appeal to our attendees, and it was."

The 383-room Fairmont Copley Plaza, which opened in 1912, has hosted nearly

The Fairmont Copley Plaza, which opened in 1912, has hosted nearly every U.S. president since Taft.



Credits: The Broadmoor



Then and now: The Broadmoor's Palm Court circa 1918 and today.



every United States president since Taft. Following a \$20 million renovation and restoration, the hotel remains themed around Boston's rich history and culture, and offers 23,000 sf of Renaissance-inspired meeting space, including the luxurious Oval Room ballroom, which features a sky and cloud ceiling mural. "Our general session was held in the Oval Room, which is a beautiful and historic room overlooking Copley Square Park that was perfect for

a group our size," says Squeglia. "People truly enjoyed the décor and view."

The staff's experience and knowledge of the group helped make the meeting special. "Several of the banquet servers have been at the property for over 20 years," says Squeglia. "I have done several programs there in the past, and they welcomed me back and took great care of our attendees. No request was too big or too small. The staff was gracious and accommodating."

The top-notch service contributed to the post-meeting feedback. "It was very positive," says Squeglia. "Everyone loved the hotel. The setting, food and location were what people said they enjoyed the most."

### Restorations and Renovations

Here is a summary of historic hotels that have undergone renewal, restoration or expansion while preserving their traditional look and feel.



A remount ceremony in 1928 at The Broadmoor.

**Loews Don CeSar Hotel** in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida, was recently named Best Historic Hotel (201–400 guest rooms) by Historic Hotels of America. The 277-room property, built in 1928, was a playground for notable figures such as famed attorney Clarence Darrow and author F. Scott Fitzgerald. Today, the Don CeSar features European grandeur amid renovated guest rooms, refreshed public spaces and the Spa Oceana along with award-winning dining.

**The Plaza New York**, one of the nation's most celebrated and historic hotels, has completed an extensive renovation project that includes a restored façade. The iconic property, constructed in 1907 and managed by Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, also underwent waterproofing, roofing repairs, and a thorough cleaning as well as restorations of deteriorated brick, marble and terra cotta.

The **Renaissance Cleveland Hotel**, which opened in 1918 as the Hotel

Cleveland, is undergoing a \$22 million renovation that includes the entire property, including guest rooms and public spaces. The renovation will pause prior to the Republican National Convention in July and continue afterwards.

The 277-room **St. Anthony Hotel San Antonio**, which opened in 1909, has completed a redesign and renovation that restored the property to its original grandeur. The renovation includes fully remodeled guest rooms and suites. The redesigned lobby features sculpted columns, Calacatta marble floors and a grand staircase. Public spaces feature new furniture, artwork, and restored chandeliers and torchieres. The rooftop pool and deck also were renovated. The St. Anthony is known as "the Waldorf on the Prairie" because it hosted celebrities such as John Wayne, who has a suite named after him.

The **Grand Hotel** on Mackinac Island, Michigan, which opened in 1887, recently updated 200 guest rooms and added Sushi Grand, Mackinac Island's first sushi restaurant. The Grand Hotel features 390 guest rooms and suites, including more than three dozen historic suites that are named after former U.S. presidents, first ladies and other historical periods and individuals.

**The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia**, housed in a historic building in Center City, is undergoing a \$24 million refresh that recently unveiled 26,000 sf of meeting space. Originally built as a reproduction of the Pantheon when it opened in 1908 as The Girard Trust Company, the building's original charm has been reinstated in conference spaces, and even the original bank vault now serves as a luxurious function room.

For planners looking to elevate the meeting experience, historic hotels will set the tone the minute attendees step inside their grand lobbies. These properties can complement the theme of a meeting, be the central element of the theme or simply serve as a unique and fascinating setting to enrich the experience of attendees who will take back priceless memories — and maybe even feel a part of history.

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# TOP Value Destinations

## Fresh-Eyed Planners Discover Hidden Gems From City to City

When it comes to meeting destinations, some choices are always popular. Las Vegas and Orlando consistently head the pack, and Sunbelt cities such as Houston and Phoenix also draw large numbers. The same goes for San Francisco, Seattle, Miami and many other cosmopolitan destinations.

But plenty of other possibilities await planners who seek lower costs or other features that enhance overall value.

Take Detroit. It might not top most people's list of attractive destinations, but a closer look reveals many positives and surprising benefits.

Melissa Cantwell, CMP, who plans meetings in her position as strategic partnership advisor for Houston-based Shell Oil, says cities such as Detroit may bring unexpected advantages.

"They offer different options that can surprise attendees," she says.

Cantwell notes that she was skeptical of coming to Detroit initially, but has grown to care about the city.

"It has some amazing architecture and a very rich history," she says. "It is not just about the auto industry."

### Great Values Abound in Detroit

Cost also is an important factor.

"There is great value in Detroit," Cantwell says. "There are many wonderful venues at great prices. Although it

can be a high labor market, you end up even or under, as the price of space is so reasonable."

By Mark Rowh

The focus of her annual meeting is a competition where students design, build and test energy-efficient vehicles. The four-day event includes a business forum that brings



An aerial view of Detroit's downtown riverfront.

together business leaders, government officials and NGOs to discuss energy-related issues.

She also appreciates the variety in after-hours activities.

"I like how I can have an event in an interesting setting that pushes learning and is also fun," she says. "You aren't taking them to another spa, perhaps you take them on a tour of the Ford plant

and talk about sustainability, or you go into the cold room at GM. Then you do a walking tour of downtown to look at the architecture."

She also says the city is much more than an auto production center, citing its music history and dining opportunities, among other attractions.

"The dining is amazing," she says. "I really like that I don't have to go to a chain to eat dinner. You can dine in so many new restaurants that are owned by people who live in the city."

A \$279 million renovation of Cobo Center, which features an impressive 2.4 million sf of space, has recently been completed. A new addition, Cobo Square, is a 50,000-sf exterior plaza and vehicle drop-off area for music, art, exercise programs, corporate game events and more.

The city's suburban convention center, Suburban Collection Showplace, will start construction later this year on a 200,000-sf addition planned for a 2017 opening. And work is underway on the M-1 rail streetcar, to be called the QLine, which will be completed early next year.

Recently added attractions include the state's only Legoland Discovery Center, Sea Life Michigan Aquarium and the new DNR Outdoor Adventure Center, which includes meeting space and is located along the Detroit Riverfront.

Cantwell says Detroit is a city on the rise.

"There are so many hidden gems in De-

troit," Cantwell says. "Forget everything you think you know about the city and take a look at it with fresh eyes. You will be surprised by the energy and creativity. You will also be surprised at the reasonable rates you can get."

### Baltimore Offers Diverse Cultural Offerings

Baltimore is another destination offering great value, says Adam Andersen, managing director, events for New Hope Network, a Boulder, Colorado-based firm specializing in healthy lifestyle products.

"It's convenient and centrally located to major metro areas," he says. "Accommodations are widespread and well-priced."

He has been coordinating meetings in the city since 2011. The yearly meetings are attended by 25,000 people and are the largest of their type on the East Coast.

"Baltimore has such a rich history and diverse cultural offerings," Andersen says. "It has amazing restaurants that fulfill a wide variety of interests."

The meetings are held in September, a popular time for attendees. Andersen says many enjoy evening networking events and outdoor activities ranging from major league baseball to running around the harbor.

He also says the cooperation from the CVB is consistently excellent. "They understand every market and adjust to the needs of every event."

All told, Baltimore offers much to consider, Andersen says. "It would be hard to have a meeting there and not be successful."

Another attraction is Mount Vernon Marketplace, one of Baltimore's newest food destinations. Opened in October 2015, this indoor market in historic Mount Vernon features a wide variety of offerings from local providers.

Looking to the future, Harbor Point is a downtown waterfront site now in the planning stages. Totaling 3 million sf of office, retail, residential and hotel space covering 27 acres, it will include 9.5 acres of waterfront parks.



An authentic crab feast in Baltimore, Maryland.

### Oklahoma City Has Something for Everybody

Oklahoma City is yet another attractive destination offering good value.

"It's centrally located in the United States, which makes accessibility easy," says Lauren Warkentine, who plans meetings as COO of Computer Rx, an IT firm in Moore, Oklahoma. "But more importantly, once people get to Oklahoma City, they love it and want to return."

She says visitors typically remark that they feel safe and enjoy the city's cleanliness.

*"Baltimore has such a rich history and diverse cultural offerings. It has amazing restaurants that fulfill a wide variety of interests."*



Adam Andersen  
Managing Director, Events  
New Hope Network  
Boulder, CO

"The people are friendly, and everything is in walking distance from the convention center," she adds.

Her company's event, Idea Exchange, typically has about 600 attendees representing 400 pharmacies and 50 vendors. The event is held in the Cox Convention Center ballrooms along with hotel meeting rooms.

Warkentine touts the city's affordabil-

ity, but adds that cost is only part of its attractiveness.

"Oklahoma City offers meeting planners great space at an affordable rate," she says. "But beyond that it offers a first-class city for attendees to experience." She notes that the Boathouse district provides active opportunities to canoe, kayak, paddleboard or complete a ropes course. "There are great places to relax and enjoy live music, good food and drinks in Bricktown," she says. "There really is something for everyone in Oklahoma City."

