



MIM Europe Magazine, the meetings and incentives magazine for European corporate planners, in exclusive partnership with EUMA, the European Association of Management Assistants, supported by ECM, European Cities Marketing and Site.



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INCENTIVES FEATURE

Make them special



Interview

FLORIAN SENGSTSCHMID

Azerbaijan, an emerging meetings hub



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Events in European cities are booming!

I find it quite remarkable that in recent times all European cities seem to be hosting major events every year. And they are not just catering to local audiences but most notably also to overseas guests. The spectrum of what they offer is large and covers sports, culture, music as well as a variety of city entertainment options. In my hometown of Antwerp the saying goes that during the summer months there is no need to travel abroad for a vacation.

The choice of events is so staggering that one can hardly keep track. This phenomenon is very likely the result of city marketing or the strategic positioning of a city as an entertainment centre.

Vienna most definitely carries off the honours in this respect. In 1999 the city created 'Stadt Wien Marketing GmbH'. Today this city department, which is actually more like a company, employs 17 people who are totally dedicated to profiling Vienna as an attractive and viable city. When visiting the city on the occasion of the most recent edition of the Eurovision Song Contest I was very fortunate to be able to talk to Michael Draxler, CEO of Stadt Wien Marketing, receiving first-hand information on how Vienna handles events (www.wien-event.at).

To summarise my conversation: it is simply amazing what is happening there. If you're looking for a master class in city events handling this is the man you need to meet. I know of no other city in Europe where events are approached with so much respect. His company does not only produce its own events but also acts as a coordinating body. Every year Vienna hosts up to 50 large and small events which contribute sizably to the city's finances. They cleverly take inspiration from prevailing trends and have clearly understood that events bring people together and appeal to visitors. A city at its best! Please also read 'Vienna, a city at its best' on page 40.

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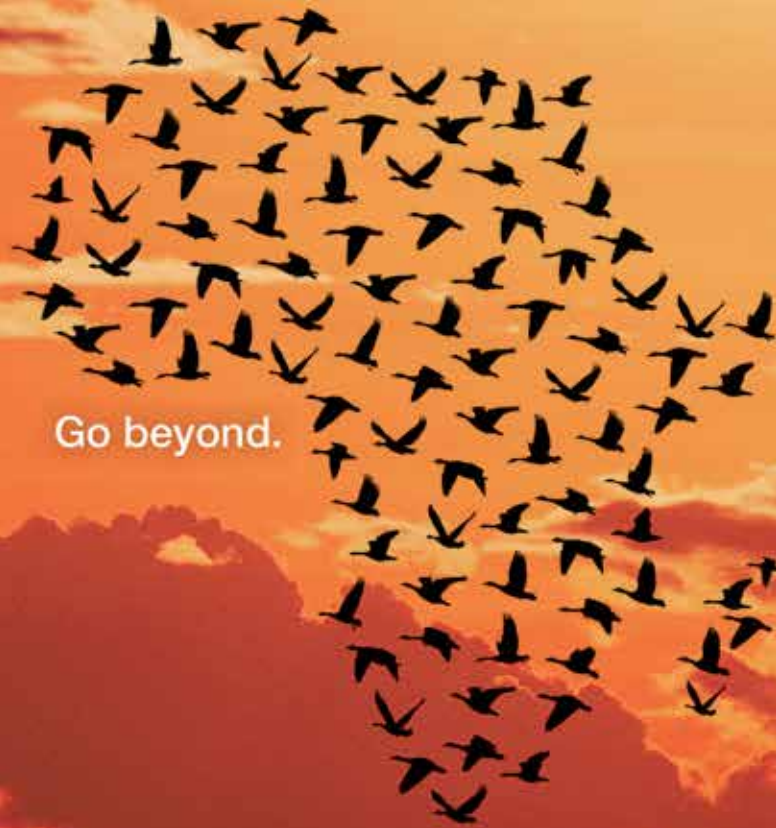
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Consequently there are numerous 'sole' destinations, i.e. destinations operated by either one airline or the other.

