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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

Mountain Resorts

The Natural Majesty of the
Surroundings Motivates Attendees
to Greater Heights of Performance

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Incentive winners from Xyngular, a Lehi, Utah-based health and nutrition products company, are drawn to Robert Redford's Sundance Mountain Resort in Sundance, Utah.



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Miami Magic

Miami Continues to Exceed Expectations With New
and Newly Reimagined Venues and Experiences

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Credit: Digital Blue Photography

An innovative closing dinner at Bellagio featured setups that were color-coded to choice of cuisine. **PAGE 14**



Credit: Callaway Gardens

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Credit: Greater Miami CVB

Downtown Miami skyline. **PAGE 37**

Publisher's Message

From the Beaches to the Mountain Tops

The ultimate goal of every meeting planner is to select the perfect site for a meeting, event or incentive, and provide a memorable experience for attendees while delivering measurable ROI for the company. A win-win for all parties. In this issue, we examine how to reach these goals from the beaches of Miami to majestic mountain resorts. In our cover story on page 20, "The Natural Majesty of the Surroundings Motivates Attendees to Greater Heights of Performance," we address

how meeting properties in the mountains of Colorado to California and New York can help you meet budget *and* deliver a memorable, wow experience for all your participants.

Properties like Robert Redford's Sundance Resort — the epitome of a mountain resort — undeniably attracts attendees. Here's how Xyngular's President Marc Walker explains the reaction of his company's sales representatives (on our cover) who ask "How can I earn my way back to Sundance?" Walker added a Sundance Return Trip for reps who top a certain amount of sales in a month and get the opportunity to go back to Sundance to mentor other participants. Walker adds, "There is something special about Sundance, and when they've been there they want to go back."

The magic of Miami also attracts attendees back to South Florida year after year. There's nothing better than a sunny day on the beach or an incredible South Beach entertainment experience. William D. Talbert III, CDME, president and CEO of the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, reminds us that Miami is a constantly evolving global destination offering exceptional options for meetings, conventions and events. Talbert says in "Meeting in Miami," our special report starting on page 37, "The unparalleled culture, accessibility, hotel rooms and diverse offsite venues set against a backdrop of beautiful weather and beaches are just a few of the elements that make Miami the preeminent locale for meetings and events."

For more enlightening and informative stories in this issue, check out "What's Cooking?" on page 14 — an up-to-date feature on F&B trends; see where you fit among other planners in the "Ethics" conundrum on page 26; and on page 32, determine if you should embrace a drive-in meeting for your next corporate group event.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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News & Notes

Celebrity Cruises Reveals Celebrity Edge, a Ship Designed to Transform Expectations



Renderings of the revolutionary Celebrity Edge, which Celebrity Cruises boasts will set a new standard for ship design. The rooftop garden at night (left) and the ship-climbing Magic Carpet platform are just two of the amazing new features that will debut in 2018.

MIAMI, FL — Celebrity Cruises delivered a first look at the transformational 2,918-guest Celebrity Edge, whose dramatically expanded staterooms, ship-climbing Magic Carpet platform and stunning suites set a new standard for ship design.

Revolutionary staterooms erase the boundaries between the traditional ship stateroom and its veranda, creating a closer connection to the ocean. The design adds 23 percent more square footage and 10 percent larger bathrooms than Celebrity's Solstice Class.

Celebrity has more than doubled the number of available suites, adding two spectacular new categories. At the top of the line are two new Iconic Suites situated above the ship's bridge. These 2,600-sf, two-bedroom, two-bathroom suites feature mind-blowing views thanks to panoramic

windows. The 700-sf veranda offers a 270-degree view of the ocean.

Cantilevered from the side of the ship, the tennis court-sized Magic Carpet makes Celebrity Edge's distinctive profile recognizable from miles away. At the summit of the ship on Deck 16, the Magic Carpet becomes the ultimate specialty restaurant offering a special "Dinner on the Edge" for 90 guests. Alongside Deck 14, Magic Carpet becomes an open-air expansion of the main pool area. On Deck 5, Magic Carpet extends one of the ship's specialty restaurants into the most amazing al fresco seating imaginable, and at its lowest position on Deck 2, Magic Carpet is a key component to the Destination Gateway, a luxury embarkation station where guests will be whisked away aboard sleek Edge Launches. www.celebrity.com

IRF Releases Wellness in Meetings and Incentive Travel Study

WASHINGTON, DC — The Incentive Research Foundation released The



VAN DYKE

IRF Wellness in Meetings and Incentive Travel Study. The study provides insights and benchmarks for how meeting planners are successfully incorporating wellness

into their incentive travel and meetings programs.

"Each year companies in the United

States invest billions of dollars to both help their employees get healthier and additional billions to help them meet face to face," said IRF President Melissa Van Dyke. "The research featured in The IRF Wellness in Meetings and Incentive Travel Study leads us to question how integrated these efforts within organizations are — and what the meetings and incentives industry could do to create better synergies."

Key findings include: The majority of meeting planners agreed wellness is a critical focus for either their company (87 percent) or their client's company

(74 percent); 40 percent of meeting planners indicated meetings were "mostly healthy"; and 19 percent said "very healthy." The top standard preferred food & beverage wellness inclusions for meetings and events were healthy snacks (83 percent), water and reduced calorie drinks (82 percent), and fish, chicken and lean meats (80 percent). Smoke-free facilities (90 percent) and free access to fitness facilities (80 percent) were the top-ranked standard or preferred meeting design elements supporting wellness. www.theirf.org

DMAI Will Become Destinations International in July

WASHINGTON, DC — DMAI will become Destinations International



WELSH

effective July 2017 during its Annual Convention in Montreal. Through collaboration with Miles Partnership, feedback gathered from stakeholder interviews, paired with extensive analysis of key operational facets of the association contributed to the eight-month rebrand review.

Throughout 2016, DMAI reviewed past and current initiatives with the goal to build a new framework for the organization in 2017 and beyond. During this time, the team collectively established a new Vision, Mission and Value Proposition and subsequently the Business Plan for 2017.

Vision: Our members are essential to the success of destinations worldwide

Mission: We empower our members so that their destinations excel.

Value Proposition: We inform, connect, inspire and educate our members to drive destination economic impact, job creation, community sustainability and quality of life through travel.

"We realize we are a trade organization, not a marketing organization. Our members are the marketers. This is exactly why we felt the need to rebrand the organization," said Welsh. "Our efforts go far beyond a sharp new logo and a new name. Together with our members and partners, Destinations International represents a powerful forward-thinking, collaborative association; exchanging bold ideas, connecting innovative people and exciting tourism to its highest potential." www.destinationmarketing.org

The Diplomat Beach Resort Debuts



At the ribbon-cutting for The Diplomat Beach Resort in Hollywood, Florida (l to r), Bruce G. Wiles, managing director Thayer Lodging Group, Brookfield Hotel Properties; Leslie A. Pchola, Hilton Area V.P.; Ed Walls, general manager, The Diplomat Beach Resort; Mark Nogal, global head Curio Collection by Hilton; Joe Berger, Hilton E.V.P. and president, Americas; Shai Zelering, managing director and head of asset management, Thayer Lodging Group, Brookfield Hotel Properties; Geoffrey Zakarian, chef, Point Royal; Michael Schulson, chef and restaurateur of Monkital; Howard Wein, president and CEO, Howard Wein Hospitality.

HOLLYWOOD, FL — A new icon has officially taken center stage in Hollywood, Florida — The Diplomat Beach Resort Hollywood, Curio Collection by Hilton. Emerging from a \$100million-dollar transformation, The Diplomat Beach Resort Hollywood is an oceanfront, experiential destination resort. With more than 1,000 guest rooms — including 96 suites, 515 king rooms and 484 double dooms, The Diplomat Beach Resort is the largest hotel in Broward county. The resort now offers 10 innovative culinary destinations.

With 209,000 sf of flexible function and meeting space including a 50,000-sf unobstructed Great Hall, The Diplomat Beach Resort Hollywood continues to serve as the premier location for business travel and large-scale conferences. With recent upgrades in comprehensive technology, transportation services and unbeatable ocean views, travelers and locals can expect thoughtfully designed and unique spaces meant to create memorable meetings and events. www.diplomatresort.com

GBTA Releases Study: U.S. Business Travelers Rate Travel Safety

WASHINGTON, DC — Business travelers view terrorism as the greatest safety risk they face on the road, according to a new study by the GBTA Foundation.



MCCORMICK

Almost half (45 percent) rank it as their greatest concern when traveling for business, much higher than the share indicating street crime (15 percent), illness/disease outbreaks/sanitation (13 percent), property crime/theft (12 percent), kidnapping (8 percent) or natural disasters (6 percent). "We often talk about the resiliency of the business travel industry in the face of terror threats, economic uncertainty, political unrest and other factors," said Michael W. McCormick, GBTA executive director and COO. "Keeping travelers safe on the road is a prime responsibility for travel professionals. Understanding the road warriors' fears and anxieties about business travel as well as communicating the available risk protocols and assistance services, can go a long way in building an effective risk management program." www.gbta.org, www.gbta.org/foundation

Snapshots

CELEBRITY EDGE



1 At the Celebrity Edge reveal in Miami, Lisa Vogt, associate vice president, corporate incentives & charter sales Celebrity Cruises is flanked by David Middlebrook (l), V.P. of operations, Coastal Communications Corp. and Harvey Grotsky, president of Coastal Communications Corp. **2** Ron Gulaskey, associate V.P., national & strategic accounts, Celebrity Cruises joins Grotsky at the event.



2017 MPI EMEC



1-8 MPI's 2017 European Meetings & Events Conference (EMEC) was held in Granada, Spain with 350+ registered attendees. More than \$16,000 was raised at MPI Foundation's Rendezvous fundraiser and networking event. Highlights included education sessions such as master classes, immersive experiences, meet-ups and EduLabs. Next year SITE + MPI will jointly host the Global Forum in Rome taking place in January 2018 at the Rome Cavalieri Waldorf Astoria. **2** MPI President and CEO Paul Van Deventer (l) with Matthew Marcial, MPI's V.P. of education and events, and Eva Garde, director of marketing with the Granada Convention Bureau.



HILTON WEST PALM BEACH

1 At the first anniversary celebration of Hilton West Palm Beach are (l to r) G.M. John Parkinson, D.O.S.M. Edd Karlan and Harvey Grotsky, publisher, *Corporate & Incentive Travel*.



THE DIPLOMAT GRAND REVEAL

1 Judy Erickson, manager of marketing, The Diplomat Beach Resort in Hollywood, FL, and Harvey Grotsky, publisher, *Corporate & Incentive Travel*. **2** Diplomat Beach Resort D.O.S.M. Jim Curtis (l) and Tarra Curtis join Grotsky and David Middlebrook at the event.

By Jill Anonson

Ensuring Safe and Secure Incentive Travel Experiences

It's no secret that elements of the evolving global landscape trickle over into the travel industry. New risks and threats pop up without warning, and the travel and event industry is particularly vulnerable to the changes. What seems like a safe destination one day might raise eyebrows the next, forcing event planners into a difficult spot.

Yet, according to a Global Business Travel Association survey, nearly 30 percent of companies reported their organization lacked a risk management plan or were unsure if there was one. That's an incredibly vulnerable position for travel planners and their clients alike.

The good news is that the risk inherent in incentive travel can be successfully mitigated through risk management. Designing and delivering safe yet once-in-a-lifetime experiences in all corners of the world can be a reality if a comprehensive and flexible approach is used.

First: Assess the Risk

Before you can mitigate risk, you need to assess it. How much is too much? Consider these questions before selecting your destination:

- **People.** How will you accommodate their basic needs when traveling, such as physical safety, access to medical services and the ability to communicate?
- **Experience.** Will the destination meet the desire of your demographic? And will the quality of medical support be acceptable?
- **Dollars.** Since your incentive travel experience or event is a business investment, a profitable return is your goal. Assess whether or not your mitigation tactics are sufficient to ensure a solid return.

Destination Considerations

Arming yourself with as much timely and accurate intelligence as you can gather will allow you to identify and assess the risks of a destination. Securing legitimate intelligence will largely depend on the authenticated resources to which you have access. While destination management professionals and the news media may be able to offer insight, a qualified intelligence professional (i.e., a global security expert) often can deliver more pertinent and timely information. If you don't have a proper resource on

staff who can deliver the necessary level of accuracy or detail, consider contracting with a professional individual or team that can.

A crisis management or emergency management plan is essential. The destination-specific intelligence you gather will allow you to fine tune that plan, mitigating risk down to the lowest possible level. The plan should include — but is not limited to — these strategies:

- **An emergency meeting location.** Being able to account for each of your guests in the event of a fire or flood is the first step to ensuring traveler safety. Your emergency meeting location should be shared in pre-event communications and reinforced onsite at arrival.
- **An evacuation strategy.** If your group is in an area where tropical storms are a possibility, a detailed evacuation plan may prove lifesaving.
- **Reliable communication.** If the terror threat rises or public unrest escalates while you are onsite, knowing exactly how you will reach each and every one of your guests with details and instructions is a must. Strongly consider leveraging your event technology such as an app, or create an emergency text/email distribution list to disseminate mass messages.