Meeting space is plentiful. The Cox Convention Center offers 21 meeting rooms, 100,000 sf of exhibit space, a 25,000-sf Grand Ballroom, and a 15,000-seat arena. Other space includes the Chevy Bricktown Event Center, accommodating 1,800 people for receptions, the 18,000 seat Chesapeake Energy Arena, and the Devon Boathouse for up to 350 guests at receptions.

Slated for completion later this year is a new expo building at Oklahoma State Fair Park. Replacing the current Travel & Transportation Building, it will have 201,000 sf of expo space. In addition, the facility will include a huge hangar door for oversized equipment access.

Indicative of the city's progressive outlook is a new civic center for which funding is assured through a sales tax increase. The \$252 million project will offer nearly 200,000 sf of exhibit space, a 35,000-sf ballroom and 50,000 sf of additional meeting space. Completion is planned for 2019.





Credit: Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau

Bricktown, the entertainment district just east of downtown Oklahoma City, includes the Chickasaw Bricktown Ballpark, the navigable Bricktown Canal and much more.

### More Noteworthy Value Destinations

Progress also is the name of the game in **Cincinnati, Ohio**. The Queen City is experiencing significant hotel growth with both updates of historic downtown buildings and first-time hotel developments coming on board. In 2014 and 2015, some 572 new rooms were added to the downtown market, and six new hotels are planned over the next two years.

A new venue opened at Smale Riverfront Park, which itself offers an attractive setting for outdoor activities. The Annie W. & Elizabeth M. Anderson Pavilion operates as a banquet center suitable for corporate functions.

Just across the Ohio River is the two-year-old New Riff Distillery, which is now the northernmost point on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail. It offers daily tours, a 150-person event room with full bar and roof deck, and an event room for up to 50 guests.

In September, the first phase of the Cincinnati Streetcar will be completed. Linking riverfront attractions to the northern downtown neighborhoods, the 3.6-mile loop route will include stops at more than 18 popular attractions including museums, entertainment districts and the Duke Energy Convention Center.

**Atlantic City, New Jersey**, has long been a desirable destination. “The value one receives from Atlantic City is that we have world-class headline entertainment every weekend, free beaches, and

tremendous midweek value on hotel rooms and suites in our casino resorts and hotel properties,” says Jim Wood, president and CEO of Meet AC.

Wood and others point to the Atlantic City Boardwalk as the city’s most well-known feature. The historic attraction spans continuously over a five-mile stretch, and work is underway to extend the inlet section even farther.

The city offers more than 15,000 hotel rooms. Major properties include eight casino resorts along with several hotels that offer beachfront and Atlantic Ocean views.

Now under construction at the Steel Pier, Atlantic City’s 1,000-foot-long amusement pier, is a 200-foot-high observation wheel with climate-controlled gondolas. The project is scheduled for completion later this year.

Also attractive is Atlantic City’s expanding arts and cultural scene. A rich selection of festivals and events includes beach concerts with big-name performers, a seafood festival, a beer and music festival, an “insane inflatable 5k” and annual air show.

Located within easy access of much of the country’s population, **Charlotte, North Carolina**, stands as a leading example of today’s progressive South. Home to a growing number of corporate and association headquarters, the city also has become a favorite for meeting planners seeking outstanding value.

The NASCAR Hall of Fame, which is connected to the convention center, fea-

tures historic stock cars, interactive exhibits and racing memorabilia. It’s available for dinners and corporate meetings, accommodating groups from 10 to 2,400.

Along with a wide selection of hotels, the city offers a variety of entertainment and meeting venues. In the past year, Bojangles’ Coliseum has made significant improvements in seating, signage, concessions and technology. The historic facility just celebrated its 60th anniversary.

Other attractions include the Duke Mansion with more than 8,000 sf of meeting space, Discovery Place hands-on science museum, the U.S. National Whitewater Center and Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden. The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art accommodates up to 140 guests for sit-down functions and 225 for receptions.

In **Minneapolis, Minnesota**, planners enjoy a wide range of meeting options. At the Minneapolis Convention Center, a facility-wide renovation is underway.

A new visitor center located downtown offers not only the standard info for newcomers, but also a retail section featuring works by Minnesota artists. It’s also the temporary home of the city’s well-known Mary Tyler Moore statue.

An interesting appeal to meeting planners is a promotion dubbed “Minneapolis in 24 Hours” in which planners take an online quiz to determine in which category of Minneapolis meeting planner they fit. Each category (“Parks to Prada,” “Muskie to Monet,” “Four-star to Stargazing” and “Big Games to Household Names”) has an associated itinerary for spending a day in the city.

You can’t get much more Southern than **Mobile, Alabama**. Rich in history and attractions, the city offers more than 6,000 hotel rooms and a number of meeting spaces.

From its waterfront location, the Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center offers easy access to hotels, restaurants and shopping.

With a long history that includes the original Mardi Gras and its attractive Gulf Coast locale, the city offers plenty of opportunities for visitors to enjoy after-hours activities. **C&IT**



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# Taking On Terrorism



## Safety & Security at Meetings in Europe

**M**aybe it's inevitable. At some point, a large group will be meeting in a ballroom somewhere overseas and there will be a terrorist attack at the hotel, with hundreds or even thousands of casualties.

Or you may be sitting peacefully at home and when your big-screen TV suddenly topples onto your head and bam! You're a goner.

In fact, the second of those two possibilities is the most likely — by far. TVs kill 55 times more U.S. citizens annually than do Islamic terrorists. You also are more likely to blow yourself up with fireworks than be killed by jihadist bombers. You are 35,079 times more likely to die of heart disease and 33,842 more likely to die from cancer than from a terrorist at-

tack. Your chances also are greater of being killed by lightning, guns and cars.

By Christine Loomis

That's the statistical context, and all of us in the travel industry should keep it in mind as we consider whether we are safe meeting in Europe these days. But it's not to suggest that planners shouldn't develop strategic safety and security measures when meeting overseas, or that they

shouldn't ensure that the international hotels, convention bureaus and DMOs they work with also have solid measures in place.

### A New Environment

Terri Woodin, CMP, senior director global meeting services, Meeting Sites Resource, based in Irvine, California, puts it this way: "The attacks in Europe have complicated the work of meeting professionals, from the conveniences that have to be sacrificed and security and safety issues to legal issues, insurance on meetings when something happens and contract clauses that protect both sides. We are in a new environment where precautions are necessary."

She says the most important piece of advice she can offer others is to be prepared for what can happen, to have contingency plans for knowing where your attendees are and to have communication plans in place — including if technology is or is not working.

Ellie MacPherson, senior vice president with Strategic Meetings + Incentives, based in Toronto, concludes that working methodically in advance to minimize risk and maximize safety and security in a destination is crucial. "Take a structured approach to risk management in advance," she says. "Identify the risks, assess the impact on events, determine the potential consequences of the risks, establish methods to reduce risks and create an emergency response plan of action."

While noting that it's not possible to mitigate all risk, MacPherson says that with proper planning it can be managed.

"Pre-assessment of the destination and all facilities is a must," she says. "Conduct a 'risk register' and create an emergency response plan including clear definitions of responsibilities both abroad and at your home office in the event of an emergency. Depending on the destination, it may be prudent to enlist professional risk management and security professionals as well as corporate security of the company hosting the program."

In addition to putting procedures in

place well ahead of an event, MacPherson notes that security awareness and risk management must continue on arrival overseas. "In the destination, plans should be in place for medical emergencies, weather and natural disasters, government and labor unrest and disruption of transportation," she says.

Planners also should inspect important physical aspects of each location. "Be aware of proximity to main railway stations, the nearest metro stop, embassies or any area or aspect that may be perceived as a target," MacPherson says. "Know the exact location of the nearest hospital and trauma center. And know where your country's embassy is located as well as the embassies of any group members traveling on other foreign passports."

### Vetting Vendors

Having a solid understanding of the safety and security measures of



*"The attacks in Europe have complicated the work of meeting professionals. ...We are in a new environment where precautions are necessary."*

Terri Woodin, CMP, Senior Director, Global Meeting Services  
Meeting Sites Resource, Irvine, CA

partners and vendors overseas also is critical. "A complete review of all safety and security practices should take place with the head of hotel security during the pre-con," MacPherson says. "Review of measures for fire and medical emergencies, and assessing if the grounds and premises are patrolled by security 24/7" also are important.

The good news is that European destinations and organizations typically already have solid measures in place, and have for a long time.

### Brussels Aftermath

Hugo Slimbrouck, director of strategic partnerships, Ovation Global DMC, MCI Group, has a unique perspective on terrorism. He's based in Brussels, where coordinated terrorist attacks in March left 32 victims dead and hundreds injured. Yet he sees no reason for groups

to avoid Belgium, or the rest of Europe for that matter.

"In our company, MCI, and our DMC brand, Ovation, we have been using state-of-the-art standards on health and safety for many years already. The recent events have proved again that we are right in doing so."