Air France and KLM have, of course, designed simple tools to allow passengers to make the most of this dual network, notably with:

- The hubway, a system of 12 daily flights distributed regularly throughout the day linking Paris and Amsterdam, and connecting Air France and KLM networks.
- Fare combinability, an innovative concept allowing passengers to build their own trip to destinations operated by both airlines, combining a flight leg on KLM through Amsterdam with a flight leg on Air France through Paris. In this way passengers may benefit from connecting flights via one or the other hubs either on the outbound or inbound flight and make use of most suitable flight times (thanks to a better offer in terms of frequencies) and the most attractive fares (based on the addition of two half return trips).

AIR FRANCE KLM is operating flights to 47 destinations on the African continent.

The Group has also signed agreements with various African air transport players (Kenya Airways, TAAG Angola Airlines, Air Côte d'Ivoire, kukula.com, Comair) offering its customers over 20 additional destinations on the continent.

AIR FRANCE KLM is operating flights to 47 destinations on the African continent

Personalized services on African routes
Air France offers customers on its African routes tailor-made services as soon as they arrive at the airport, as well as the excellence of French in-flight service.

At Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport, a team of experts from the African continent is present on all flights to and from Africa, where they provide commercial assistance to passengers, taking into account the geopolitical, commercial, regulatory and cultural characteristics of each country.

Air France and KLM also offer a larger baggage allowance than on the rest of the long-haul network, to most African destinations.

Around 1,000 local staff make up the Air France and KLM teams on the African continent. They receive continuous training in international industry standards, working on a daily basis to provide customers with the best of Air France and KLM.

On board, more than 2,500 cabin crew staff, belonging to Air France's Africa and Middle East Division, meet the specific expectations of customers on African routes. The Company offers a specific range of gourmet dishes including examples of African gastronomic produce such as chili or bissap juice in Business class.

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Linda Kullas

You don't have to be the Steve Jobs of communication to make your event a success

Whatever the size of your event, big or small, you will always need a well-defined communication strategy. Communicating effectively with your participants is an important part of making any event a success. In this article, we will discuss the different aspects of event communication and consider some things you should think about for your next event.

Preparation is key

Your participants should receive their invitations well ahead of the date, so that they have time to react. Include only the essentials in the invitation, and make additional information available from your site.

A short invitation will keep your participants interested long enough for them to read all the details. People get invitations and e-mails from left and right, so it's crucial to make your message short and simple. The final thing you should do before sending out the invitation is to test it on somebody who hasn't been part of the planning process. It's necessary to get impartial feedback.

Essentially, a good invitation will lead to easy and successful registration.

Your registration options depend completely on your target group. Some target groups might require several registration options next to the typical online registration. Whichever way you choose, it is strongly recommended that

you manage all registrations on one platform. One platform will make your life as an organiser a lot easier.

It is vital to use one platform for your event and try to automate as much as possible

After registering, your attendees should get a confirmation to reassure them that their registration has been received and processed. The confirmation message will also give you a chance to recap important information, including the contact information for the organiser, the schedule, how to get to the venue and the information the attendee has given when registering.

A week or two prior to the event, it's good to send a reminder via e-mail to the people who haven't registered yet. This will increase the visibility of your event among all the other invitations. A week

before the event another reminder can be sent to the actual event attendees.

When registrations are over and the event is fast approaching, create a text message that will be sent a day or a couple of hours before the event starts. Whilst smartphones are common, not everyone reads their e-mail constantly. A text message is a short and simple way to welcome attendees to your event. Furthermore, a text message receives ten times more attention than a regular e-mail and will set you apart from other events that might not use reminders at all.

Event communication can be a dreadful task, but with the help of event management tools, communicating even the biggest events will feel like a walk in the park.

First published in the EUMA magazine proActive No 43. This article was written by Linda Kullas, Lyty-Event Management Software. Lyty is a Gold Partner to European Management Assistants (EUMA).