Medical Risk Management

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "...the hazards associated with travel cannot be eliminated. ...The goal in travel and in travel medicine should be skillfully managing risk, rather than trying to eliminate risk."

From potentially life-threatening medical emergencies to travel-related injury and illness, the risk of a situation requiring medical attention is quite likely with a large group of travelers, making it critical to have medical care procedures in place. Well in advance of the trip, research and complete a checklist that details:

- The nearest hospital and pharmacy.
- Hotel phone number, security procedures and emergency process.
- Whether there is an AED (automated external defibrillator) program and/or doctor on call at the hotel.
- EMT and ambulance estimate travel time to/from hotel.

- U.S. Embassy location/address and hours of operation.
- Decide how, in the event of a medical emergency, the staff should contact emergency services for assistance.
- Prepare a list of which onsite team members should be immediately notified.
- Determine if staff members (either your team or the hotel/travel staff) have emergency training in first aid, CPR or AED use, and if there a first aid kit or AED near where the event will take place.

Data Protection

While the evolution of technology as it relates to travel and events is of immense value, the benefits come with substantial risk. Safeguarding proprietary information such as company financial data and trade secrets, as well as guest

- What is your policy for lost or stolen devices and identifiable information?

Financial Security

A travel experience or event is an investment for your company — and protecting that investment is critical to its success. There may be times when the risk is greater than the reward, and cancellation becomes a reality, or events outside your control force you to revise travel dates or switch hotels. But there are protective measures you can take to protect yourself and your investment. Here are five major contracting considerations:

- Rates, deposits and payment schedules, including your contracted attrition rate and deposit schedule.
- Do you have a reasonable cancellation schedule and force

“Safeguarding proprietary information such as company financial data and trade secrets, as well as guest information, is imperative.”

information, is imperative. Your data risk management approach should be carefully planned with your information technology team. Data collection/encryption, network security and security access features of your event spaces need to be analyzed. Third-party services being utilized by technology suppliers to collect information and the privacy policies in place should be examined. Also, appropriate social media policies should be established for your event.

Consider the data security of your individual attendees, asking these questions:

- Does the event space's VPN (Virtual Private Network) extend to the guest rooms?
- Will you or the hotel be using beacons to convey or collect information from attendees, and what might this expose?

majeure terms that are up to date as they relate to global risk factors? Have you negotiated construction/renovation terms that can have an impact on your travel experience?

- **Confidentiality.** What protections are in place for you and your guests? Have you negotiated terms prohibiting your hotel partner from booking your competitors during your event date?
- **Insurance.** Do your hotelier partners and third-party suppliers have adequate insurance portfolios?
- Are mutual indemnification and hold-harmless terms part of your agreement? Have you formally defined how you will resolve disputes?

The bottom line is that exercising sound risk management is good business. Mitigating risk is a win for you, your business and your valued guests.

C&IT



Jill Anonson

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By Karl Edmunds

4 Signs That Your Live Meetings Are Growing Stale

The digital age has left no industry untouched, and the world of live meetings and events is not an exception. Still, there are many who haven't adopted the conveniences of the ever-changing technology landscape. If meeting planners aren't constantly re-evaluating their events and making improvements, their meetings will easily be outshined and even replaced by others. Organizations cannot continue to spend tens of thousands of dollars on events that yield no measurable return. So, how can you tell if your tried-and-true methods are no longer sustainable?

Here are the four signs that your live events are growing stale.

1. You Don't Have a Tech Budget or It's Tiny.

If meetings and events are strategically important to your firm and you still operate without a technology budget, your firm will likely be left behind. Event leaders who still operate

2. Your Core Tactics to Manage Meeting Content Are Outdated.

If you are a meeting and event planner who has taken the first step with technology and feel good about automated registration, expense management, revenue tracking and electronic agendas but still open the meeting with a three-ring binder on the table for your participants, you are behind the curve. Interactive technologies are not only "cool" to look at, but they also are a much more reliable method of keeping individuals engaged.

In today's market, the most advanced events allow every participant to save slides, take notes on specific slides, draw stylus notes for future reference and post questions to speakers and moderators, and then they can have all this activity delivered to them in a secure PDF file at the conclusion of the event. No more searching for those specific slides through a book of papers and details scattered throughout an event.

“Virtual reality platforms will begin to show up and deepen the engagement opportunities in live events”

without any meeting technology for participant engagement are like the leadership of Blockbuster who failed to see the threat of Netflix until it was too late.

Unfortunately, too many event planners pass over new technology solely based on cost. Of course, you have a budget, and you need to stick to it, but consider where you are spending and what you are getting in return. Are your meetings delivering results? Do participants understand your message? How well can you measure and track that understanding? If your meeting is for new prospective customers, can you calculate how many leads and customers are needed to make the investment in new technology worthwhile? Yes, technology can have a large upfront investment, but astute managers are beginning to see that the right technology can deliver exponentially more value than what is currently in place.

3. Your Engagement Measurement Is a One-Trick Pony

If your measure of success for a completed live event is a simple paper survey ranking between 1 and 10, you are missing a multitude of opportunities. Post-meeting reporting has the latitude to evaluate how engaged the audience was, what topics resonated most, which speakers provided the best information, and when individuals were interested or uninterested throughout the event.

Before you even start the detailed planning for an event, at least be clear about the basic measures of success. Will the meeting be measured by the number of new leads it generates for the sales department? If so, what is the targeted cost per lead? How is it tracked? Or is the meeting designed to enhance brand awareness? If so what are the measures and timelines to be used in measuring brand awareness?

Leading event planners are beginning to compile data de-

rived from multiple events, which allows deeper insight than ever before and may include personality profiles, demographics, corporate position and geographic considerations. These meeting analytics will be the fuel that drives dramatic changes in how meetings are conducted today.

4. You Aren't Prepared for "The Next Big Thing."

If you are making future technology decisions based on what you are comfortable with, you are behind. The role of technology will continue to evolve and change so be prepared to adapt and adopt when appropriate. For example, virtual reality platforms will begin to show up and deepen the engagement opportunities in live events. Three-dimensional printers may very well become the go-to for creating event structures, sets or signage. The IOT (Internet of Things) has the opportunity to open the door for tracking activities of participants beyond anything that is currently used or has been in the past. And analytics tools will dramatically enhance the strategic value and consequently the ROI of live events. Executive management from leading companies will begin to expect high quality data from live meetings to analyze in their own strategies for overall corporate growth.

Innovative meeting planners will be actively utilizing engagement technology to increase the impact of their events and improve the quality of data that is derived from them. While the evolution to new and emerging event technologies may seem a bit overwhelming initially, the best event and meeting planners know that to survive in this ever-changing industry, you must adapt. Take a look at your strategies; do they need an overhaul? A simple change? Or are you right on target?

If you feel behind, don't ignore the signs. Take an honest assessment of your events and make changes to keep your attendees engaged and enhance your ability to drive measurable results.

Final Thoughts

In summary, successful event management is no longer simply a "how" function but must be first tasked with a "why." By knowing the why of the meeting through strategic marketing decisions, the how factors will be put into place by the events team to achieve company goals, rather than just doing what has always been done. The outcome will be a dramatic leap in quality based on real data and metrics and not just completion based on soft, worn out assumptions.

To avoid having your meetings grow stale, the role of the



event department must move from one of basic logistics to a critical element of the executive marketing leadership team. Meetings should no longer be viewed solely as a social function with good food. Good meeting planners must have the responsibility, the technology and the budget to deliver post-meeting data and analytics that begin to show and track a true ROI for that meeting investment.

C&IT



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What's Cooking?

Creative Cuisine for Cutting-Edge Events

By Sophia Bennett

Environmental sustainability, encouraging good health, personalization and experiential learning are major areas of focus in the meeting industry. It should come as no surprise, then, that these areas impart a strong influence over 2017's food and beverage trends. Here's a look at what industry experts believe are ways to create memorable and high-quality experiences for today's event attendees.

Farm-to-Table Food and Drinks

Interest in locally sourced, sustainably grown and raised food is still wildly popular with attendees. While that trend has been going on for a long time, planners may be pleasantly surprised by how much easier it is to get the fork-to-plate experience at larger venues.

The move to bring locally sourced cuisine to banquets started with independent and boutique hotels, according to Mike Schugt, president of Teneo Hospitality Group, a global sales company that works with more than 300 hotels and resorts and 70 destination management companies. Those smaller venues were able to experiment in their restaurants, then share best practices with the banquet staff. Over time, larger hotels have adapted that same model. As they've done

that, "They're able to create these intimate, unique, almost farm-to-table banquet experiences for thousands of people," Schugt says.

The focus on local extends to the drink menu as well, says Tracy Stuckrath, CSEP, CMM, CHC, CFPM, president and chief connecting officer of Thrive! Meetings & Events. More food service professionals are pairing local wines and microbrews with menus to give guests a true taste of the region. "People are incorporating more and more flavors into their cocktails as well," she says. "They're using local and organic vegetables and fruits and coming up with creative drinks that are seasonal."

Along with the focus on locally made food is the interest in housemade items and/or foods prepared from scratch. Many hotels are now making some of

their own condiments, cured meats, cocktail mixers and more.

Healthful Foods

Another popular trend is creating more healthful food and beverage options. The main place where planners are doing this is with snacks or breaks. Instead of the traditional cookies or sugary foods, more companies are opting for protein-rich items such as yogurt and nuts, or fruit and veggie-focused items such as roasted vegetables or make-your-own smoothie bars.

This trend definitely extends to the beverage space. Instead of sodas, caterers are setting out club soda and water infused with cucumbers or strawberries.

Schugt cautions not to go overboard with healthful foods at meetings. "You still have to cater to people's

sweet tooth," he says. "Maybe you can have a little shot glass of carrot cake or key lime pie on the end of the buffet. At events, those are the things that fly off the shelf the quickest."

Non-Traditional Proteins

"A couple years back, every banquet and convention menu was based on chicken breasts and pork tenderloins," says Stefan Peroutka, executive banquet chef at The Venetian and Palazzo resorts in Las Vegas. "People are much more open to trying new things now."

Today's consumers understand that part of sustainability is eating the whole animal and avoiding certain types of fish. This shift in mindset has allowed Peroutka to introduce menu items such as smoked and braised meats and housemade sausages. He's

also using some unusual seafood, including sardines, mackerel and rockfish. "Even two years ago that was a definite 'no,'" he says.

Stuckrath can envision a time when banquet staff may offer dishes with crickets, venison, elk, bison or goat. "Since goat meat is the No. 1 meat eaten around the world, it's starting to be incorporated into a lot more restaurant menus," she says. "It will be interesting to see how hotels and convention centers incorporate them — maybe more for appetizers than main courses."

It's also becoming more common to see plant-based proteins as part of a main course — and not just for vegetarians and vegans. "We're definitely incorporating more for lunch and breakfast," Peroutka says. He often shies away from tofu — "soybeans have gotten a really

bad rap in the last few years because they're genetically modified" — and instead uses beans, legumes or nuts.

There's a sustainability element to serving more plant-based foods. "Reducing the amount of meat we consume is huge for the environment," Stuckrath says.

There's also a guest services element to this trend. "One of the things most meeting planners are getting away from is that special meal area where people feel singled out," Peroutka says. "We try to offer a regular meal that appeals to everybody."

Starch Replacements and Other Alternative Foods

As more people adopt special diets such as paleo or gluten-free — and as more people develop food allergies



Experient, along with MGM Event Productions, created a color-coded dining experience at Bellagio (here and center inset below); as well as breakfast and breaks at The Mirage (below left and right).

— starch replacements and other food alternatives will continue to garner interest. “The one I love is alternative pastas,” says Stuckrath. “You can use a spiralizer to create pasta from vegetables such as carrots and zucchini.” It’s also possible to purchase pasta made with almond flour or chickpea flour.

Alternative milks made from products such as rice, soy, hemp, nut or coconut remain popular with many guests. Stuckrath is seeing more cooks use alternative sweeteners, including agave, date sugar and maple syrup.

“Transparency in food is huge right now,” she says. “Not just what meals are free of but what they actually contain.” Sharing a list of the ingredients for every dish will be appreciated by many guests, not just those with allergies or special diets.

Ethnic-Inspired Items

“The crowds we’re catering to are getting more and more diverse,” Peroutka says. That, combined with foodie culture, means guests are more open to exploring different flavors.

Peroutka likes to experiment with ethnic cuisines at breakfast. “We’re exploring Indian-inspired breakfast items right now,” he says. “It’s a good fusion;

“Experience design is one of the trends that continues to develop. The same is true of personalization.”

**Karen Watson, Director of Strategic Events
Experient, Austin, TX**

there’s some egg in it, but it’s more like handheld items with authentic flavors.” Many of these foods, he points out, are lower in fat than the traditional bacon, fried potatoes and eggs, which fits with the trend toward more healthful eating.