Related specifically to the 2016 attacks in his city, Slimbrouck notes, "Authorities reacted very well with clear communication and up-to-date travel information to the industry, which we shared with clients. The CVB issued updates on a regular basis related to the travel situation and issued FAQ documents to help everyone in the industry cope with questions from clients and guests, especially those who were trapped in the city due to travel restrictions and the airport being closed for two weeks."

He also points out that while Brussels has been at peace since World War

II, other countries, including Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom, have dealt with severe threats for more than 20 years. "These countries have kept on being top-ranking destinations for visitors and tourists," he notes.

"The chance that this is going to happen again is extremely small when you compare it to people being killed by firearms in any U.S. city. In the U.S., you may want to stay away from certain high-crime neighborhoods. The same applies all over the world. Europe is still a very peaceful destination as a whole."

Slimbrouck believes strongly that the key to good security lies in excellent communication, working with local authorities and continued vigilance — not moving groups from areas where attacks have occurred. "There is no reason to move an incentive group out of one city and bring it to another. People just need



# Safety & Security Best Practices

Culled from experts, these tips are a place to start for planners organizing a meeting overseas.

- Approach safety and security pragmatically rather than emotionally.
- Develop plans for a variety of specific possible scenarios.
- Work closely with local authorities to develop safety and security protocols.
- Consider hiring security experts onsite.
- Ask hotels and other meeting venues about their specific safety and security protocols; meet with security personnel.
- Never publish itineraries.
- Secure and manage access to attendee data and personal information as well as financial information; shred sensitive documents rather than simply dropping them in the trash.
- Consider mini coaches or vans rather than large motor coaches for transport in order to maintain a lower profile, even though it likely will increase cost.
- Remove identifying signage from buses and vans.
- Be sure security measures are not too predictable, making it easier for them to be breached.
- Direct hotels to not deliver luggage to a room unless the guest is inside to receive it.
- Provide all attendees with emergency contact information, including a phone number for regular hours as well as for “out of hours.”
- Be vigilant about badges and direct attendees to tell you immediately if a badge is lost. — CL

to stay vigilant and keep their eyes open. That’s what we do who live here.”

## Destination Risk Assessment

For MCI and Ovation, vigilance includes a thorough assessment of each destination for risk. MCI relies on professional evaluation from Global Warning System, a security service that provides detailed, real-time data for a city in terms of geopolitical and criminal factors, terrorism and natural disasters. MCI also has developed its own proprietary Event Safety and Sustainability Tool (ESST), mandatory for every event.

***“The chance that this (Brussels attack) is going to happen again is extremely small when you compare it to people being killed by firearms in any U.S. city. ....Europe is still a very peaceful destination as a whole.”***

**Hugo Slimbrouck**, Director of Strategic Partnerships  
Ovation Global DMC, MCI Group, Brussels, Belgium

The ESST protocol requires that Ovation team members be familiar with security and safety measures in place at hotels and other venues they use. With ESST, an event team produces a report based on 10 comprehensive criteria, from food safety to venue security to issues related to transport. Following evaluation, each event is given a “risk” level from one (negligible) to six (critical),

with responses in place to make changes or to cancel a program as required. If situations change during an event due to geopolitical turmoil, the assessment is continually revised in real time, and the company’s global health and safety director works with the team to minimize risk factors.

While safety measures were already in place in Brussels in March, Slimbrouck says the attacks provided an opportunity to evaluate and update them, something Visit Brussels also has done. In a release titled “Why you should keep organizing your events in Brussels,” the



convention bureau noted that controls at airports and public transportation stations have been increased, as have military and police presence on the streets, making Brussels extremely safe yet without impacting “the quality of stay” for foreign visitors.

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) also has a risk assessment tool. The GBTA Foundation, focused on

education and research, announced in April the launch of its new Travel Risk Management Maturity Model (TRM3) Self Assessment Tool, created in partnership with iJet International.

“The single biggest issue for our members right now is duty of care,” noted Michael W. McCormick, GBTA executive director and COO, in the launch announcement. “A recent lightning poll survey of our global members following the terror attacks in Brussels showed 20 percent of organizations do not have a risk management plan in place and an additional 8 percent are unsure if they have a plan. Clearly there is work that still needs to be done. The new TRM3 tool is designed to help companies evaluate their risk management program and identify opportunities for improvement.”

This self-assessment tool, available to GBTA members, looks at nine categories: policies and procedures, education and training, risk assessment, risk disclosure, risk monitoring, response and recovery, notification, data management and program communication. Based on the answers supplied, it rates a program from Level 1, defined as reactive, up to Level 5, defined as optimized and indicating that the travel risk program is integrated throughout the organization.

## Emergency Preparedness Plan

While MCI has developed its own proprietary risk management tools, not every organization needs to do that. Host Global Alliance, a worldwide consortium of destination management companies, now offers a standardized Emergency Preparedness Plan for all of its DMC members.

“Emergency preparedness is a serious concern in the present event marketplace, and our job as an alliance is to ensure that our clients and DMCs are having the necessary conversations while planning their programs,” said Marty MacKay, DMCP, president of HGA, in a press release about the plan. “While typically those conversations pertain to décor, tours and event management, they also need to include a preset plan in the event of an emergency. All too often emergencies are not thought of until they happen. As DMCs, an important value we provide our clients is risk avoidance or mitigation, and HGA has taken the lead to ensure that our portfolio of DMCs have a comprehensive plan in the event of an emergency.”

HGA worked for months developing templates related to preparedness. Its strategic initiative creates common language, processes and communications that allow for effective leadership in the event of an emergency. The globally standardized plan includes details on the procedures to follow in the event of a crisis, emergency or incident during a program. Additionally, it outlines how to safeguard against and handle cyber security issues that may arise.

In London, which historically has had its share of terrorist incidents yet remains a generally safe European destination, Spectra, a local DMC represented by Minneapolis-based World Marketing Group, has added heightened security protocols to its already comprehensive basic security plan. At the top of the list: mandating that all attendees wear their badges or other ID at functions and on buses or be denied access. It seems so obvious, but sometimes it’s

the basics fallen by the wayside that leave groups vulnerable.

Spectra also requests the full names, passport numbers and home addresses of participants, as well as a contact number and email address of a friend or relative back home who can be contacted in an emergency. All travel staff and guides are asked to keep their mobile phones on at all times, and bus drivers remain in the vehicle at all times with the doors closed prior to loading and while guests are not in the vehicle. Spectra keeps a dedicated mobile phone available and on so attendees can contact someone from the staff at all times. And if any attendees decide to not attend a function or activity, they are asked to tell the Spectra staff where, exactly, they plan to be.

## Communication Is Key

It’s easy to see that all of the experts who offer guidance on security planning



***“Pre-assessment of the destination and all facilities is a must. Conduct a ‘risk register’ and create an emergency response plan including clear definitions of responsibilities both abroad and at your home office.”***

**Ellie MacPherson**, Senior Vice President  
Strategic Meetings + Incentives, Toronto, ON

and risk management come together on one critical point: communication. It’s imperative. That includes communication between event organizers and hotel security, local authorities and attendees. It includes communication between staff at an overseas event and those in the home office. It includes access for organizers to devices available to keep communication flowing at a conference even in the event of a natural disaster or terrorist act. Perhaps most important, it includes honest, direct communication about the fears and challenges terrorism and other safety and security emergencies present to the meetings industry. If challenges aren’t acknowledged, how can they be overcome?

Soon after the Brussels attacks, David McMillin wrote an eloquent article on *pcma.org* titled “Confronting the Realities of Travel in the Terrorism Era.”

“Mali, Paris, Tunisia, The Ivory Coast, Boston, Istanbul, Brussels — the list of beautiful places around the world marred by horrific violence seems to grow longer each week ....It’s time for us to start having a real dialogue about what the state of international security means for our organizations and our attendees.

“I’m not writing this to play into the fear game. I don’t plan on changing my personal approach to exploring the world because of risks that I can’t control or ideologies that I can’t understand. But there are people who will adjust their travel plans, and there are people who will watch the news and think they need to stay home. As business event professionals, hoteliers, convention centers and destinations, we should be transparent and straightforward in our communications with them. Let them know that safety is the number-one

concern. Acknowledge that risks do exist. Make sure they know that your organization is taking every step possible to keep them safe so they can continue to feel the benefits of being a traveler.”

Slimbrouck also sees communication as critical related to travel and meetings in Europe as a whole and especially in Brussels, a city he loves and that remains incredibly safe in spite of the March events.

“The overall message is that the city is safe, and the meetings industry at large employs a lot of people who are passionate about their jobs and whose professional activities are part of not only the wealth of the country and Europe but also part of their happiness. If we stop doing business in Brussels, we will lose jobs and passionate people and then terror and unfairness will have won.”

Amen to that.

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## Golden Opportunities for Meetings

There's a saying that's available on t-shirts, art prints and posters that says, "California is always a good idea." Judging by the popularity The Golden State has attained as a meeting destination, many planners and attendees would agree — and maybe even grab one of those t-shirts to take back home.

California is one of those versatile destinations where a group could meet over and over again, yet have a totally different experience each time. From San Jose all the way down the coast to San Diego, virtually every type of hotel, venue, setting and activity can be found here under the California sun.

By Karen Brost



## SAN JOSE

As home to the busy Silicon Valley, it's not surprising that San Jose offers excellent airlift. In addition to San Jose International Airport (SJC), the area also is served by the San Francisco and Oakland airports. Combined, the three airports offer 1,400 flights per day. As an added advantage for attendees, SJC offers free high-speed wireless Internet throughout the airport, and 25 percent of the seats have power outlets built in.

San Jose has a compact, walkable downtown with more than 200 dining and entertainment options, and it claims to be one of the safest, cleanest big cities in America. In addition to offering more than 90 hotels and the 367,000-sf San Jose McEnery Convention Center, the city

has a variety of unique venues for private events, including historic theaters, museums, sports venues and the Happy Hollow Park and Zoo. The city also was the first to be selected to test Facebook's new Wi-Fi service called Terragraph, which will be installed in the downtown area later this year.

Planners searching for a venue that reflects the Silicon Val-

ley's spirit of innovation may want to book an event at The Tech Museum of Innovation, a 132,000-sf venue that offers hundreds of exhibits in seven halls on three levels as well as an Imax Dome Theater and a rooftop terrace. The venue, which is within walking distance of the convention center and downtown San Jose hotels, defines itself as "the most inventive place on earth and a showcase of the latest blockbuster exhibits, high-tech gizmos and wondrous gadgets that continue to define Silicon Valley."

Team San Jose has developed a unique planning service model. "Team San Jose's one-stop sales solution gives you one contact to book your entire event in San Jose," says Mark

McMinn, director of sales and destination services for Team San Jose. "We provide all your destination needs from a CVB perspective as well as from a convention center perspective. We manage hotel room blocks and housing, convention center bookings and event services, customized food and beverage menus, marketing support and technically savvy special events." ■



Credit: Na'im Bevhah  
The Tech Museum of Innovation.



## Grows On Trees **HERE**

Bright people meet in San Jose, the smartest city in America - as named by the Today Show. San Jose leads the nation in patent generations. The Valley's palpable sense of dreams turned to revolutionary reality is enough to inspire every group visiting Silicon Valley. Meet in San Jose and connect to the best free Wi-Fi experience in the nation. Our Wickedly Fast Free Wi-Fi meets the demand of the largest tech companies in the world and enables complete connectivity and maximum productivity. San Jose is the birthplace of big ideas. We invite you to meet, connect, and innovate here.

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# MONTEREY

When spectacular scenic beauty, history and sustainability are on the agenda, Monterey is a natural choice for meetings and events. Food and beverage also plays a starring role here, since there are more than three dozen wineries in the area, and the abundant farms in the Salinas Valley have earned Monterey County the nickname the “Salad Bowl of the World.” When it comes to the fresh and local cuisine trend, it’s hard to get better than that.

“Monterey County is the ideal location for corporate meetings and events,” says Tammy Blount, president and CEO of the Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Set on California’s Central Coast, planners will find that our destination



Credit: Monterey County CVB

Cannery Row offers dining, shopping, entertainment and more.

offers multiple options and activities for every group’s size and budget. The county has a legacy of hosting innovative meetings and provides a setting that inspires leaders to open minds and create new beginnings for their teams.”

Monterey is a “bucket list” destination for golfers, with 26 public and private courses, including the legendary Pebble Beach, being located in the area. It’s also a haven for nature-lovers. Monterey County has 99 miles of shoreline, and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is so expansive that at its center lies an underwater canyon that’s twice as deep as the Grand Canyon. Attendees can take a break and view the local sea life at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, a world-class facility that is home to 300,000 marine plants and animals and includes a million-gallon tank that portrays the open ocean. It also can be booked as a spectacular venue for private corporate events.

History buffs in the group will enjoy following in the footsteps of award-winning author John Steinbeck who was inspired by characters he met at the real Cannery Row in Monterey to write his popular novel by the same name. And here’s a bit of fun trivia: a young woman named Norma Jean (who later became known as Marilyn Monroe) was crowned “Artichoke Queen” in this area in 1948.

In response to the market’s demand for more flexible meeting space, the city of Monterey has begun a \$60 million renovation of the Monterey Conference Center (MCC). It is the largest capital improvement project in the city’s history. In addition to creating more flexible meeting space, the project also will give the MCC more usable prefunction space, and its technology and systems will be upgraded. Upon its completion, the project will give groups the opportunity to hold multiple meetings in a LEED-certified building. Construction got underway in December and a grand reopening is currently scheduled for spring 2017. The two hotels located adjacent to the MCC, the 379-room Portola Hotel & Spa and the Monterey Marriott, which has 319 rooms and 22 suites, will remain open during the construction period.

“Monterey’s scenic beauty and unique characteristics provide inspiration and enhance the desire of meeting planners to book their conferences in our extraordinary destination,” Blount explains. “This renovation will provide the advanced facility sought by meeting planners to complement their memorable meeting and destination experience.”

## San Francisco

North of Monterey and San Jose, the City by the Bay is known for its unique neighborhoods and thriving arts, cultural and food scenes.

The San Francisco Travel Association (SFTA), the destination marketing organization for the city, has introduced several unique partnerships among hotels that are designed to offer planners access to greater amounts of meeting space and guest rooms than a single hotel can provide. According to the SFTA, the Meetings Neighborhood Network Connections program makes it possible for planners to create “micro-citywide” conventions and events.

The San Francisco Downtown Connection includes four adjacent hotels — the Hilton San Francisco Union Square, Park 55 San Francisco - a Hilton Hotel, the Hotel Nikko San Francisco and the Handlery Union Square — all located in the city’s popular Union Square area. Among them, they offer nearly 200,000 sf of event space and up to 2,200 rooms on peak nights.

The Nob Hill Connection, located in an upscale, centrally located part of the city, consists of five luxury properties — the Fairmont San Francisco, Intercontinental Mark Hopkins San Francisco, Stanford Court San Francisco, The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco and the Scarlet Huntington. Combined with The Masonic event venue, this connection offers more than 170,000 sf of function space and up to 1,400 guest rooms on peak night.

Other Meetings Neighborhood Network Connections include the Union Square Alliance, which includes The Westin St. Francis and the Grand Hyatt San Francisco, and the SOMA One Connection (SOMA stands for South of Market) comprised of the Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco, San Francisco Marriott Marquis and Park Central Hotel San Francisco. ■

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As California's largest city by far, Los Angeles has plenty to offer meeting groups. Darren K. Green, senior vice president, sales, for the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board explains, "One of LA's major differentiators is our branding as the entertainment capital of the world. We truly roll out the red carpet for corporate meetings in a bounty of ways including our ability to offer unique 'only-in-LA' venues such as The Studios at Paramount and the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.



Credit: Populous and HMC Architects

Rendering of the Los Angeles Convention Center expansion.

Additionally, getting around Los Angeles has become much more convenient thanks to our Metro system. Whether attendees are interested in seeing the stars along the legendary Hollywood Walk of Fame, enjoying the beach or exploring our booming culinary scene downtown, they can get there stress-and car-free with Metro."

In 2015, LA attracted a record number of visitors from around the world — 45.5 million — and hosted 350 events at the Los Angeles Convention Center (LACC). But this is not a city that is content to rest on its laurels. Nearly 5,000 more hotel rooms are slated to be added between now and 2018. One of the most noteworthy developments, the 73-story Wilshire Grand Center, scheduled to open in 2017, will be the tallest skyscraper in LA. It will include the 900-room InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown hotel along with outdoor space and exterior plazas, restaurants, businesses and nightlife offerings.

Creativity just seems to be in the water in LA as is evidenced by the city's wide range of unique event venues. One is the Petersen Automotive Museum, which features a dramatic glass-and-steel contemporary design, a rooftop deck that delivers panoramic views of the Hollywood Hills and 50,000 sf of event space. The museum, which was completely redesigned in December, is dedicated to showcasing the history, industry and artistry of the automotive world and includes 22 galleries filled with interactive displays and exhibits.

Not to be outdone is the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall, which offers several spaces for private events. The venue's striking architecture features a series of stainless steel panels that mimic sails billowing in the wind. The main auditorium can seat more than 2,200 guests.