Offering a variety of exciting flavors can work great at other meals too. Peroutka recently did a street food-inspired dinner for a cloud software company. He created three different hot dog options using housemade sausages. There was a banh mi-style dog, a German-style offering made with brat-

wurst, and the “confused Californian,” which had an avocado topping.

For planners looking to introduce ethnic foods to their attendees, Stuckrath says cuisines from Thailand, the Philippines and other Asian countries are really big right now. So is food from South American and Middle Eastern countries. “There’s a lot more melding of flavors across different countries and continents,” she says, which can lead to some interesting fusion dishes.

More Beverage Trends

Premium beverage stations are an up-and-coming trend. Ditch the airtops of coffee and invite baristas to whip up lattes, Americanos and other hot drinks in front of guests. “It’s like bringing in a mini Starbucks,” says Schugt. “That’s an amazing presentation for groups.”

Cold-pressed coffee is another craze among the caffeinated set. Find ways to incorporate it into cocktails or daytime drinks. And don’t forget about tea. For people

ing to offer a signature cocktail created just for that event. The cocktail can reflect a theme, such as Prohibition-era drinks or beverages using local spirits. Or it can reflect some aspect of the group’s personality and tastes.

Customized F&B Experiences

In addition to quality food and beverages, event attendees want to have can’t-miss experiences. “Experience design is one of the trends that continues to develop,” says Karen Watson, CMP, director of strategic events for Experient. “The same is true of personalization.”

Watson created a dining experience at Las Vegas’ Bellagio that exemplifies this trend. Her goal was to make sure the 500 people who attended felt like they were attending the best dinner party they’d ever been to.

She started by surveying attendees and asking them to rank 10 different types of cuisine by what they’d most enjoy eating. From the survey she narrowed the choices to seven different themed meals that the kitchen would prepare.

MGM Event Productions created customized tablescapes to go with each cuisine. Guests who wanted a steakhouse-style meal would be seated at round tables with metal chairs and centerpieces that featured cowboy boots and sunflowers. Tables and chairs that could be lit up with turquoise lights were used for the seafood setups.

As part of the survey, attendees also were asked a few personal questions such as their favorite sports, television shows and books. Watson made seat assignments based on those questions so everyone would be at a table with people they had something in

“(Larger hotels) are able to create these intimate, unique, almost farm-to-table banquet experiences for thousands of people.”

**Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Eden Prairie, MN**



A “street fair” at Naples Grande Beach Resort featured various food stations, including farm-to-table, Asian hot pot, taqueria and Mediterranean options.

common with. There were tables for people who played sports and people who liked to watch sports; tables for guests who admired the same famous people and liked the same kind of music. “There was even a ‘Game of Thrones’ table,” she says.

Event guests, who were staying at The Mirage for the conference, received invitations to the closing dinner at the Bellagio that were color-coded to their choice of cuisine (red for Asian food, blue for comfort food, etc.). When they came to the hall for the pre-dinner reception, they found a wall painted with the images of seven different houses with doors that would take them to

their area of the dining hall. The houses also were made up to resemble the theme of the cuisine. The Asian house was flanked by regal lions; the comfort food house had real shrubbery in front.

When folks went through each door, their area of the room was spotlighted in the theme color so they could easily find their table (see photos on page 14–15). “Even the waiters were dressed in appropriate colors for the seven different concepts,” Watson says.

The event was a tremendous amount of work: Watson says it took about two weeks to do the seating assignments. But her guests were truly treated to an experience they’ll never forget.

‘Live’ Experiences

Live food events, where meals are prepared in front of guests, are getting more popular. “I’m seeing more and more requests for sushi stations,” says Gregg Herning, vice president of sales at Las Vegas’ Bellagio. These are sushi bars where chefs prepare the food in front of guests. “Even though it’s a laborious and expensive endeavor, people want to do it because it will wow their participants.”

“As people’s knowledge of food grows, their thirst for information grows too,” says Watson. That informed her decision to create a live cooking event for another trip she organized.

The group of 30 people was staying at the Boca Raton Resort & Club. The chef planned an unforgettable fishmonger's lunch.

"They took us to the sidewalk by the water," Watson says. "The executive chef was there in his rubber overall suit, and he got on his smartphone with one of the fishermen he gets fish from regularly. The fisherman pulled up alongside us and the other chefs started loading the fish off the boat into a big wheelbarrow." The chefs filleted the tuna and made a sushi appetizer in



"Transparency in food is huge right now. Not just what meals are free of but what they actually contain."

Tracy Stuckrath, CSEP, CMM, CHC, CFPM, President and Chief Connecting Officer, Thrive! Meetings & Events, Atlanta, GA

front of the group. While they worked, the head chef told them all about the fish, including its habitat, sustainability, market price and what else it could be used for.

After attendees had finished their appetizer, they went back inside so the chefs could prepare the remainder

of their meal. Everything was done in front of the group, so the educational component continued throughout the meal. Not only did guests learn cooking techniques, they got recipes so they could prepare some of the same dishes at home.

Not all live food events have to be on par with this one. "Bring the chefs out and have them interact with your group or do different tastings," Stuckrath says. Beer and food pairings, cheese and salt tastings, or champagne and chocolate tasting are out of the norm and will give guests an experience that engages multiple senses.

Immersive Experiences

"The new trend is to get the participants involved in the cooking process," Herning says. "It's not just watching a cooking demonstration, it's being part of it." Bellagio can set up cooking classes or opportunities for people to act as celebrity chefs giving cooking demonstrations. Their staff videotapes these sessions so each attendee has a memento of their experience, and guests can receive a Bellagio or Tuscan Kitchen apron with their name embroidered on it.

Another fun option is to participate in a mixologist session. "We'll divide the group up, put them with their own mixologist and have the smaller groups compete to create the next new very cool mixed drink," Herning says. "Sometimes we promise the winner we'll highlight their drink as the happy-hour drink. We'll show a picture of the drink, the recipe and put 'as created by' with the guest's name. It's much more immersive than just standing there."

And that's definitely the expectation of guests these days, whether they're attending a reception, meal or any other part of an event. **C&IT**



Food labeling at events like this one for Slow Food Atlanta, which supports local food culture, identifies appropriate fare for those with food sensitivities or particular philosophies.

Photos by PWP Studios/courtesy of Thrive! Meetings & Events



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Site Selection



Xyngular's President Marc Walker says their sales reps are eager to earn a return trip to Robert Redford's Sundance Mountain Resort in Utah.

Credit: Xyngular

The Natural Majesty of the Surroundings Motivates Attendees to Greater Heights of Performance

By Patrick Simms

From an incentive travel point of view, the draw of the mountains can be comparable to the draw of the sea.

Evidence comes from the incentive programs of Xyngular, a Lehi, Utah-based health and nutrition products company. The Caribbean (via cruise) and Bora Bora are among the destinations the company utilizes for its six to eight annual incentive trips, but competing and perhaps eclipsing those des-

tinuations in terms of popularity is Utah's Sundance Mountain Resort.

After a visit to Robert Redford's creation, Xyngular's sales representatives will often ask, "How can I earn my way back to Sundance?" remarks company President Marc Walker. "So we have added our Sundance Return Trip, where if someone gets a certain amount of sales in a month we invite them back to be a mentor for the other people there."

Xyngular's sales representatives do

love the sun 'n' fun destinations, Walker says, but "there is something special about Sundance, and when they've been there they want to go back."

Indeed, the group has been going back for seven years to enjoy the amenities at Sundance, a property that epitomizes the mountain resort. Tucked away in a little valley near Mount Timpanogos, the resort recently added a new ski lift and a new zip tour, one of the longest in North America. Xyngular's qualifiers

have taken advantage of both activities, as well as the Redford Conference Center for their meetings.

Part of nearly 14,000 sf of onsite meeting space, the facility has a rustic feel with plenty of wood accents as well as a lobby with a large fireplace. With 95



Credit: Cheyenne Mountain Resort

guest rooms (undergoing a renovation through the first quarter of 2018), the property is a nice fit for Xyngular's 40-60 incentive winners and spouses. "We know most of the staff by now, and they know us," says Walker. "And we've been treated well since day one. They could get used to you (after seven years) and not go the extra mile, but that's never happened. For example, in the winter when we do an outdoor event with fire pits they'll be out there shoveling the snow to make a place for our people; last year they had three feet."

Outdoor Events

Outdoor functions, weather permitting, are practically a must at a mountain resort so that attendees can take in the natural majesty of their surroundings.

Raleigh, North Carolina-based FMI Corporation, a management consulting and investment banking provider for the engineering and construction industry, tries to mix in outdoor gatherings as part of its events at Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs. Since 2003, the company has staged client-facing leadership training conferences at the 316-room resort, set on 200 scenic acres. "It's an incredible setting at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the Front Range we call it here in Colorado Springs," says Mark Hooey, consultant and corporate planner with FMI Corporation, who is based in the Denver office.

A great indoor vantage point to appreciate that setting is Cheyenne's

Mountain View Restaurant, infused with natural light from large windows and offering outdoor seating. "They have an incredible buffet with multiple entrees, a well-stocked salad bar and a dessert bar as well," says Hooey. "We're meeting before and after the meal so a buffet works very well for us (as opposed to a more time-consuming plated meal). And if the main restaurant is too busy with a special event for a large group, they'll accommodate us and put us in a breakout room for our meal. And we'll have our own mini buffet line with the same selection."

While bringing in only 10-50 attendees at a time, FMI Corporation receives highly attentive service from the resort staff during the full week of the event. Over the years, the group has convened in a variety of spaces within Cheyenne's more than 40,000 sf of function space. "They're very aware of what we do each day, and if we need a quick turn on a meeting space from an open space to a classroom or boardroom setting, they're right on time to help us make those transitions," Hooey adds.

When not in sessions, including before and after the conference, attendees have a slew of amenities to enjoy onsite, a highlight being the Alluvia Spa & Wellness Retreat. Seasonal offerings include an 18-hole Pete Dye-designed golf course, a private lake with watersports and five outdoor pools. The resort also creates "Signature Meeting Experiences" for groups, such as The Amazing Race



Mountain views abound from Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs, CO.



Yoga on the mountaintop at Keystone Resort in Colorado Springs, CO, and the Ski Tip Lodge.

Credit: ©Matt Bass / Vail Resorts

(teambuilding based on the hit TV show), Crafty in Colorado Springs Beer Tasting (the city is home to more than 150 craft breweries) and Glow Golf (a nighttime experience of the Pete Dye course).

Toward the end of FMI's conference, many attendees make time to visit some of Colorado Springs' remarkable attractions, from Garden of the Gods to Seven Falls to Manitou Springs. "The experience and the setting has been phenomenal," says Hooey in sum. "Our program has been going for 20 years, and it's largely successful because clients go back to their home company and say, 'That was amazing; we need to send more people.' So the marketing has been word of mouth."

Unique Location = Unique Spaces

Another popular option for groups in a state known for its mountain resorts is located in Keystone, amidst three mountains: Dercum Mountain, North Peak and the Outback. Similar to FMI's relationship with Cheyenne, Louisville, Colorado-based CableLabs has found a long-standing partner in Keystone Resort, taking its annual meeting there for about 18 years.

Keystone offers 1,200 lodging units across three neighborhoods, a good logistical match for the approximately 850 cable operators, internal associates and vendors who attend CableLabs' annual meeting. Options range from the Keystone Lodge & Spa to the centrally located Inn to Ski Tip Lodge, converted from an 1880s stagecoach stop. The Keystone Conference Center

houses more than 60,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space, complementing an additional 40,000 sf of meeting space resort wide. "We find that the Keystone Conference Center meets our needs; it's an independent building so we can really own the building when we're there. And it's just the right size for our event," explains Annette Smith, manager corporate events at CableLabs.

"The other thing that makes Keystone unique for us is certainly the self-contained services," she adds. "They handle the shipping themselves. Our electrical needs are also met: We require a Com-cast cable feed in for our broadband service; we have a one gigabit fiber line that drops in." In addition, Wi-Fi is available throughout the meeting rooms and common areas.

Taking full advantage of its natural environs, Keystone offers several unique spaces for special events, including Keystone Stables, Decatur Field, Keystone Lakeside Gazebo, the Mountain View Terrace, Mountain House and Summit House, Key Top Overlook and more. "People love to be in the mountains," says Smith. "There is biking, hiking and gondola rides to the top of the mountain. It's almost a game with them to sight wild animals: a moose, a deer, a black bear, even a mother bear and her babies behind the convention center."