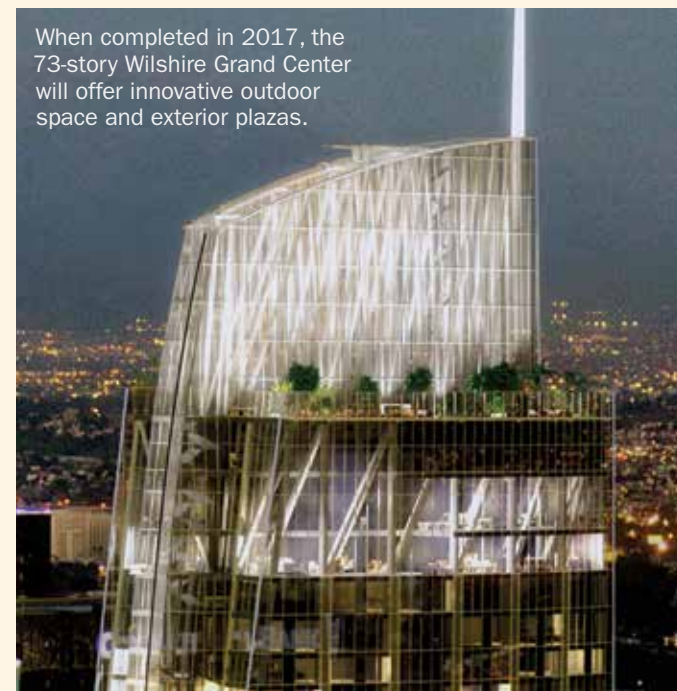
When it's time to give attendees the star treatment, The Dolby Theatre just might fit the bill (or the playbill as the case may be). The venue's 25,000-sf, art deco-style Ray Dolby Ballroom is the site of the annual Governors Ball, the star-powered gala that follows the Academy Awards ceremony each year. It can host up to 1,800 guests for a seated function and it has 10,000 sf of outdoor prefunction space that offers panoramic views of Hollywood, LA and the Pacific.

For a venue with a more rustic, Western-style ambience, there's Sunset Ranch Hollywood, the only horse ranch in the greater LA area. Promising "the best view in Hollywood," the ranch offers "Best View and BBQ" sunset trail rides and is available to host private events under the stars and the legendary Hollywood sign.

Being the home of Hollywood, LA has always had a magical appeal, but now there's a new kid in town: The Wizarding World of Harry Potter opened in April at Universal Studios Hollywood. It can host private events with up to 2,000 attendees who can explore Hogwarts castle, visit the shops of Hogsmeade and experience the wizardry of rides like the Flight of the Hippogriff and Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey.

Another new venue is scheduled to open in June. Being billed as "the only way to view LA," SkySpace LA will be California's tallest open-air observation deck and will offer panoramic, 360-degree views of the city from its location on floors 69 and 70 of the iconic U.S. Bank Tower in downtown Los Angeles. The venue, which will offer 3,500 sf of flexible space that can accommodate up to 350 guests, will be available for private corporate event bookings.

Coming in 2017 is the highly anticipated opening of the



When completed in 2017, the 73-story Wilshire Grand Center will offer innovative outdoor space and exterior plazas.

Credit: Wilshire Grand



Credit: Petersen Automotive Museum

The Petersen Automotive Museum, which was totally redesigned in December, offers 50,000 sf of event space in 22 galleries.

Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, a six-story facility that will occupy the historic Wilshire May Company building next to the campus of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Being described as "the world's leading movie museum," the attraction will house the academy's massive collection of photographs, film and video assets, screenplays, posters and production and costume design drawings. It also will feature special event spaces and more than 1,400 special collections that showcase the work of film legends such as Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, Alfred Hitchcock and John Huston.

The LACC is in the midst of a major modernization and expansion project that will increase its exhibit and function space from its current size of 870,000 sf to more than 1.2 million sf. The project, which is in its early stages, is being designed to attract larger conventions and add the capability to host multiple, large-scale events at one time. Construction will be done in two phases, with the final phase expected to be completed in 2020. Sustainability is an important priority for the expansion, and the design team is committed to ensuring that the project will meet the standards of a LEED Gold Certified facility. Plans also call for including an onsite hotel with at least 1,000 rooms in order to increase the number of hotel rooms available within walking distance of the convention center.

The team at the LA Tourism & Convention Board offers planners a full menu of support services, including advice on creating authentic, "only in LA" experiences and finding the right accommodations, facilities and venues for anything from small meetings to large citywide events. The organization's media relations team also can help planners generate buzz for their events by providing contacts for local media, press releases and access to a multimedia library.



The highly anticipated Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, which opens in 2017, will offer special event spaces.

## Anaheim

Already well known as the home of Disneyland Resort and Disney California Adventure Park, this city 30 miles south of LA has plenty of other unique event venues to consider, as well. The House of Blues, currently located in Downtown Disney, is relocating to a larger venue at the Anaheim GardenWalk dining, shopping and entertainment complex. The larger venue is scheduled to open this summer with an expanded main concert hall, an intimate theater called The Cambridge Room and a new VIP Foundation Room club.

The Anaheim Packing House, which was built in 1919 to serve as an orange and lemon packing house for Sunkist, has now been restored to serve as Orange Country's first gourmet



Credit: SkySpace LA

SkySpace LA, which debuts this June, will offer 360-degree views at 1,000 feet above downtown, and event space for 350 people.

food hall. The building's original hardwood flooring and much of its authentic character have been preserved. The Packing House includes a large central atrium used for dining that is surrounded by more than two dozen cafés and kiosks, and a dining porch spans the length of the building.

Since the Anaheim Convention Center (ACC) opened in 1967, it has undergone six expansions to keep up with the growing demands of the meetings and conventions industry. The ACC is now embarking on its seventh expansion plan. Designed to add 200,000 additional sf of flexible meeting and event space, the project is slated for completion in the summer of 2017.

In Anaheim hotel news, Orange County's first JW Marriott is being built next to the Anaheim GardenWalk. With a projected opening date in 2018, the 12-story hotel will include 466 guest rooms. ■





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Located 45 miles south of LA and 90 miles north of San Diego, Irvine is in an ideal position to offer meeting groups plenty of dining, entertainment and shopping opportunities. "America's safest big city is conveniently located in the center of Orange County and easily accessible by car or via John Wayne Airport," says Demea Metcalf, di-



rector of sales for Destination Irvine. "Our 16 Irvine hotels offer nearly 3,800 sleeping rooms and more than 138,000 sf of meeting space, ideal for corporate meetings of 10 to 1,200 people." John Wayne/Orange County Airport offers non-stop service to more than 20 cities across the U.S. as well as easy access to the area's hotels and attractions.



Credit: Lyon Air Museum

Special events are hosted at the Lyon Air Museum amidst vintage aircraft and vehicles from the World War II era.

For offsite events, Irvine offers plenty of options such as Bowlmor Lanes, a hip, upscale bowling venue ideal for fun teambuilding activities. The Marconi Automotive Museum

features a \$30 million collection of historic, exotic and classic cars. It can be booked for everything from networking events to gala dinners to theme parties. The Lyon Air Museum, located on the west side of John Wayne Airport, is available to host private events where guests can mingle amidst vintage aircraft and vehicles from the World War II era. And the Orange County Great Park Picnic Lawn offers 50,000 sf of space ideal for teambuilding and other outdoor activities.

When attendees have some downtime, they may want to head to one of Irvine's shopping centers. Fashion Island, which overlooks the Pacific, offers a blend of luxury, designer and specialty stores along with a variety of dining opportunities, many of them outdoors. Irvine Spectrum Center contains more than 120 stores and a 21-screen movie theater.

For being located in a large urban area, Irvine boasts a surprising amount of open space where attendees can take a break and enjoy nature and the local wildlife. The city's original planners understood the ecological importance of having open spaces, so visitors today can enjoy natural wonders like the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary that offers more than 300 acres of coastal freshwater wetlands and 12 miles of walking trails. The 2.8-acre Quail Hill Trailhead connects to Irvine's extensive network of trails.

Destination Irvine is offering an incentive of up to \$2,500 for groups that work with the organization and book a meeting with a minimum of 60 room nights over at least two consecutive days in one of Irvine's 16 hotels. Certain restrictions apply. Destination Irvine also is offering a "See it. Book it!" promotion that offers hosted site visits to qualified meeting planners. The promotion includes complementary airfare from most U.S. cities, accommodations, ground transportation and a customized site tour based on the RFP submitted. Visit [destinationirvine.com](http://destinationirvine.com) for complete details on both the sales incentive and the "See it. Book it!" promotions. ■

Fashion Island, which overlooks the Pacific, offers luxury, designer and specialty stores along with indoor and outdoor dining.



Credit: Destination Irvine

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# SAN DIEGO

The San Diego Tourism Authority has a forecast for your next meeting: “High chance of positive brainstorm, 100 percent chance of budget-friendly solutions, and blue skies and bright ideas.” California’s second largest city boasts a mild Mediterranean climate and more than 70 miles of coastline, and that’s just the beginning. The city spans more than 4,200 square miles, but it is divided into a dozen different neighborhoods, each with its own unique personality. For example, Coronado, located across the bridge from downtown San Diego, is known for its charming small town ambiance, iconic Hotel Del Coronado resort and long stretches of white sand



The Gaslamp Quarter in downtown San Diego is a popular dining and entertainment district that also is home to meeting hotels.

beach. Another popular neighborhood is downtown San Diego, which includes the historic Gaslamp Quarter dining and entertainment district, and is the site of many of the city’s major meeting hotels along with Petco Park, home of Major League Baseball’s San Diego Padres.

Also located in downtown San Diego, the Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego is a waterfront hotel located adjacent to the Seaport Village shopping area and less than a 10-minute walk from the San Diego Convention Center. It contains more than 1,600 guest rooms, including 76 suites, 168 Grand Club rooms, 40 accessible rooms and even a pet-friendly floor.



The Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego overlooks San Diego Bay.

Basic wireless Internet is complimentary in all guest rooms. The hotel also offers 316,000 total sf of flexible event space, including 136,000 sf of dedicated indoor meeting space and a total of 42 breakout rooms.

Later this year, The Pendry, part of a new hotel brand by Montage Hotels & Resorts, will open in the Gaslamp Quarter. The property will feature 317 loft-style guest rooms and 23,000 sf of meeting and event space. Other amenities will include Spa Pendry and a fitness center as well as a lobby bar, beer hall, street-side market café, a signature restaurant and nightclub.

As you’d might expect from a lively oceanfront community, San Diego offers plenty of options for offsite activities. Urban Adventure Quest offers scavenger hunts where teams of two to five people armed with a smartphone or Internet-connected tablet solve clues and complete challenges while they learn local history along the way. The company offers a choice of two locations, one in San Diego’s Balboa Park and the other in downtown San Diego. Each team’s score is tracked and immediately posted on the San Diego leaderboard for all to see.

San Diego is home to more than 60 wineries, 130 craft breweries and seven small-batch distilleries, making it a great location for “spirited” tours of these types of facilities. San Di-



Attendees enjoy the terrace overlooking the marina and San Diego Bay at The San Diego Convention Center (left, center).

Credit: Manchester Grand Hyatt

Credit: Gaslamp Quarter

Credit: Hilton San Diego Bayfront

Credit: San Diego Convention Center



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Credit: Port of San Diego

A new esplanade at the Port of San Diego was recently completed in an effort to create a more pedestrian-friendly Embarcadero.

ego Beer and Wine Tours offers a variety of different options, including wine and food (or beer and food) walking tours and a winery train tour and a beer train trolley tour. The company also can arrange to provide an interactive brewmaster, wine-maker or spirits sommelier event at the hotel or private event venue of the group's choice.

Naturally, many groups meeting in San Diego like to work in a trip to the beach, and a company called Beach Butlers is glad to provide all of the gear necessary for a fun day of sand and sun. The company can arrange for all of the necessities, such as cabanas, chairs, umbrellas, coolers and sunscreen along with sand and surf toys, and even lunch. The company offers these services exclusively at the 1.5-mile-long Coronado Beach,

which is an ideal setting for swimming, boogie boarding, body surfing, volleyball and just kicking back and relaxing.

A few years after the Naval Training Center, San Diego, closed, the city of San Diego acquired the property and created Liberty Station, a center for commerce, history and the arts. Liberty Station now offers groups a choice of 11 different private event venues including Brick, a venue in the arts district that can accommodate up to 400 guests, and Luce Court and Legacy Plaza, a beautifully landscaped outdoor event venue that's highlighted with fountains, rose gardens and dozens of palm trees. Also scheduled to open at Liberty Station is The Lot, a six-theater movie house and event venue.

Permanently docked in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier is the USS Midway Navy aircraft carrier, the longest serving American aircraft carrier of the 20th century, from 1945 to 1992, when it was decommissioned. In 2004, it became a permanent museum that now hosts some 300 private events each year, accommodating from 100 to 3,500 attendees.

The San Diego Tourism Authority has streamlined the RFP process with an innovative tool called iLead. Designed for single-property meetings that require 10 or more sleeping rooms, iLead only delivers meeting specifications to San Diego hotels that best meet the group's needs. Hotels respond in real time using an electronic proposal template, and all responses are compiled in a summary format that can be downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet. Information also is linked to the responding hotels' websites, Google Maps and the San Diego Tourism Authority's Meeting Planner Guide.

## California Dreaming

So if, as they say, "California is always a good idea," all planners have to do is decide which California destination will be the very best idea for their next meeting. And there is certainly no shortage of options. ■

The USS Midway Museum hosts some 300 private events each year on the Navy aircraft carrier that is permanently docked at Navy Pier in downtown.



Credits: San Diego CVB and (inset) USS Midway Museum



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# Las Vegas

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By Derek Reveron



A smoke drums performance by Blue Man Group at the Luxor Hotel & Casino.

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LAS VEGAS





These include Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino Convention Center, MGM Resorts International's The Park and Topgolf Las Vegas. Aria Resort & Casino is expanding its convention center; Caesars Entertainment Corporation plans to upgrade more than 4,800 hotel rooms at four Las Vegas properties; and Steve Wynn and Wynn resorts are proposing a new lake resort called Wynn Paradise Park. In addition, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority's Las Vegas Convention Center District project includes expansion and renovation of the Las Vegas Convention Center.

Such projects will help Las Vegas keep its ranking as the No. 1 trade show destination. Las Vegas topped the Trade Show News Network's "2015 TSNN Top 250 Trade Shows in the United States" list for the 22nd consecutive year. Las Vegas hosted 54 of the largest trade shows held in the U.S. last year, accounting for about 22,000 meetings and 5.9 million attendees.

Las Vegas is popular partly because it offers so much that makes life easier for planners. "Vegas is an adult playground and, in many ways, a planner's best friend," says Christy Lamagna, CMP, CMM, president and chief strategist at Strategic Meetings & Events, a Bernardsville, New Jersey-based meetings and incentives firm. "Las Vegas truly has something for everyone in terms of meeting space, pricing and caliber of property. Lift is second to none."

In addition, Las Vegas is a top fine-dining destination. "It is transforming into more of a culinary and entertainment hub rather than just gambling," adds Lamagna. "Las Vegas allows planners to bring groups with discriminating palates who also have a hunger for live shows and concerts. The city has celebrity chefs and a collective wine list that is staggering."

Some of the newest restaurants include the Italian eat-



*"Vegas never goes out of style, and given its ever changing options, attendees have something new to experience each time they return — much more so than other cities."*

**Christy Lamagna, CMP, CMM, CTSM, President Strategic Meetings & Events, Bernardsville, NJ**

ery Carbone at Aria Resort & Casino, the restaurant's first domestic expansion outside of New York City. Other restaurants include Rivea at the Delano Las Vegas; Salute, which offers cuisine from Southern Italy at Red Rock Casino Resort and Spa; and Harvest, a farm-to-table restaurant at Bellagio.

### Meeting Off The Strip

Popular meeting properties include the 800-room AAA Four Diamond Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa, the crown jewel of Station Casinos. The Red Rock, located 10 miles off The Strip in Summerlin, was the just-right property for a three-day business meeting with about 300 attendees that CliftonLarsonAllen, a Milwaukee-based professional services firm, held last year.

CliftonLarsenAllen chose the Red Rock after reviewing a handful of off-The-Strip properties. "Although The Strip has fabulous properties, we preferred to be off-Strip," says Lisa Jeans, project manager, executive team and firm-wide travel manager. "The Red Rock is a luxury resort offering everything a meeting planner looks for in a resort, but doesn't have all of the distractions of The Strip."

In addition, says Jeans, the Red Rock is the ultimate self-

contained resort. "We actually prefer to stay on-property for our events, and with all the Red Rock has to offer, it makes it easy," she says. "The food and beverage quality is incredible. The size, location and condition of meeting facilities and rooms are excellent. The service is second to none."

Most of all, adds Jeans, the Red Rock offers excellent bang for the buck. "The value received was incredible," she says. "The room rates you are able to get in Las Vegas are the best rates you can find in a convention-conference city — \$75 to \$100 per night less than other convention-conference cities during peak times. The Red Rock also made me feel like I was their only client during the planning process, which is invaluable as an event planner."

So far, the Red Rock is the only Las Vegas property that Jeans' company has used for its principal business meeting. The company plans to return to the property in January for a client meeting. "We are averaging one meeting every other year at the Red Rock," says Jeans.

### Choosing the Right Property

Las Vegas has suitable properties for every type of group. However, because Las Vegas is such a unique destination, it's important to match the meeting with the right property that meets the company's objective.

Making a good match requires planners to consider each group's expectations and needs for experiencing Las Vegas. "For high-end clients, we are looking at Wynn, Encore, Bellagio, Venetian, Four Seasons, etc.," says Mike May, president of Irving, Texas-based Spear One, a meetings, incentives and events planning firm. "Another consideration is podium power. For incentive travel programs, where we are trying to motivate participants to earn a trip, we might consider a new or trendy property like the Cosmopolitan."

Overall, Las Vegas is perfect for certain types of meetings. "In my opinion, the best types of meetings to host in Las Vegas are larger product launches, customer user groups and trade shows," says May. "Internal sales kickoff meetings are an interesting paradox. The mega-hotels are fantastic for accommodating such large groups, but may not be the best match for more buttoned-up corporate cultures."

Planners booking small groups in Las Vegas have uniquely different considerations. "Small meetings can get lost in Vegas, so I'd caution those groups to look for intimate environments, or possibly lose attendees," says May. "If you are a smaller group, consider a boutique property like the Four Seasons at Mandalay Bay or the newly rebranded Nobu Hotel in Caesars Palace."

The demographics of a group — including age, gender, education and regional origin — are also a key in choosing the right Las Vegas property. "Many groups would like to be in the heart of The Strip action, but that isn't necessarily



Wynn Las Vegas offers 260,000 sf of meeting space in combination with sister property Encore.