Smith also commends the resort's culinary creativity and service. "I think that the Keystone F&B organization is probably one of the most interesting in the area. They rival anybody because of the way they bring in interns to the F&B staff. They bring in culinary students,

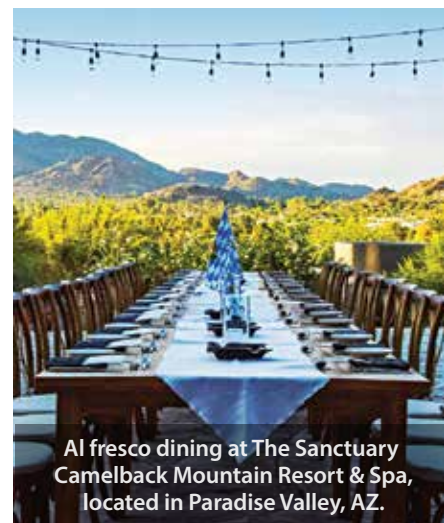


Credit: ©Bob Winstett / Vail Resorts

and that gives them a freshness; you're not seeing the same person doing the same thing all the time," she explains. "If I say I need to do an event that focuses on Thai cuisine, I would guarantee you I would have a good menu, and it would taste like it should." For a taste of classic Colorado beef, the CableLabs group sometimes buys out the Keystone Ranch steakhouse, set in an authentic 1930s homestead.

Keystone is managed by Vail Resorts, a few of whose properties are undergoing improvements. The Pines Lodge, a RockResort set among aspen and pine groves on the slopes of Beaver Creek Mountain, is conducting a renovation of its 60 guest rooms, as well as tech upgrades with the addition of 55-inch televisions and USB ports in every room.

In Park City, Utah, the Grand Summit Hotel is closing for renovation from April through mid-summer. A ski-in/ski-out, AAA Four Diamond resort, the Grand Summit Hotel offers 350 lodging options and several on-mountain venues for groups, such as the recently expanded Red Pine Lodge accommodating up to 450 guests.



Al fresco dining at The Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa, located in Paradise Valley, AZ.

Credit: The Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa

"It's (Cheyenne Mountain Resort) an incredible setting at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the Front Range we call it here in Colorado Springs."

Mark Hooey, Consultant, FMI Corporation, Denver, CO



In February, Vail Resorts entered an agreement to acquire Stowe Mountain Resort, in Stowe, Vermont, from Mt. Mansfield Company Inc. for a purchase price of \$50 million. Stowe Mountain Resort will be Vail Resorts' first mountain resort on the East Coast. Stowe Mountain Resort includes the 312-room Stowe Mountain Lodge and offers 56,000 sf of function space, a world-class spa, two 18-hole championship golf courses, the Spruce Peal Performing Arts Center and some of New England's finest skiing with more than 100 trails.

Peaks and Lakes

Farther down the East Coast lies a classic mountain resort in Bolton Landing, New York. Set on Lake George within the Adirondacks, the Sagamore Resort was built in 1883 and pairs Victorian architecture with AAA Four Diamond quality and service.

Ideal for smaller groups, the property offers 137 guest rooms and a generous amount of indoor meeting space: more than 32,000 sf, including the 15,760-sf Conference Center and the 10,080-sf Sagamore Ballroom. Several improvement projects have been completed or are underway at the Sagamore. Wireless connectivity and download speeds are being increased from 3MB to 10MB. The 32-inch flat-screen TVs in the main hotel have been replaced with 50-inch TVs, and nano doors have been added around the indoor pool so it becomes more of an open-air concept throughout the seasons. In addition, room renovations to the entire main hotel are being planned.

Go Westward

A very different but equally beauti-

ful mountain experience lies out West in Arizona and California. The Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa, located on 53 acres in Paradise Valley, Arizona, offers 109 guest rooms and has recently unveiled \$2 million in renovations to its Spa Casitas and Spa Suites. Conducted in three stages, the project also saw the 2016 introduction of Spa House (a 3,500-sf mountain enclave for

a 650-sf indoor gathering area and bar, a 600-sf ground-floor dining terrace, a 950-sf upper-level dining deck and a 2,000-sf lawn area, complemented by a private boat pier, outdoor whirlpool, fire pit and barbecue.

Groups currently have more than 15,000 sf of indoor and outdoor function space at the 170-room Ritz-Carlton. During free time, attendees can



The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe.

Credit: The Ritz-Carlton

groups of up to 16) and a complete redesign of the resort's Mountain Casita accommodations in 2015. The 12 Spa Casitas surround the resort's infinity-edge pool and award-winning Sanctuary Spa. The 12 Spa Suites feature glass rock fireplaces and panoramic views of Paradise Valley's Sonoran landscape.

The Lake Tahoe experience is also a "paradise" for groups, whether they're skiing, hiking or just taking in the alpine village of Northstar California. An upscale resort choice ideal for incentive groups is The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe, the area's first AAA Five Diamond resort. Expected to open this summer is the Lake Club, an elegant, multilevel dining and bar facility with panoramic views of Lake Tahoe. The facility features



Credit: ©Chris Cypert

repair to the 17,000-sf spa and fitness center, or get a little adventurous by taking a gondola ride to the Village at Northstar or a six-mile trip to historic downtown Truckee.



"We know most of the staff (at Sundance Resort) by now, and they know us. And we've been treated well since day one. They could get used to you (after seven years) and not go the extra mile, but that's never happened."

Marc Walker, President, Xyngular, Lehi, Utah

Speaking of adventure, The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe has recently launched a resort-wide program called *Après Adventurist*, offering guests both summer and winter packages of activities. An "Adventurist" acts as a host and escort for activities ranging from wine tasting to stargazing to snowmobile tours.

Exploring Nature in Teams

A mountainside environment tends to bring out the outdoorsman in any attendee, and exploring nature can certainly become a team experience that breeds cohesiveness. Vail Resorts has recently introduced new teambuild-

ing experiences in partnership with CBST Adventures. Available at Vail Resorts properties in eight destinations across Colorado, Utah and California, the menu of activities includes Beaver Creek Winter Rush, based on Winter Olympic games; Vail Resorts RiverVentures Expedition, a rafting or float trip combined with strategic challenges; and Team Tune Up at Lake Tahoe, a corporate wellness/holistic program that features full-body circuit training, yoga and meditation out in nature.

Another notable example of a mountain resort curating outdoor teambuilding activities is Mohonk Mountain

activities that integrate survival skills, nature awareness and an "escape from technology." The new program includes options such as Explore "Man Vs. Wild," where participants work together to master the "Basic 4" elements of survival while learning to effectively communicate; Fire-Building, a mini-break where groups practice this ancient skill; Nature Walks, led by Mohonk's naturalist, Michael Ridolfo; and Forest Bathing, an ancient Japanese form of meditation led by Mohonk's Director of Mindfulness Programming Nina Smiley, Ph.D.

Planners who want their group's lodging experience to be "close to nature" can consider renting Mohonk Mountain House's newest accommodation, Grove Lodge, which debuted in September. Located by a fern grove on the northeast side of the 1,200-acre property, the 7,000-sf, two-story lodge utilizes native stones, reclaimed wood, natural finishes and sustainable materials throughout. It features six rooms and a 1,080-sf Great Room with cathedral ceilings, exposed wood beams, a natural hardwood floor and artwork from Hudson Valley artists.

Overall, a mountain resort promises immersion into some of our country's most inspiring landscapes. And from an incentive perspective, it's a path historically less trodden than the beach destinations. But as the Xyngular group's longtime partnership with Sundance Mountain Resort shows, even after any novelty has worn off, attendees are still keen on earning return trips, which require achieving an elevated sales quota. The lure of the mountains, it seems, incentivizes them to greater heights of performance. **C&IT**



Mohonk Mountain House is a Victorian-style National Historic Landmark in New York's Hudson Valley.

Credits: Mohonk Mountain House

House in New Paltz, New York. Founded in the 1800s like the Sagamore, Mohonk is a Victorian-style National Historic Landmark nestled in the Hudson Valley. Surrounded by 40,000 acres of pristine forest and protected wildlife, the resort is well positioned to offer groups a "back to the roots" selection of meeting



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Meeting Trends

ETHICS



What Is Proper Conduct?

The Answer Is Not Always Black or White
— But Often Many Shades of Gray

By Christine Loomis

If you know you cannot be influenced to recommend or book a property simply because a hotel offers you planner points or expensive gifts, is it OK to take them? Is accepting an invitation to a FAM or a complimentary site visit inherently wrong...or never wrong? What should a planner do if he or she sees a colleague or boss doing something inappropriate that could also be unethical?

Most associations that serve the meetings industry offer ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for planners to embrace. The Convention Industry Council, for example, has a CMP Standards of Ethical Conduct Statement and Policy, and asks all CMP recipients to pledge, among other things, to:

- Maintain exemplary standards of professional conduct at all times.
- Actively model and encourage the integration of ethics into all aspects of the performance of duties.
- Never use the position of planner for undue personal gain and promptly disclose to appropriate parties all potential and actual conflicts of interest.

If It Feels Wrong...

Ethics should by definition be crystal clear. Things are either right or they're wrong...right? Alas, the answer is not always as definitive as one would think. And not every meeting planner sees every ethical issue in exactly the same way. But most agree on this point: If it feels wrong, it probably is.

We went to a few industry experts — meeting planners — and asked them for their thoughts on a number of potential ethical dilemmas. Here's what they had to say.

To start, there was no consensus on what the most prevalent ethical dilemmas for planners are. Blue Janis, an Experient national account manager based in Florida, says, "To me, there is really only one: Not putting the needs and best interest of the client before those of the planner."

Nell Nicholas, senior director, global accounts, HelmsBriscoe, notes, "This is open to interpretation. One potential ethical issue is FAM abuse. If a planner has not booked a destination, should he/she accept a FAM trip into that destination? The flip side of that coin is, if a planner has not been to a destination, how is he/she able to

sell it to stakeholders for future business? It's a sticky wicket! Stringent qualification on the supplier side can certainly alleviate this potential issue, including real potential for business in that destination and overall volume of business booked, years in the business, how many FAMs the planner has already been on in that year, etc.," Nicholas says.

"Another possible ethical issue is option abuse. Both planners and hoteliers need to be fully transparent on their holds prior to contracting. This goes for both sides. If hotels are holding a second option, it's always helpful for planners to know what the possibility is of going to first option and what the parameters are on that second-option hold to properly communicate with their stakeholders about the viability of going to contract. For planners," she says, "full transparency about how strongly the percentage of that hotel winning the business and why/why not is really helpful for a hotel to manage its dates more efficiently. Open and clear lines of communication are key for both parties to maximize revenues and create successful programs."

Commissions or Kickbacks?

Dayne P.S. Sullivan, CTA, meeting planner and event manager with Adventures LLC, a San Antonio, Texas, company offering meeting planning and DMC services, says, "One of the most prevalent ethics issues that we've experienced is hotel sales staff attempting to 'persuade' a planner to choose their hotel over another through gifts or freebies. This includes free hotel stays that can be used for sites or vacations."

On the DMC front, he says, "Another issue we've experienced lately pertains to independent planners and hotels asking for commissions (which also could be considered kickbacks) from DMCs, venues, etc., for simply referring them or making the company a preferred vendor.

"Our company is a hybrid that provides meeting and event management as well as the work of a destination management company, so we get hit from multiple sides by this issue. It is not uncommon for an independent planner to contact our DMC division and ask us to create an experience or manage a meeting/event and then expect us to pay them a commission on the total event spend.

"I can understand commissions or fees being

As a recipient of the CMP designation by the Convention Industry Council ("Certificant"), a CMP must pledge to:

- Maintain exemplary standards of professional conduct at all times.
- Actively model and encourage the integration of ethics into all aspects of the performance of my duties.
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- Maintain the confidentiality of all privileged information, including the identity or personal information of other CMP candidates and the contents of the CMP examination, except where required by law to disclose.

Never use my position for undue personal gain and to promptly disclose to appropriate parties all potential and actual conflicts of interest.

- Communicate all relevant information to my employer in a truthful and accurate manner in order to facilitate the execution of my fiduciary responsibilities.
- Not use the CMP designation or service mark in any way other than that which is authorized by the Convention Industry Council, and to immediately cease using the designation should I fail to maintain the designation.

As a recipient of the CMP designation by the Convention Industry Council ("Certificant"), a CMP must pledge to:

- Maintain exemplary standards of professional conduct at all times.
- Actively model and encourage the integration of ethics into all aspects of the performance of my duties.
- Perform my responsibilities in accordance with the laws and regulations of the local, state or national governments under which I reside.
- Maintain the confidentiality of all privileged information, including the identity or personal information of other CMP candidates and the contents of the CMP examination, except where required by law to disclose.

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- To be truthful in all information provided to the CIC in all applications and certification applications at all times.

paid by a DMC, AV company or event company with inside or on-property sales offices at a hotel," Sullivan says. "However, to ask for a commission simply for referring an event planner or DMC only drives up the cost to everyone concerned. The referrals should be based on the company's knowledge and service level, not on how much they will pay to the referring planner or property. This also happens with many meeting planning and DMC networks."

Sullivan says planners should not be afraid to ask a network or organization how they are funded or if they are paid commissions or referrals.

"I also find it appalling," he continues, "when

I also find it **appalling** when a hotel salesperson asks me to **share** what other hotels are offering in their proposals."

Dayne P.S. Sullivan, CTA

Event Manager, Adventures LLC, San Antonio, TX

a hotel salesperson asks me to share what other hotels are offering in their proposals. We ask that they give us their best possible offer at the beginning, and the decision will be based on what is best for our client. By asking me to share what another property is offering, they diminish their credibility, and I immediately place that property at the bottom of my list."