Credit: Wynn Las Vegas

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the right fit for everyone,” says May. Groups looking to cover educational content might want a property farther away in the Henderson area, so attendees won’t lose focus.”

Some planners want The Strip itself to be part of the meeting experience. “We hired a company to produce a three-hour teambuilding event that focused on critical thinking, strategic planning, teamwork and ingenuity,” says Lamagna. “There were actors placed throughout The Strip to interact with the group (if they were clever enough to find and recognize them based on descriptions). Even people who rolled their eyes when they found out they had to participate came back excited, happy and better for the experience.”

### To Meet On The Strip, or Not?

Planners should balance choosing whether to be on The Strip with other considerations. “Sometimes we want a gambling-free hotel, and sometimes we want to be a big fish in a little pond,” says Lamagna. “Other times we want to allow attendees to feel the true magnitude of the space so we are a small group in an enormous space.”

Lamagna cites other key considerations: “If Vegas is chosen for its location and its abundance of space rather than what

it has to offer in entertainment, then off The Strip may be the better option,” says Lamagna. If you are limited on your budget and allow attendees to have nights on their own, then The Strip is more strategic.”

Age of the group also should play a determining role. “Millennials value fresh food, place a lower emphasis on gambling and prefer newer spaces,” says Lamagna. “My Gen Xers and above enjoy and often expect to be in a more traditional casino because it’s their definition of the Vegas hotel experience.”

Because of competition among hotels and pricing, planners have a choice of properties to match their budgets. “Room rates aren’t always the best narrowing factor in Las Vegas — a city where large hotels and great rates are a dime a dozen,” says May. “Rates are usually very reasonable, especially mid-week and as long as you watch out for resort fees, which are usually high — \$20 to \$35.”

On the other hand, May adds, entertainment for incentives can be pricey. “When planning for incentive travel programs, we usually like to account for high personal spend on shopping, gaming, food and beverage with a room credit for winners and guests,” says May. “No one wants to be surprised with a high incidentals bill at the end of an earned getaway.”

Multiyear deals, when appropriate, can add even more value. “They give a planner the peace of mind that their event has a home for a few years out and, if working with the right partner, allows you to keep pricing a year or so behind current rates,” says Lamagna. “Vegas



The Park, a new outdoor dining and entertainment district on The Strip, recently hosted Le Dîner en Blanc, a global epicurean event.

Credit: The Park

never goes out of style, and given its ever-changing options, attendees have something new to experience each time they return — much more so than other cities.

### New and Noteworthy

The 1,504-room **Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas** is currently expanding its meeting and convention space from 80,000 sf to 110,000 sf. The expansion, which will debut in winter 2016, includes an additional 2,000 sf of prefunction and registration space; and an additional 18,000 sf of meeting and convention space in the Artist Ballroom, which will total 28,000 sf. Among the 40 existing meeting spaces are Muse Hall, Artist Hall, Festival Hall and the Studio Collection, which feature Higher Frequency, a program offering customizable sensory meeting packages that are designed to deliver “an immersive rock ‘n’ roll experience” to enhance the impact of the event. Beyond the meeting space, Hard Rock also features special event venues for corporate groups, including the music venues The Joint and Vinyl, as well as lounges and the Breathe Pool.

**MGM Resorts International** recently unveiled **The Park**, a vibrant outdoor dining and entertainment district



Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, which features the music venues The Joint and Vinyl, is expanding its meeting space from 80,000 sf to 110,000 sf this winter.

Credit: Hard Rock Hotel & Casino

celebrating the beauty of the surrounding desert landscape and offering visitors a new way to experience the Las Vegas Strip. Located between **New York-New York** and **Monte Carlo** resorts, The Park is designed as a social gathering space where guests can experience stunning design elements, a fun culinary lineup boasting great indoor/outdoor environments, iconic art and playful entertainment.

The Park serves as the gateway to the new **T-Mobile Arena**. The 20,000-seat venue also offers a wealth of event spaces for rent that fit both large and small gatherings.

**Wynn Las Vegas** and **Encore** together have 260,000 sf of beautiful and unique settings for any size meeting or convention. Amenities aplenty, Wynn also offers Steve Wynn’s ShowStoppers, a music spectacular featuring a reinvented collection of songs and dances. Voted “Best New Show” in Las



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*“The Red Rock made me feel like I was their only client during the planning process, which is invaluable as an event planner.”*



**Lisa Jeans, Project Manager**  
CliftonLarsenAllen, Peoria, IL

Vegas, ShowStoppers brings a vibrant and talented cast of 66 singers, dancers and a full orchestra with dazzling scenery and costumes to the intimate Encore Theater.

Wynn’s most recent news is word that a new entertainment destination — named **Wynn Paradise Park** for now — built around a first-ever recreational lake concept has been proposed by the chairman and CEO himself — Steve Wynn. Subject to approval by the company’s board of directors, the new destination will take the place of the golf course and is expected to include a 38-acre lagoon surrounded by premium meetings and convention space, a 1,000-room hotel tower, a small casino and extensive dining and nightlife.

“We have a chance to reinvent Las Vegas and make the whole venue an entertainment attraction...an idyllic beach paradise surrounded by white sand beaches,” stated Wynn in an announcement. “People come to Las Vegas from all over the world to live large and have a good time, and we can dish up an irresistible entertainment attraction.”

The proposed lagoon will be lined by a white sand beach and boardwalk, and feature an array of daytime activities including waterskiing, paddleboarding and parasailing. At night, the space will transform with an elaborate fireworks display that is launched from the center island and surrounding areas.

The park will add 260,000 sf of premium meeting space with unobstructed views of the waterfront, spacious guest rooms with a separate bedroom, living room and balcony, and a variety of restaurants, including an expansion of the current Country Club restaurant.

Wynn also is developing **Wynn Plaza**, an expansive retail complex featuring nearly 80,000 sf of luxury retail space. Debuting fall 2017, the complex will augment the existing luxury retail collection currently showcased at Wynn Las Vegas and Encore as well as bring the shopping experience to the high traffic area bordering Las Vegas Boulevard.

**Caesars Entertainment Corporation** announced plans to upgrade more than 4,800 hotel rooms this year at four of its Las Vegas resorts. These resort upgrades include the transformation

of the original tower at **Caesars Palace** to create the Julius Tower as well as the refurbishment of the resort’s Augustus Tower. Additional room upgrades will include **Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino, Paris Las Vegas** and **Harrah’s Las Vegas**.

Caesars Palace also offers an amazing casino and meeting space experience. Its 300,000 sf of meeting space is comfortably set apart from the casino area, yet remains within easy reach of attendees. Caesars Palace offers a large range of flexible venues with countless configuration options to suit groups of all sizes. In addition to traditional meeting venues within Caesars, the site’s 4,100-seat **Colosseum** boasts one of the world’s largest LED screens, a perfect location for presentations that really “wow.”

Caesars Entertainment Corporation’s properties — **Fleming Las Vegas, The Linq Hotel & Casino** and Caesars Palace — introduced a new integrated self-check-in program that includes email, text, Web and mobile apps as well as new check-in kiosks. Arriving guests use the kiosks to verify IDs and take payment information. The kiosk then provides a printed key if the room is ready, or an alert to return when the room is available. Other Caesars properties will soon offer the system.

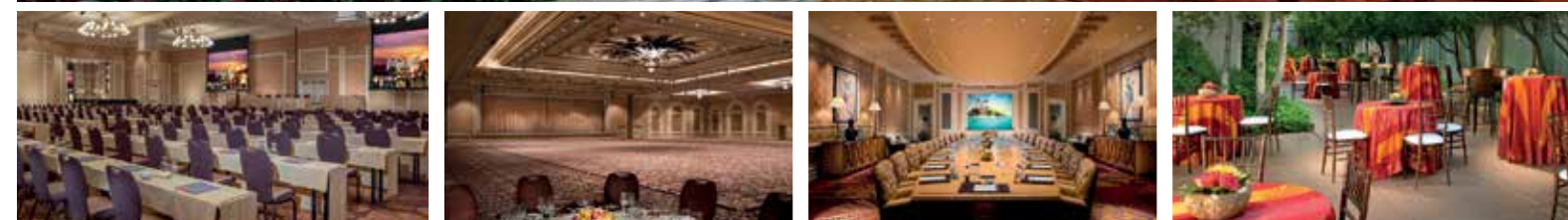
To meet the ever-growing needs of convention managers and attendees, the **Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino Convention Center** recently completed its expansion with the opening of the 70,000-sf Oceanside Ballroom. The \$70 million expansion includes 350,000 sf of new exhibit space, a 20,000-sf foyer and underground parking. Mandalay Bay also completed the final phase of its resort-wide remodel of more than 3,000 guest rooms and suites. Created by the MGM Resorts International Design Group, the



The Venetian/Palazzo/Sands Expo complex offers more than 2.25 million sf of meeting and exhibit space. (Inset) The Bella Suite at The Venetian.



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- Guest rooms and elevators are steps away from the meeting spaces giving your guests easy access back to luxury room accommodations
- Versatile outdoor meeting spaces like the St. Croix Patio offers your guests indoor-outdoor perspectives with lush greenery
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redesigned rooms and suites feature refreshing color palettes and modern designs in three distinct collections.