Guidelines Count

For Sam K. (not his real name), a planner in the automotive industry who wishes to remain anonymous, ethical dilemmas are made more difficult when a company does not have clear guidelines and rules in place, or does — but managers and other employees skirt around them. "My company has rules and guidelines," he says, "but some policies are more 'don't ask, don't tell.'"

That leaves employees in murky territory.

Most planners agree that accepting invitations to FAMs or paid-for site inspections is not in itself inherently unethical. As Nicholas notes, planners need to see properties firsthand in order to be able to deliver the best information to clients. The ethics issue comes into play when planners accept an invitation to properties they

know they won't book or that they've been to multiple times.

Janis puts it this way: "As long as the planner is accepting invitations to FAMs or arranging site inspections to destinations that can be realistically selected by the client, I don't think a planner has any ethical concerns. Planners that accept FAM invitations for personal pleasure reasons are in a serious ethical swamp."

Sullivan points out that, unfortunately, many planners don't know or are on the fence about what is and is not acceptable. "I understand the need to get planners to see your city, hotels and venues; however, it becomes an issue when a

planner knowingly accepts a free trip or hotel stay to a property they or their client will never use. What I believe is a more ethical way to treat this issue," he says, "is to have the planner pay for the trip with the possibility of being reimbursed if/when a group contract is signed."

"While we will accept complimentary hotel rooms for site visits," he adds, "these are written into the hotel agreements for our groups and are strictly limited. I can only remember participating in three FAM trips during my 18 years as a planner, and I only attended if we had a client interested in booking business at that location. However, I have witnessed others on the same FAM trips, making the statement, 'Oh this is a vacation I needed.' I believe every FAM should be vetted, and I know it is hard to do so."

Nicholas believes site inspection invitations are best for planners "when there is an RFP out to demonstrate the veracity of the site inspection." She says getting the CVB involved with the RFP is a key factor in planning site inspections.

"CVBs are another layer of support to assist with complimentary site inspection visits," she says. "Circumstances may arise when a hotel cannot comp the planner, say when visiting a hotel during high-demand dates. In that case, when one hotel is in contention of winning the business, a win/win situation is to charge the client the room rate for the site (hopefully it is discounted!) and credit the client that room rate off the master bill if the hotel is selected for the program."

Admittedly, she adds, this gets a little dicey when a destination is in high demand and multiple hotels are on the site inspection list. "When there is no RFP out and a hotel offers a complimentary site inspection, it's important that the

"Planners that accept **FAM invitations** for personal pleasure reasons are in a serious **ethical swamp**"

Blue Janis

National Account Manager, Experient, Fort Pierce, FL

planner offer full disclosure — before accepting the invitation — as to the potential for booking that destination."

While planners in Sam K's company cannot accept complimentary airfare or attend organized FAMs or comped site inspections, "They can accept comped hotel nights during site inspections — but those are then worked into the subsequent contract so that everything is transparent."

Handling Points and Gifts

When it comes to hotel points offered to planners by properties, planners are divided. How gifts from hotels and CVBs should be handled also is not always clear.

In terms of points, "I represent a major third party," Janis says. "Our company policy, one I completely agree with, prohibits me taking points."

Nicholas believes that for the vast majority of planners, their ethics are not compromised if they accept hotel points. "There is no dilemma about collecting points as a planner for a program," she says. "I have had this conversation with several planners, all of whom understand that the points are a perk of the role of meeting planner and can be used in any way the planner would like. I don't know a single planner who punches a time clock, and the hours, especially onsite, are brutal. The demands of a planner onsite can be insane while their only focus is to execute a successful program. All the moving parts and details for a planner onsite to consider are exhausting. If a hotel wants to give points to a planner as a thank you, there should be no issue with that."

She also doesn't believe that the acceptance of points clouds a planner's decision-making. "When selecting a property, the planner has a whole host of stakeholders to satisfy from a budgeting standpoint to the style and scope of

the selected property. If a hotel is selected for personal gain, then, yes, the planner has compromised his or her position. But I don't believe there is a planner out there who would compromise their position in a company for hotel points."

For Sullivan, it's about how those points are used. "On occasion, we have accepted hotel points. However, they are always used for site visits or business purposes. Every planner should make sure there are written guidelines in place and an understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable. This will also protect them from repercussions if something is said or done that goes against the guidelines. Make sure they are specific! I have never thought of hotel points as part of the discussion process. I would rather the hotel do something more for my client so their hotel is more of a value."

Planners in Sam K's company cannot accept planner points from a hotel, nor can they accept gifts over a value of \$50. But that tricky 'don't ask, don't tell' looseness makes some of these rules ineffective. Sam tells a couple of stories that show the dilemma planners face when the rules aren't really the rules. Yet, he points out, checks and balances in the planning system and structures keep planners on more solid ground in his company.

"A hotel company sent a box to a manager at our company to thank him for booking multiple meetings at one of its resorts. Before opening it, he said to the employee who had planned those meetings, 'You did all the work so you can keep it.' But when he opened the gift, it turned out to be a very expensive sterling silver serving dish, which he promptly took home."

On another occasion, Sam says, "A CVB gave two of us the newest iPads as a thanks for booking one of our largest meetings in its city. There was no way to not take them with the CEO of the CVB standing there, which presented me with



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“Find a great **mentor**. ...You are not alone; we have all made mistakes, and we can all **learn from each other.**”

Nell Nicholas

Senior Director, Global Accounts, HelmsBriscoe, Cornwall, CT

contract is in play, several people in the company review it. With this system, planners cannot show favoritism to any one property, CVB or destination, and gifts cannot influence any of the related decisions.”

Newbies Need Solid Advice

For young or new planners facing these issues, the right path may be even less clear. Advice for them from the planners we talked to covered a range of suggestions and solutions, from personal attitudes to company policies.

Janis put it very succinctly. “Be sure you have a clear personal moral code. Always put the needs and best interests of the client before those of your own. If you have to wonder whether it’s inappropriate, it probably isn’t.”

Sullivan’s suggestions include company processes and systems as well as planner clarity. “Adopt a blind bid process,” he says. “We are an independent planning company and have implemented a policy of blind bidding, where-

by one planner in our office will gather all the RFP responses and place them in a comparative spreadsheet. This spreadsheet doesn’t contain any property names or affiliations. It’s then given to a different planner in our office to review, compare and determine which property is giving our client the most ‘bang for its buck.’ At that point, we will have a joint meeting and discuss the pros and cons of each property.”

He says planners should make sure there are specific policies and procedures in place regarding hotel points, gifts, FAM trips, site visits, etc., and they should be updated often. “Your position as a planner will also include being a teacher. Be proactive in helping to develop ethical practices at your company and make sure everything is addressed in the employee handbook or Code of Conduct. It will provide protection for you and your company.

“Lastly,” Sullivan recommends, “Ask questions and then question the answers! Make sure you have a clear understanding of what practices are acceptable and what practices are not. If your conscience or gut tells you something is wrong, it usually is and it needs to be addressed.”

Nicholas encourages planners to seek help from those more experienced. “Find a great mentor,” she says. “We are out there and available to help guide you through tough choices and compromising situations. You are not alone; we have all made mistakes, and we can all learn from each other.”

When it comes down to it, planners put their jobs on the line if they act unethically. “You don’t want to lose your job,” Sam K. says, “so consider whether breaching guidelines, such as accepting planner points when you know you should not, is worth it. As the saying goes, ‘If you would be embarrassed reading about something you did on the front page of the newspaper, don’t do it.’”

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Embracing Drive-in Meetings

The Multiple Benefits of Steering to the Right Site

Meeting and event planners turn to regional drive-in meetings to keep costs down and draw the maximum number of attendees. Moreover, drive-in meetings in or near city centers are convenient and walkable, which enhances the overall experience — exactly what planners and attendees want more than ever nowadays. Here are a few options to consider from coast to coast.

East Coast Classics

Lansdowne Resort and Spa sprawls across 476 acres along the banks of the Potomac River in Leesburg, Virginia. Rich in history and at the gateway of Virginia wine country, the resort is deeply connected to nature and the region. It's also the ideal locale for a drive-in meeting or event for attendees from the East Coast.

Glynnis Judy, corporate meeting event specialist at Taylors, South Carolina-based Touchpoint Energized Communications, produced a corporate event of high-level executives. The

two-day meeting featured a reception on the first night and an outing on the second evening. There were general sessions each day.

By Maura Keller

"The majority of the attendees drove, and there were about 40 to 45 people in attendance," Judy says. "Usually, if you have a beautiful venue like Lansdowne, attendees can plan to arrive early and enjoy the property. They're usually more relaxed when they've driven because they haven't had to deal with airline issues, crowds, etc. They may be able to take advantage of the venue's golf course because it's easier to throw the clubs in the trunk than it is to bring them along on a flight."

The Lansdowne resort features 55,000 sf of event space, exquisite cuisine, recreation and experiences tied to the destination, leaving guests feeling inspired with a new perspective. Just miles away from Washington, DC, Lansdowne is heir to a cherished tradition of Virginia hospitality and is the only full-service, four-diamond resort in the area.

"We've found that drive-in meetings help the meetings flow better as you can plan for a specific start time if you don't have to work around airline delays," Judy says. "Lansdowne is a beautiful property set in an easy-to-reach location and close to major cities. You get the feeling of being far away in a beautiful, lush environment without having to travel too far."

Nearby, Delta Hotels Baltimore Hunt Valley is a premier destination for meetings, conferences and social escapes in the greater DC and Baltimore area because of its proximity to and drivability from both cities. Surrounded by Maryland's renowned horse country, the property is consistently booked by large corporations (including Under Armour, McCormick Corporation, Lucent Technologies, Becton Dickinson and more) and provides meeting planners the best of both worlds — easy access to the nation's largest corporate headquarters and complete serenity in nature.



The Lansdowne Resort and Spa sprawls across 476 acres along the banks of the Potomac River in Leesburg, Virginia.

With an under-the-radar profile, the area's largest collection of meeting space at 30,000 sf and the capacity to accommodate 1,200 event attendees, Delta Hotels Baltimore Hunt Valley is the ideal location for high-powered groups looking for access to Washington and Baltimore. It is close to attractions yet removed from distractions. And better yet, there's complimentary parking for 900.

Delta Hotels Baltimore Hunt Valley boasts a transformative redesign of all interior spaces blending an authentic countryside vibe with a luxurious, modern style.

Another popular drive-in destination is Connecticut where expansion is the name of the game. Leaders of the Mohegan Tribe and Mohegan Sun gathered recently to announce the official plans for The Mohegan Sun Expo Center. Construction is underway with a target opening date of summer 2018. The expansion will span more than 240,000 gross sf and will be located by the Winter Garage and in close proximity to Mohegan Sun's newest hotel, Earth Tower. Mohegan Tribal Chairman Kevin Brown stated, "This new conference center will help solidify Mohegan Sun as not just the premier conventions destination, but the premier resort in the Northeast region. It will enable us to host some of the largest trade shows in the nation and take back some of the lost conventions that seek bigger venues in Boston and New York."

The 21,412-sf ballroom is divisible into two and will feature more than 3,000 sf of prefunction space. There will be 18 meeting rooms in total.

More features include free parking, six loading docks from an open parking field and additional drive-in access from two grade level drive-in doors.

Additional features include a mobile box office, advanced technology, digital displays inside and outside the center, free Wi-Fi and contiguous exhibit space.

The new Expo Center will be a column-free structure with clerestory windows. The main circulation spine that connects the exposition hall to the prefunction area also provides access to the overall facility, including the ballroom and adjustable meeting rooms. Along this path, floor-to-ceiling windows and doors lead visitors onto an outdoor patio that adds gathering space in warm weather and buffers the building from Cove Road that loops

around the entire site. Greenery extends east to the recently completed Earth Tower, which shares the same grand entry as the Sky Tower.

Interior finishes will recall the Tribe's cultural history, with custom carpeting and light fixtures that reflect Native American motifs, the nearby Thames River and the color palettes of the Earth and Sky Towers.

Once the Expo Center is completed in the summer of 2018, Mohegan Sun will be home to the largest meetings and convention spaces between Boston and New York City.

Just a two-hour drive from New York or Boston, another attractive drive-in site in Connecticut is Saybrook Point Inn and Spa in Saybrook, which offers a variety of venue options — from traditional to non-traditional settings for meetings, along with creative teambuilding activities including an Iron Chef-style cooking competition in their award-winning



Mohegan Sun in Connecticut is slated to open a new conference center in 2018.

restaurant Fresh Salt, New England-style fishing boat excursions and scavenger hunts on a hiking trail.

The Hilton Meadowlands Hotel & Conference Center in Meadowlands, New Jersey, also is a favorite drive-in conference hotel featuring 30,000 sf of flexible space. This Northern New Jersey events venue features 15 meeting rooms and two ballrooms, complete with high-speed internet access, video-conferencing services and complimentary event parking.

Pittsburgh on Your Own

Susan Zachardy, events coordinator at GPD Group in Akron, Ohio, understands the importance of having as many attendees as possible for a meeting or event. She recently orchestrated a drive-in leadership retreat for GPD Group at Kimpton Hotel Monaco Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Thirty-one executives participated for a full-day event with a facilitator. As corporations continue to tighten their proverbial purse strings, they recognize that not all meetings are conducive to people's schedules or the company budget — especially those that are held in locales that require the majority of attendees to fly in. But regional drive-in meetings offer cost-effective options to productive getaways without hurting the bottom line.

"The vast majority of past meetings for GPD Group have required flying," Zachardy says. "The only other two cities we have driven to were Detroit and Niagara Falls. From a planning standpoint the hardest part of planning in the past has been having to put so many people on planes. Driving offers all attendees (the option) to arrive on their own time schedule."

For GPD Group's most recent leadership retreat, all 31 attendees drove — from different locations in Ohio and Indiana.

"The convenient location of the hotel was a drawing point, and I investigated four hotels in the Pittsburgh area and

was most impressed with the courteous, knowledgeable and helpfulness of the people that I had original contact with at Hotel Monaco," Zachardy says.

Hotel Monaco Pittsburgh is located in downtown Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle, right next to Mellon Square Park. Its location offers great bars and restaurants within easy reach, and the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, bus station and train station are all within four blocks.

Pittsburgh is easily accessible by car from most Northeast cities, and Hotel Monaco Pittsburgh plays host to some of the best meetings in town. Located within a six-hour drive or less from nine states, Washington DC, and parts of Canada, Pittsburgh is both easy and af-



Glynnis Judy
Corporate Meeting
Event Specialist
Touchpoint Energized
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"They may be able to take advantage of the venue's golf course because it's easier to throw the clubs in the trunk than it is to bring them along on a flight."

fordable to travel to by car. There is an abundance of parking options, from hotel valet, to several parking garages and lots within a five-minute walk, to plenty of street parking — ideal options for drive-in attendees.

West Coast Wows

For Denise Odle, sales assistant and meeting planner at Iridex Corporation in Mountain View, California, drive-in meetings that are close to the main office provide attendees flexibility, which gives them the option to leave when necessary.

"Not only can they go home at night

to be with family, if necessary, but they are also available to go back to the office or other local meetings/events that they need to attend," Odle says. "A few of our attendees did have to leave for other meetings but came back. Coming and going like that is easier when you don't have to fly to and from the venue."

Odle recently planned a yearly global sales kickoff meeting with the sales, marketing, engineering and executive teams at Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa in Monterey, California.

"The sales team was provided with new info, strategy and goals for 2017 along with the opportunity to provide feedback to the main office staff," Odle says.

Designated as an eight-time Forbes Four Star-rated hotel, the Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa features breathtaking views of the ocean, and the hotel's ideal location provides easy access to the area's most vibrant attractions, including Cannery Row, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Fisherman's Wharf and recreational activities such as world-class golf, sailing, scuba diving and whale watching.

The hotel's oceanview event venues are welcoming sites for executive retreats, conferences and seminars, while the ballrooms have adjacent outdoor terraces and beautiful waterfront settings for receptions and social events. The Outdoor Plaza is a stunning, open-air location for private cocktail parties, banquets or barbecues.

"We chose the Monterey area because it was fairly close to the main office, and we didn't have to fly the entire team to the venue," Odle says. "But the location is still far enough away and in a cute little tourist area so that people at least feel like they were getting away from the norm."

Paige Cecil, meeting planner and administrative coordinator for Fresh Source LLC, in Orange, California, recently coordinated an awards dinner at Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa for a retail partner. Attendees included the retailer's employees (the award winners), executives, and a select few of their vendors. All attendees were invited to

stay two nights and to select the complimentary activity of their choice.

"With the exception of a handful of vendors, most drove to the event," Cecil says. "There were approximately 140 attendees. The biggest benefit to drive-in meetings is that the attendees are spending less time with travel. Flying is becoming more and more stressful, so a more local event means the attendees are more likely to enjoy themselves."

Michelle Wilson, a corporate meeting planner who recently orchestrated her company's second three-day teambuilding and celebration meeting at Chaminade Resort & Spa in Santa Cruz, California, had 11 attendees drive to this offsite event.

"Drive-in meetings offer privacy and focus," Wilson says. "When away from the office and in a relaxed atmosphere, I have found drive-in meetings to be an outstanding experience. Offsite meetings have provided our groups with the aforementioned privacy and focus as well as the chance to relax and enjoy the beautiful location. With everyone at one site, participants aren't running to meeting after meeting trying to keep up. The Ropes Course is a tremendous teambonding experience and one we've enjoyed immensely. Having leisure time between workshops and the ability to enjoy meals

Tina Oliver
Meeting Planner
Onyx Meetings
and Events
Kansas City, MO



"The attendees love drive-in meetings because they can be flexible. We have several attendees that take advantage of the more scenic routes that they don't typically get to take."



Located on Cannery Row, Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa is one of the most dramatic waterfront hotels in California.

together or have a bit of private time to rejuvenate helps tremendously."

At Chaminade Resort & Spa they offer the Benchmark Conference Plan (BCP) — a one-price-per-person package that conference professionals tailor to a company's specific objectives. The BCP is a unique and exclusive offering including overnight accommodations, meals, continuous refreshment service, conference space including amphitheaters, boardrooms, large conference rooms and smaller breakout rooms. Each room is set to specifications with ergonomic furnishings. High-tech audio-visual equipment also is part of the package.

The Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort, a working ranch located on 10,500 acres in California's Santa Ynez Valley, about 30 miles northeast of Santa Barbara, is a popular drive-in destination for meetings and events. From custom teambuilding and corporate events, Alisal creates programs for groups of all sizes.

The property is made up of 73 cottages all with working wood-burning fireplaces — and without phones or televisions (although they do have Wi-Fi throughout the property) — making it a truly rustic escape from the daily grind. The Alisal offers various group and teambuilding activities, from ropes courses to country dancing, as well as

a winemakers dinner and winery tours. The resort's Meet & Play package is designed for groups who like to split their time between meetings and recreation. This package includes unlimited recreational activities, including horseback riding, golf, fishing and tennis.

Located 20 minutes from downtown Palm Springs, Hyatt Regency Indian Wells Resort and Spa offers a variety of beautiful indoor and outdoor event venues that will motivate and inspire attendees. Hyatt Regency Indian Wells offers more than 88,000 sf of meeting space accommodating any type of event, from a stunning outdoor event on the Serena Vista Lawn to a full-scale trade show in the Indian Wells Ballroom.

Tina Oliver, meeting planner with Onyx Meetings and Events in Kansas City, Missouri, recently orchestrated a drive-in corporate event at the Omni La Costa Resort & Spa in Carlsbad, California.

"This particular meeting is very special. It's a celebration and thank you from the company to its employees because of their dedication and hard work," Oliver says. "Each attendee is invited to bring a guest. We have one day of meetings and one day of giving back to the community, and it ends with an awards celebration."

Spanning 400 rolling acres in the coastal foothills of Carlsbad, Omni La Costa Resort & Spa is the premier destination for drive-in meetings, confer-



Credit: Sheraton Bay Point Resort

Pelican's at the newly renovated Sheraton Bay Point Resort in Panama City Beach boasts great views from the scenic boardwalk.

ences and social escapes in Southern California area because of its proximity to and drivability from both San Diego and Los Angeles. Consistently booked by large corporations, the property provides meeting planners the best of both worlds, easy access to the nation's largest corporate headquarters such as med-tech giants in San Diego and La Jolla and entertainment in Los Angeles.

"We chose Omni because of their location, size and service. There were 700 people in attendance and 60 percent drove," Oliver says. "The attendees love drive-in meetings because they can be flexible. We have several attendees that take advantage of the more scenic routes that they don't typically get to take. I love it because it saves on airfare and allows me the opportunity to spend it in other areas, such as a great keynote speaker, or a well-known band for the welcome reception."

Southern Gems

Whether it's for corporate retreats, conferences or executive meetings, Callaway Gardens offers a diverse selection of traditional and non-traditional meet-

ing venues as well as a number of lodging, dining, shopping and recreational options throughout the resort for guests to create a customized day outing. This property, which is popular with the Southeast drive market, is just 70 minutes from Atlanta.



Credit: The Lodge and Spa at Callaway Gardens

The Lodge and Spa at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia.

Southern hospitality and the expertise and resources of a city that hosts nearly 11 million visitor days annually, makes Panama City Beach the ideal destination in Florida for meetings, groups, conferences and conventions. Whether it's a business conference, convention, or

executive retreat there are endless options in this beachside community with more than 160,000 sf of flexible meeting space complete with stunning views of the Gulf of Mexico or St. Andrews Bay.

The newly renovated Sheraton Bay Point resort is now open and offers 60,000 sf of flexible indoor and outdoor event space including a 12,000-sf ballroom, 8,000-sf junior ballroom, eight additional breakout rooms, 22 individual meeting rooms, outdoor lawns and a covered deck and private bay beach among other venues that cater to a group's needs. From large conventions for up to 1,500 attendees to intimate board meetings, the Sheraton Bay Point Resort offers a catering staff that can fulfill all dining expectations.

Located on the South Carolina coast, close to Savannah, Georgia, and Hilton Head, South Carolina, Montage Palmetto Bluff is recognized as a premier destination for board meetings, client events, corporate retreats and incentive programs. There are a wealth of activities and dining options as well as meeting space with a residential atmosphere and gorgeous views of the May River. Located on 20,000 acres in South Carolina's low country, Montage Palmetto Bluff is adorned with 100-year-old oak trees and 35 miles of waterfront, providing an unforgettable backdrop for a board meeting, executive retreat or client event. The facilities include more than 16,000 sf of flexible meeting space, including a 7,000-sf ballroom and a 1,800-sf ballroom with an outdoor veranda overlooking the May River.

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Credit: Montage Palmetto Bluff

Montage Palmetto Bluff is nestled along the May River in the low country of South Carolina.

An aerial night photograph of Miami, Florida. The image shows a mix of urban development and green space. On the left, several tall skyscrapers are illuminated with lights. A multi-lane highway with light trails from cars runs diagonally across the middle. To the right of the highway is a large, well-maintained park with many palm trees, walking paths, and some modern architectural structures. In the background, the city extends to the water, with more lights visible. The sky is a deep blue with some clouds.

Meeting in Miami

**From the Vibrant Downtown to Trendy South Beach,
Planners Take Events to the Next Level**

The Magic City

By Maura Keller

Credit: Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau

Miami Continues to Exceed Expectations With New and Newly Reimagined Venues and Experiences

There's nothing more rewarding than planning a meeting that people really want to attend. With beautiful weather, luxurious beaches and state-of-the-art amenities, Miami sizzles with excitement and new opportunities to take meetings and events to the next level.

Miami On the Move for Meetings

As William D. Talbert III, CDME, president and CEO of the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, explains, Miami is a constantly evolving global destination, providing meeting planners with exceptional options for meetings, conventions and events.

"The unparalleled culture, accessibility, hotel rooms and diverse offsite venues set against a backdrop of beautiful weather and beaches are just a few of the elements that make Miami the preeminent locale for meetings and events," Talbert says.

Miami International Airport (MIA) currently serves 109 airlines, which is the most of any U.S. airport. New airlines and nonstop routes are being added in 2017, which will further increase accessibility to the destination.

"Meetings and conventions held in Greater Miami have seen record international attendance due to the ease of air ac-

cess to the destination," Talbert says. "With three convention centers totaling more than 1 million sf, 75 additional meeting venues throughout the destination and more than 50,000 hotel rooms from intimate boutique hotels to luxury resorts and convention hotels, the GMCVB convention sales team is eager to be the meeting planner's onsite, one stop for assistance with every detail from start to finish," Talbert says. "Our experienced, knowledgeable team welcomes the opportunity to work with planners to identify hotels, venues, vendors and more to fulfill and exceed expectations for a highly successful meeting in Miami."

Notably, the Miami Beach Convention Center is undergoing a \$615 million renovation and expansion, which will result in a new facility perfectly designed to host large-scale business, trade, civic and cultural events. The renovation will include a mixed-use, 60,000-sf grand ballroom, 500,000 sf of exhibit space, 81 new breakout rooms spanning 190,000 sf, a 20,000-sf glass rooftop junior ballroom, advanced technology and new versatile indoor/outdoor public spaces.

"The renovation and expansion of the Miami Beach Convention Center adds to the attraction of the destination for meeting and convention planners by offering a totally transformed state-of-the-art, technologically advanced facility with enhanced amenities, service and an extraordinary sense of place that reflects the stunning local environment, culture and community," Talbert says. "In addition, hotels such as the Loews Miami Beach, The Sheraton Miami Airport Hotel & Executive Meeting Center and The Betsy South Beach are just some of the properties that continue to cater to the meetings industry, completing multimillion-dollar renovations to their event spaces."