**Tropicana Las Vegas, a DoubleTree by Hilton**, recently opened its new pool club, Sky Beach Club. The South Beach-inspired club is designed for 21-and-over guests and features bikini-clad servers, two luxury pools, VIP cabanas, two bars and a DJ booth. A-list celebrity hosts, top live music acts and beer pong are also part of the Sky Beach Club.

The pool opening follows a \$200 million transformation that included the 55,000-sf Trinidad at Tropicana Las Vegas, and 1,469 updated guest rooms and suites with new furnishings and amenities. In addition, guests can enjoy beach houses styled after Miami penthouses and oceanside beach houses.

The transformation also added a new conference facility featuring more than 100,000 sf of meeting and exhibition space that includes a 25,000-sf ballroom and is divisible into 38 breakout rooms.

**MGM Grand's Skylofts** is personalizing the guest experience at every touch point, from pre-arrival to departure. Sky-



The Foxtail Nightclub and (inset) World Tower guest room at SLS Las Vegas.

lofts features a personal concierge who asks upcoming guests a series of questions prior to arrival to ensure room, mini-bar and travel preferences are met. Those choices are then documented and saved so when the guests return, everything is as if they never left.

**The Venetian, The Palazzo and Sands Expo** complex offers more than 2.25 million sf of meeting and convention space and one of the world's largest pillar-less ballrooms at 85,000 sf, plus 298 meeting, conference and boardrooms. Adjacent to The Venetian and The Palazzo Congress Center, the Sands Expo offers 1.9 million sf of meeting and show space.

The all-suite Venetian and Palazzo offer the largest standard suites on The Strip, starting at 650 sf. Prestige at The Palazzo offers 225 Prestige suites that provide exclusive amenities such as champagne check-ins, personal concierge and

access to a 12,000-sf private lounge where enhanced weekend offerings include nightly wine tastings and live piano music.

Guests can enjoy their downtime at The Venetian and The Palazzo with the resorts' exquisite restaurants from celebrated chefs, including Bouchon by Thomas Keller, Carnevino by Mario Batali and Cut by Wolfgang Puck; relaxing spa and fitness at Canyon Ranch SpaClub; world-class shopping at the Grand Canal Shoppes; and entertainment from artist headliners along with new shows, which include "Baz – Star Crossed Love" and "Puppet Up! – Uncensored," a spontaneous, off-the-cuff comedy with the unmatched talent and creativity of Henson puppeteers.

**SLS Las Vegas**, a Tribute Portfolio Resort, features 1,613 guest rooms in three distinct towers — Story, World and Lux — ranging from luxurious 325-sf rooms to penthouse suites spanning 3,300 sf. SLS Las Vegas delivers more than 80,000 sf of indoor-outdoor event sites, including a 9,000-sf ballroom, and 30,000 sf of dedicated meeting space. Fifteen flexible meeting rooms are perfectly suited to host events of all sizes from corporate luncheons to extravagant soirées. The property boasts a salon, spa, fitness center as well as a collection of acclaimed restaurant and nightlife brands.

**Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino** offers a unique blend of amenities and excitement with table games, slots, restaurants, and more than 225,000 sf of meeting space and the world's largest race and sports SuperBook. The property features entertainment options in the International Theater and the Westgate Cabaret. Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino is currently undergoing a \$100 million renovation that will encompass every square inch of the property including the addition of 300 timeshare villas, the all-new International Bar, a fully renovated pool deck, 1,200 re-

modeled Signature Rooms and more.

**Blue Man Group**, comedy, theater, rock concert and dance party all rolled into one, is back in Las Vegas at the specially designed Blue Man Theater at **Luxor Hotel and Casino**. It is an unbelievable multisensory experience showcasing new music, new design, new technology and a new finale to wow the entire audience.

**The Mob Museum** of organized crime and law enforcement has extended operating hours to include "museum after dark" programs that allow visitors to view objects, photos and documents normally not on display. In addition, "Moe-Bot," a telepresence robot, allows guests to virtually visit the museum's displays and get interactive guided tours via a desktop computer or mobile device.

In the area of technology, Las Vegas has introduced a new

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The Nassau Boardroom at The Mirage Hotel & Casino.

travel app to help visitors get the most out of their destination experience. The app, **WhereToVegas**, provides an online map of trendy events, locations and entertainment. The app determines popular hot spots by tracking online conversations about Las Vegas experiences and ranking them.

Sports entertainment facility **Topgolf Las Vegas** is a four-level, climate-controlled, 105,000-sf venue boasting 108 hitting bays, five bars/lounges, luxury suites and private event spaces. Also, it has two pools accompanied by LED-illuminated daybeds, cabanas and lounge chairs. The venue's elevated cuisine features classic comfort food, locally sourced products and internationally inspired flavors. The new facility can accommodate more than 3,000 guests, stage a 900-person concert/performance space with 300 video screens and a 28-by-200-foot video wall behind outfield targets. Groups are invited to try their hand at the patented Topgolf game — an especially appealing teambuilding program.

### More Convention Space

**The Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino Convention Center** now can attract larger and additional corporate, incentive and association groups due to the completion of its \$70 million expansion, including the recent opening of the 70,000-sf Oceanside Ballroom.

The project also includes 350,000 sf of new exhibit space, and a 20,000-sf foyer and underground parking. The convention center now has more than 2 million total sf and more than 900,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space. The resort-wide expansion also includes redesign of Mandalay Bay's 3,211 guest rooms and suites.

**Aria Resort & Casino** is expanding its LEED Gold-certified convention center by adding 200,000 sf of flexible meeting space on four levels. The \$154 million expansion will include indoor/open-air spaces and a glass-enclosed venue with views of The Park and T-Mobile Arena. The expansion, scheduled for completion in February 2018, will increase Aria's total meeting space to about 500,000 sf.

Aria now offers 38 meeting rooms and four ballrooms with one totaling 51,000 sf and divisible into 10 meeting rooms.



*"Planners can let Vegas do the work of providing the glitz, glamour and 'wow' — attendees will walk away with unforgettable experiences that planners didn't even have (to budget for)."*

**Mike May, President**  
Spear One, Irving, TX

lion-sf facility within eight to 10 years under the **Las Vegas Global Business District** master plan. Shorter term, Las Vegas will get additional meeting space (although the exact amount has yet to be determined) when the China-themed **Resorts World Las Vegas** opens in 2018. The facility will feature 6,600 rooms, a 5,000-seat theater and a 175,000-sf casino.

Las Vegas, more than most destinations, makes life easier for meeting planners. As May put it, "Planners can let Vegas do the work of providing the glitz, glamour and 'wow' — attendees will walk away with unforgettable experiences that planners didn't even have to allocate budgets for." **C&IT**

Two other ballrooms are divisible into eight rooms of 38,000 sf each. Another ballroom offers 20,000 sf of space.

**The MGM Grand Hotel & Casino** houses one of The Strip's most opulent conference centers, which features more than 600,000 sf of meeting space and more than 380,000 sf of event space on three levels. Choices include rooms of all sizes and configurations, including a 92,000-sf ballroom, and the 100,000-sf, 17,000-seat Grand Garden Arena.

The Strip's popular convention facilities include the **Mirage Hotel & Casino's Mirage Events Center**, which offers

170,000 sf of event space, including 90,000 sf of pillar-less space divisible into three 30,000-sf sections. Each section can further divide into three spaces of 6,500 to 10,000 sf. Additional space includes a 40,000-sf ballroom.

One of The Mirage's newest amenities is The Still, an 8,000-sf upscale food bar with 22 televisions. The food will be prepared in a refurbished Airstream trailer that was transformed into a fully functioning kitchen.

**Las Vegas Sands Corp.** leads a group of investors planning to build a \$1 billion domed stadium on 42 acres near the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, according to a report in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. The stadium would be home to the university's football and perhaps a National Football League franchise, the report says.

Long term, the **Las Vegas Convention Center** will add 600,000 sf of exhibit space and renovate the existing 3.2 mil-



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# On The Move



Celebrity Cruises has named **Lisa Vogt** as associate vice president, global meetings, incentives and charter sales. Most recently, she served as director, global sales and marketing for Celebrity Cruises and Royal Caribbean.

Discover The Palm Beaches, Florida, has named **Peggy Murray Hagaman** as director of sales, Midwest, and **Peter Cronin** as director of sales, Southeast. Hagaman was most recently

manager, Midwest regional sales office, for the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau. Cronin was national sales director for Choose Chicago.

Turnberry Isle Miami in Aventura, Florida, has appointed **Valerie Peru** as national sales manager responsible for the Southeast and Southwest regions. She most recently was sales manager for corporate group sales for the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort.

Sonesta Fort Lauderdale Beach has named **Paige Guiliano** as sales manager. She was director of sales for Best Western Bay Harbour Tampa.

The Westin Nashville, opening fall 2016, has named **Richard Yamaguchi** as director of group sales and **Jessica Burd** as sales manager. Yamaguchi was sales manager at the Sheraton Music City. Burd was account director at the W Atlanta Midtown.

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