The Miami Beach Convention Center began commissioning

artists more than two years ago and received 524 applications from artists throughout the world — the largest response in the history of Miami-Dade County.

"The proposed works by these artists exemplify Miami Beach's prestigious quality commitment to commission world-class works of public art," Talbert says. "The Miami Beach Convention Center public art project is a collaboration between the City of Miami Beach and Miami-Dade County's Art in Public Places programs. The public art contribution is estimated at \$7 million. This is the largest public art project commissioned in the United States."

Another major development will rise up in downtown Miami on the site of the former Miami Arena. The Marriott Marquis Miami Worldcenter Hotel & Expo, set to break ground this spring, will offer planners an expansive 365,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space. The two-phase plan includes a 1,100-room tower and 600-room tower. The hotel is part of a 30-acre mixed-use development that will include retail, dining and entertainment, and luxury residences.

"The unparalleled culture, accessibility, hotel rooms and diverse offsite venues set against a backdrop of beautiful weather and beaches...make Miami the preeminent locale for meetings and events."

**William D. Talbert III, CDME, President and CEO
Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau**



Miami Hotels

The 360-room **Trump International Beach Resort Miami** delivered a stellar experience for Kuehne + Nagel Inc., a global transport and logistics company that recently convened its global LCL (Less than Container Load) meeting there. Lourdes Silva, executive assistant and project manager, Seafreight North America at Kuehne + Nagel in Orlando, says, "We chose

the Trump International Beach Resort because we had held a meeting back in 2015 with the resort, and it was an amazing experience," Silva says. "This group wanted to come somewhere where they could escape the cold and have a five-star customer experience. The level of service at Trump International is five star," Silva says. "There wasn't a request that we put in that they couldn't accommodate. One of the nights we arrived back at the hotel around 10 p.m. and the bar was already closed, but they reopened just so our group could enjoy some drinks and net-

working after a long day of meetings." It's emblematic of the overall level of service delivered by

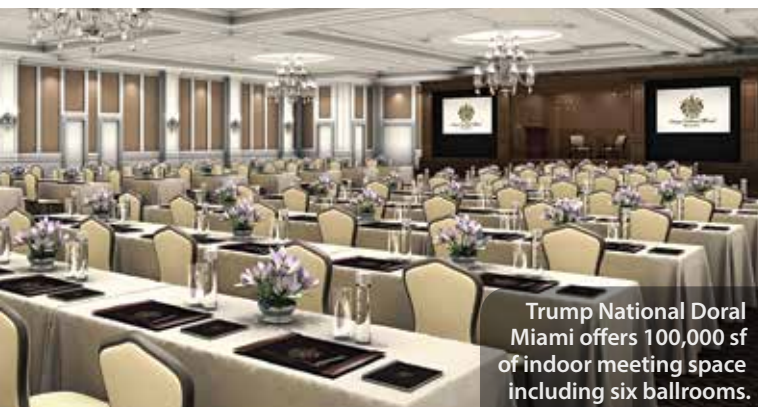


Credit: Miami Beach Convention Center



the conference center service staff who are experienced in assisting planners in all aspects of event execution, from linens and lighting to high-speed Wi-Fi and state-of-the-art AV equipment.

With 22,000 sf of flexible meeting and function space, the first-class facilities at Trump International Beach Resort are ideal for corporate events, team-building activities, meetings, training workshops, leadership seminars and executive retreats. Meeting spaces, which are bathed in natural light, include the 5,075-sf Ocean Ballroom overlooking the Atlantic, the 5,160-sf Bay Ballroom and 16 meeting rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the ocean or bay. There are five outdoor event spaces to choose from, including on the beach, pool deck and terraces, lawn and a rooftop for small gatherings.



Trump National Doral Miami offers 100,000 sf of indoor meeting space including six ballrooms.

Credit: Trump National Doral Miami

Recently, the resort's Gili's Beach Club, which can accommodate up to 250 for receptions and banquets, introduced a new interactive dining experience featuring lava stone grills. Patrons of the casual outdoor eatery, located directly on the beach, choose from a menu of savory meats, vegetables and seafood, and then grill their own entrées at the table on a 700-degree volcanic lava stone.

Trump International Beach Resort, a member of Preferred Hotels Lifestyle Collection, is independently owned by the



"We chose the Trump International Beach Resort because we had held a meeting back in 2015 with the resort, and it was an amazing experience."

Lourdes Silva, Executive Assistant/Project Manager
Seafreight North America, Kuehne + Nagel, Orlando, FL

Dezer family — real estate developers and major stakeholders in many South Florida and New York developments.

After the Trump organization acquired **Trump National Doral Miami** in 2012, the iconic 800-acre resort began an extensive top-to-bottom \$250 million renovation, which encompassed 643 guest rooms, lobby, meeting and event space, 48,000-sf spa, pool complex and restaurants. The property's four championship golf courses, including the famed Blue Monster course, were redesigned as well as the clubhouse, which features an 8,000-sf open-air veranda. The new BLT Prime opened with three private dining rooms featuring indoor and veranda seating with golf course views. The debut of 48 Trump Spa & Suites last spring marked the official completion of the resort's restoration.

Trump National Doral's 100,000 sf of indoor function space boasts six ballrooms, three of which are brand new: the Ivanka Trump Ballroom, the White & Gold Ballroom and the Crystal Ballroom, which overlooks the Blue Monster golf course. The largest is the Donald J. Trump Grand Ballroom with 24,079 sf. Additionally there are 15 breakout rooms, five executive boardrooms, 11 meeting venues with natural lighting and a dedicated event concierge. The meeting facilities offer individual or master controls for heat/AC, telephones, multiple electrical/microphone outlets, high-density internet, with the ability to dedicate bandwidth, and special lighting effects.

There's also 75,000 sf of outdoor event spaces to take advantage of the balmy Florida climate.

At a recent event held at Trump National, one corporate meeting planner remarked that the resort is "the perfect size for our group. It's not too large and not too small. The management and the conference staff do an excellent job for us. They are all superb at their jobs. The conference space is 'disconnected' from the hotel itself, as well as the sleeping rooms, so



Mondrian South Beach and its new Sunset Ballroom and Terrace (left) overlook Biscayne Bay.

Credit: Mondrian South Beach



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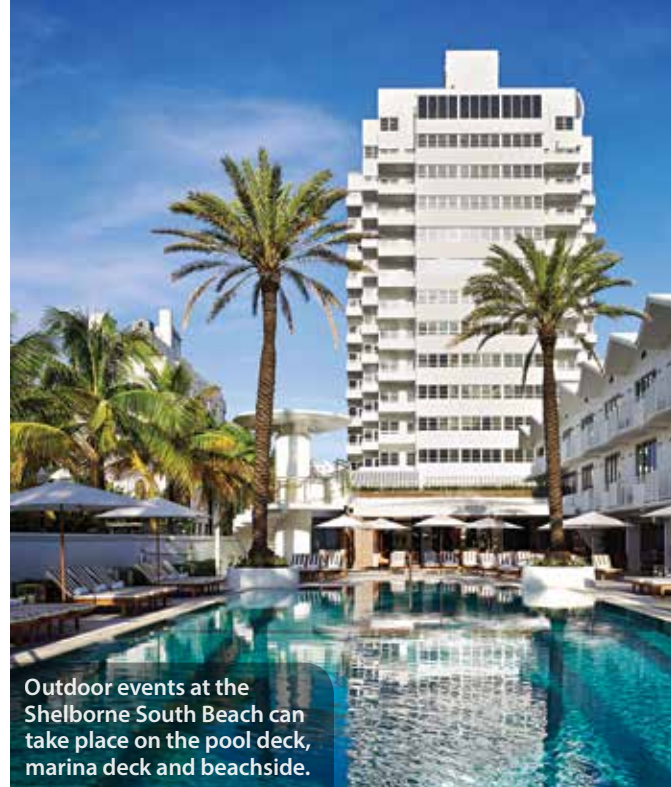
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you feel like you get away from the hotel and are secluded during your meeting sessions. The tremendous amount of breakout rooms provides a lot of options for finding the perfect mix of space.”

Miami’s South Beach has become a mecca of sorts for meetings and events. **Mondrian South Beach** boasts a prime waterfront location overlooking Biscayne Bay and the Miami skyline. The hotel’s 335 studios, one and two-bedroom apartments and penthouses feature views of the marina, bay, ocean and downtown. When Menin Hospitality took over management of the property in 2016, the Mondrian underwent upgrades including the conversion of the Sunset Lounge into the new Sunset Ballroom, which features oversized dome-shaped chandeliers and sweeping views of the bay. The hotel offers a total of 10,000 sf of event space including the 2,600-sf Sunset Ballroom and Terrace, the North and South Studios with lounge terraces, Kissing Gardens and Penthouse Lounge with city and bay views. The lushly landscaped mazes and “Kissing Gardens” are ideal for a small private dinner or a cocktail reception. Mondrian’s Red Lounge offers an intimate setting on Biscayne Bay for a smaller event or cocktail reception. The Mondrian Caffè is perfect for hosting prix-fixe corporate dinners overlooking the city skyline.

Nearby, the oceanfront **Shelborne South Beach**, also man-



Outdoor events at the Shelborne South Beach can take place on the pool deck, marina deck and beachside.

Credit: Shelborne South Beach

and event space, and 13,000 sf of outdoor space, including the pool deck, marina deck and beachside. Post meeting, guests can enjoy the sights and sounds along the Atlantic Ocean and throughout Miami’s art deco district. In addition, guests have access to some of the finest Miami Beach golf courses and tennis centers. The concierge can arrange for private yacht charters for a memorable sightseeing experience for meeting attendees.

With attendees arriving from more than 52 countries, meeting planner Belkis Lopez considers Miami as the ideal hub for her meetings and events. Lopez, vice president of sales and marketing at FIBA in Miami, recently planned the company’s annual FIBA AML Conference at the **InterContinental Miami** located downtown on Biscayne Bay. About 1,450 people attended the event, which featured a keynote address, breakout sessions, exhibition area with 45 booths, networking areas with massage chairs, espresso machines and live streaming of sessions.

“We’ve been partners of the InterContinental for over 17 years,” Lopez says of the waterfront hotel, which has 641 guest rooms and 34 suites. “Their friendly staff who, luckily for meeting planners such as myself, have been with the InterContinental for many years, from the valet parking to the F&B director — they call me by my name — they become an extension of our team, and all that matters is making sure that our event is a success. Their ample, efficient facility, largest in the (financial district), also makes the hotel a key venue to continue to host our event. The exhibit floor is in the same level as the general and breakout sessions, which makes the experience for participants a lot easier.”

More than 101,000 sf of event space among 35 meeting rooms can accommodate up to 3,000 guests at the InterContinental, which has always been a service-oriented venue. “The fact that employees stay and they promote within makes it

“We’ve been partners of the InterContinental for over 17 years. Their friendly staff...become an extension of our team, and all that matters is making sure that our event is a success.”



Belkis Lopez, V.P. Sales and Marketing
FIBA, Miami, FL

aged by Menin Hospitality, is located in the heart of Miami’s art deco district and all that it offers in entertainment, shopping, vibrant nightlife, eclectic dining and world-renowned art galleries. The vintage hotel, originally constructed in 1940, recently underwent a dynamic renovation valued in excess of \$150 million. The property, overlooking a breathtaking beach, features 200 luxurious guest rooms, a full-service spa, oceanfront heated pool and the Oasis Beach Club where attendees can rent jet skis, paddleboards and more. This quintessential South Beach hotel’s meeting rooms can host a variety of events — both intimate and for larger groups. The ballroom can accommodate up to 370 guests, or for more intimate affairs, the stately boardroom is ideal. There is more than 17,000 sf of indoor meeting



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easier for meeting planners and participants who are the hotel clients as well," Lopez says.

Customer service also is paramount for Sky Events Management when choosing a meeting or event venue in Miami. The company sources and manages meetings and events around the world but always enjoys bringing meetings and incentive

trips to the beautiful **W South Beach** with its signature Whatever/Whenever service and 10,000 sf of meeting and event space.

"The most recent group we brought to the W South Beach was for a financial services firm located in New York City that hosts an annual incentive trip for the entire firm," says Michael Burns, CEO/president and business development at Sky Events Management. "The firm flew down all 75 traders for three full days of sun and relaxation, and there is no better place in Miami that can cater to our needs like the W. This same firm enjoyed their experience so much that they are planning on going back to the W South Beach in April of 2017."

Sky Events Management's client was looking for warm weather with a great overall vibe, excellent service and a short flight from New York, so Miami clearly fit the bill.

"While there are some beautiful hotels in South Beach, nothing quite compares to the service we get from the W," Burns says. "The pool is very intimate but still large enough for our guests to enjoy the cabanas, bars and nightlife right on property. And the guest rooms are some of the largest standard and most comfortable rooms you will find in South Beach — and the suites are over-the-top gorgeous. Coupled with some of the most amazing ocean views and floor-to-ceiling windows, it goes without saying that our guests truly enjoyed their time at this property and can't wait to come back...for the 2017 incentive trip."

Located in the heart of South Beach's vibrant art deco dis-

trict, the oceanfront **Loews Miami Beach Hotel** recently completed a \$50 million transformation that included the redesign of the hotel's 790 guest rooms. Guests are now welcomed to a new open and airy lobby anchored by the indoor/outdoor Bar Collins with curated cocktails and a locally infused menu of bar bites. Nautilus, a new pool restaurant and bar, is center stage on a refreshed oceanfront poolscape with firepits and adult-only cabanas. Attendees also can indulge in spa therapies and fitness classes at Loews' exhale Spa. Just steps from the shopping and dining of famous Lincoln Road, as well as the nightlife and entertainment of Ocean Drive, Loews Miami Beach Hotel offers 65,000 sf of refreshed, flexible indoor and outdoor state-of-the-art function space that can accommodate from 10 to 2,700 people. The renovated meeting space includes the 28,000-sf



"While there are some beautiful hotels in South Beach, nothing quite compares to the service we get from the W."

Michael Burns, CEO/President & Business Development
Sky Events Management, Morganville, NJ

American Ballroom plus 17,500 sf of additional indoor space. Outside event spaces also received enhancements, including the expansive Americana Lawn. The hotel's tenured conference team provides everything planners need to create and implement a diverse agenda.

Located on historic Brickell Avenue in the heart of Miami's Brickell Entertainment and Financial District, the 296-room **JW Marriott Miami** boasts extensive renovations including three new concierge level floors, new meeting space plus a new spa and TechnoGym facility. The new design of the meeting space at the JW Marriott is evident throughout the entire fifth floor of the hotel comprising all eight of the breakout meeting rooms, the atrium spaces, gallery and the 10,000-sf Grand Ballroom.

Judy Kaufman, education coordinator at Baptist Health in Miami has hosted several brain injury symposiums at JW Marriott Hotel Miami. Each symposium had attendance of around 150 participants. "We chose the JW Marriott because of the beautiful facilities," Kaufman says. "They have a dedicated conference floor that has meeting and conference space and a lot of room for vendors, lunch, exhibits. We offer our participants continuing education units, a quality symposium, breakfast, snacks and a sit down lunch. ...They also have the opportunity to stay at this beautiful venue at a discounted rate. Although the venue was beautiful and the food was excellent, they pale in comparison to the quality of each staff member. We have always loved being at this facility. It is a block away from Mary Brickell Village, so attendees can also enjoy a fun nightlife with great restaurants, bars and entertainment."



The oceanfront Loews Miami Beach Hotel recently completed a \$50 million transformation.

Credit: Loews Miami Beach Hotel

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Other Miami meeting hotels of note:

The oceanfront **Fountainbleau Miami Beach** resort recently completed a multiphase redesign of the historic Versaille Tower's suites, and the renovation of the resort's poolside cabanas. The landmark hotel features a total of more than 1,500 accommodations in four towers and 107,000 sf of meeting space.

Another great choice for large meetings is the 615-room **Hyatt Regency Miami**, overlooking the Miami River. The hotel offers 100,000 sf of meeting space and is connected to the Miami Convention Center downtown.

A tropical oasis in Aventura, **Turnberry Isle Miami** features a newly renovated spa and fitness center, two championship golf courses, two swimming pools and the culinary expertise of celebrity chef Michael Mina at Bourbon Steak restaurant.

Offering easy access for business travelers, the **Hilton Miami Downtown**, which boasts views of Biscayne Bay and the Miami skyline, is next to the Metro Mover light rail system, 15 minutes from Miami International Airport and near the Port of Miami — the cruise capital of the world.



Spanish pro tennis star Rafael Nadal (l) and superstar Enrique Iglesias just opened the Spanish restaurant Tatal Miami.

Credit: World Red Eye

The **DoubleTree by Hilton Miami Airport & Convention Center** also boasts a convenient location for fly-in meetings, as it's connected to the Miami International Merchandise Mart and the Miami Airport Convention Center.

The historic **Biltmore** in the heart of Miami has hosted presidents, dignitaries and celebrities since 1926. It's the only hotel in Florida designated as a National Historic Landmark. The Biltmore has undergone \$55 million in renovations since 2004.

Kimpton EPIC Hotel is a lifestyle waterfront boutique property downtown at the edge of the Miami River. **Yve Hotel Miami** is another downtown boutique hotel featuring bayfront views and the new Bayfront Meeting Space.



Credit: Miami Culinary Tours

Miami Culinary Tours can host customized, private tours for small and large groups.

Local Color & Culture

Miami Culinary Tours has introduced its first culinary and cultural tour of Little Haiti near the MiMo District. Like its other culinary tours of South Beach, Little Havana, Wynwood and Coral Gables, the Little Haiti tour features educational narration that explores the cuisine, culture and history of the distinctive and colorful neighborhood while attendees enjoy food and drink tastings, artwork, and sights and sounds of the area. Private corporate group tours are available.

Thriller Miami Speedboat Adventures, located within Bayside Marketplace in downtown Miami, recently launched a new tour — "Miami's Only Way to See Stiltsville." The 90-minute tour speeds guests through sparkling Biscayne Bay, where they will see "The Lighthouse" (Cape Florida State Park, the home of a historic lighthouse built in 1825 and is the oldest standing structure in Miami-Dade county). Then the tour slows down to give participants a narration about some of the stilt homes still occupied today in the shallow waters at the edge of Biscayne Bay. Private charters are available. — MK



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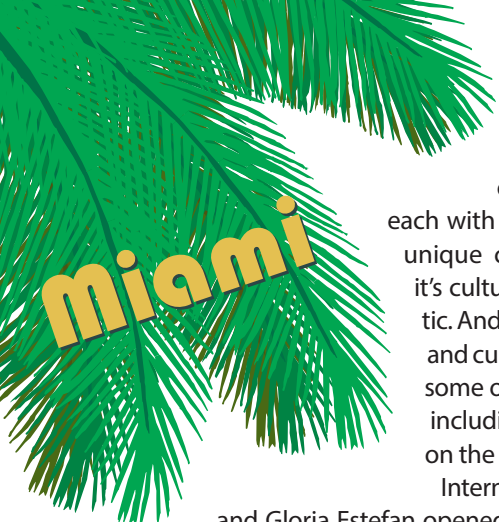
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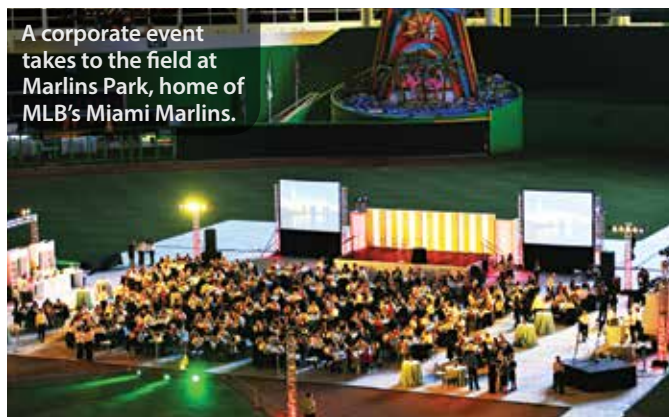


Miami Dining

Miami is a city of neighborhoods — each with its own personality and unique characteristics, whether it's cultural, architectural or artistic. And when it comes to dining and cuisine, Miami's eateries are some of the best in the country, including these newest entries on the epicurean scene:

International superstars Emilio and Gloria Estefan opened the **Estefan Kitchen** in March. The fine-dining Cuban restaurant, located in Palm Court, one of the Miami Design District's central hubs, presents a rotating roster of live music acts and performing servers and bartenders, a nod to the Estefans' storied background and passion for world-class entertainment. The interiors are inspired by the beauty and promise of 1950s Cuba, paying homage to the vibrant design, culture and warmth of the era.

Spanish global superstar Enrique Iglesias and two of the most famous athletes in Spain's history, professional tennis star Rafael Nadal and San Antonio Spurs and NBA all-star Pau Gasol Saez, along with partners Abel Matutes Prats and Manuel Campos Guallar of Mabel Capital, ushered in the international expansion of **Tatel Miami**, bringing the iconic Spanish restaurant to The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach in the heart of the art deco district. Tatel Miami, which debuted in March, is the second location for the Spanish brand. Tatel was created to build global awareness for traditional Spanish cuisine and culture.



Set to open this month, **Malibu Farm** at the Nobu Eden Roc Hotel Miami Beach is a rapidly expanding farm-to-table movement founded by Swedish native, chef Helene Henderson. Born from Helene's intimate dinner parties in her expansive garden, Malibu Farm found its first home on the pier in Malibu, California, and will now find a new home on the Southeast Coast. The farm-to-table concept offers healthful selections influenced by fresh vegetables and seafood.

Miami Event Venues

Hosting meetings and events at distinctive offsite locales makes meetings that much more memorable.



After completing an extensive \$500 million renovation, **Hard Rock Stadium**, home of the NFL's Miami Dolphins, recently announced all-new suite experiences that allow groups to enjoy the many events and functions available at the stadium. For example, The Nine offers access to nine open-air suites plus a private club designed by the world-renowned Rockwell Group. The stadium's signature sideline suites also provide great venue amenities for attendees including new seating, food and beverage packages, and access to various stadium events. The largest club space for corporate events is the Hyundai Club, which accommodates up to 2,000 for receptions. On non-game days, the stadium will arrange for receptions or events in the Dolphins Locker Room.

Marlins Park, the spectacular home of the Miami Marlins, is a retractable-roof venue that combines modern design, technology and year-round availability — making it a unique venue to host events of any size or style, from concerts and trade shows to private and corporate gatherings. The facility can provide corporate groups with personalized messages on the Marlins Vision Scoreboard, corporate batting practice sessions, "run the bases" experiences, ballpark photo sessions, fireworks, pool parties, and private tours.

As one of South Florida's premier waterfront venues, **Pérez Art Museum Miami** offers sweeping views of Biscayne Bay, sprawling outdoor plazas with lush vegetation cascading from the canopy's overhang, and a variety of modern indoor spaces for business meetings, cocktail receptions, weddings, elegant brunches, dinner parties and more.

Opening in May, the new **Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science** boasts flexible science exhibit halls, a three-level aquarium, a 250-seat full-dome Frost Planetarium and a living rooftop. The museum is in the heart of downtown Miami's waterfront Museum Park.

The **Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts**, designed by world-renowned architect Cesar Pelli, offers several venues for meeting groups including the Ziff Ballet Opera House and Knight Concert Hall, which have large, fully equipped stages that can accommodate audiences of up to 2,400 and 2,200 people respectively.

Currently celebrating its centennial year, the National Historic Landmark **Vizcaya Museum & Gardens** on Biscayne Bay in Coconut Grove is a stunning Italian Renaissance-style mansion and European-style gardens that can host indoor events or outdoor functions in the gardens. **C&IT**

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On The Move



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WHITESIDE

The US Grant in San Diego, California, has named **Lindsay Kotas** as director of sales. She was director of sales for The Westin Gaslamp Quarter in San Diego.

Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Beach Resort & Spa in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico, has named **Katherine Beja-McLennan** as director of sales and marketing. She was most recently director of sales and marketing at Shelborne Wyndham Grand South Beach in Miami, Florida.

Teneo Hospitality Group has named **Julie Stovroff** as vice president of sales, insurance and financial services. She was previously vice president group sales insurance and financial services for Preferred Hotels & Resorts.

Scott Becque was named director of sales and marketing for the Marriott Syracuse Downtown, Syracuse, New York. He most recently was director of sales and marketing for the Hilton Hasbrouck Heights in New Jersey.

Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, owned

and managed by Marcus Hotels & Resort, has appointed **Brad Lyles** as director of sales and marketing. He most recently served at Marcus Hotels & Resorts as corporate director of sales.

Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, Biloxi, Mississippi, has named **Randy Whiteside** as executive director of hotel sales. He formerly served as director of sales at Embassy Suites by Hilton Montgomery Hotel & Conference Center in Montgomery, Alabama.

The Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority has appointed **Michael Larragueta** as vice president of sales. He was previously vice president of global distribution sales for Baha Mar in Nassau, Bahamas.

The Birmingham (Alabama) Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Steve Pierson** as director of convention sales; and **Carman Atchison** as sales manager for the Northeast territory. Pierson formerly served as vice president of sales for convention bureaus in Knoxville, Rochester and Houston. Atchison was sales manager for The Westin and Sheraton hotels in Birmingham. *C&IT*

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GULF PLACE

SANTA ROSA BEACH

BLUE MOUNTAIN

GRAYTON BEACH

WATERCOLOR

SEASIDE

SEAGROVE

WATERSOUND

SEACREST

ALYS BEACH

ROSEMARY BEACH

INLET BEACH



A RETREAT FOR THOSE WHO DON'T.

BETWEEN THE SUGAR-WHITE SAND AND PRISTINE TURQUOISE WATER,
YOU'LL FIND A HOST OF VERSATILE VENUES, LUXURY ACCOMMODATIONS
AND EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO PLAN A PERFECT MEETING.