Stockholm

A great city to be a guest in

One of the most connected cities in the world, Stockholm city has 900,000 inhabitants. Next year the capital of Sweden will host the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest. The contest will be held in the Stockholm Globe district in May. The Monocle's annual Quality of Life Survey lists the world's top 25 cities to live in, ranking Stockholm at #6! More about the city: www.visitstockholm.com

The next **European Management Assistants (EUMA)** annual Training Day will be held in **Stockholm on 16 April 2016** at the hotel **Clarion Sign** and the theme for the training day is **Self-Development**. Nowadays it is crucial that you can lead your own development and follow what is happening around your profession and the business. In itself, personal development involves the setting of goals as well as their corresponding action plans within a specific time-frame. Keep in mind that self-development requires active participation on the part of the individual from the day the goals are set to the day these are achieved. Self-development is a daily

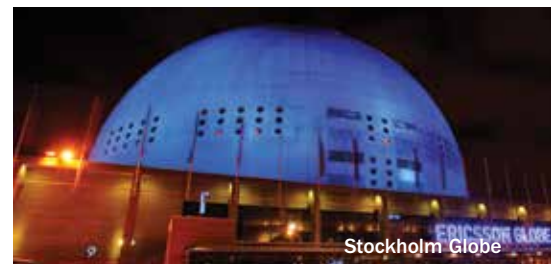
commitment toward becoming the best person you can be.

For more information please visit:
www.euma.org

Clarion Sign (www.clarionsign.com), Stockholm's largest hotel is located in the heart of Stockholm city adjacent to the Central Station and Arlanda Express as well as near all the best of Stockholm's favorite spots. It all started with the idea to create a unique, timeless, first-class hotel. By combining the best of Scandinavian architecture and design it would create a source of inspiration for the guests. A collection of icons in their areas that together would celebrate Scandinavia!

The renowned Swedish architect Gert Wingårdh, sketched his vision of a facade stooping hotel building which creates a spectacular view. Dominated by granite and glass, it leans over the square, reflecting the green park.

The interior was provided by Scandinavian design icons, such as Arne Jacobsen, Bruno Mathsson and Alvar Aalto. Wander



Stockholm Globe

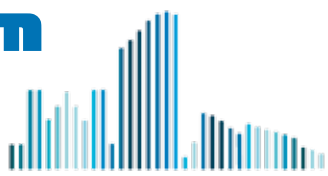


© Eson Lindman

Clarion Sign

around the hotel and discover world-famous furniture, such as Egg, Wave and Lily, classic pieces that have been around for up to 50 years and will stay the same for another 50, at least. All over the hotel you will find beautiful black and white photography art by well-known Scandinavian photo artists.

Else-Britt Lundgren,
European Chairman, European
Management Assistants (EUMA)



EUROPEAN CITIES MARKETING

MEET EUROPEAN CITIES

Ongoing Education as Success Factor of Future Business

Freshly elected ECM Vice-President for the Meetings Industry, Bettina Bunge, CEO and Managing Director of Dresden Marketing Board, explains the importance of education to face the continuing changes in the Meetings Industry.

MIM Europe: What should meetings industry professionals do to face the constant evolution of the industry?

Bettina Bunge: We live in a constantly changing world, and the Meetings Industry is no exception. To face this ongoing challenge, professionals have to educate themselves and others every day. To me it's a crucial task for top management in each organisation, whether it is a CVB, tourist office, congress centre, airline, hotel, DMC, PCO or meeting planner, to train every employee continuously.

In the Meetings Industry,
there is a variety of
high quality offers with
independent education
programmes

I personally do that for my whole staff at Dresden Marketing Board: for the CVB, Tourism, Business Development and other departments we set up a long-term personnel development plan and yearly training courses with incentives corresponding to the success of the training. I have this other example, with VISITFLANDERS, the promotion board for Flanders and Brussels, which bought a

package of seats to attend ECM Summer School and then asked its members to send application letters where they would show their motivation to go to the ECM Summer School. Five of them were selected: learning, knowledge sharing, team building, all ingredients of success were there, in this simple idea! I find it a great example of educating others by offering them such an opportunity.

MIM Europe: What educational options would you recommend?

Bettina Bunge: In the Meetings Industry, there is a variety of high quality offers with independent education programmes that can also be used as a career ladder and an ongoing process of education and training. Among them, we can find ICCA Research Sales & Marketing Program, the Forum for Young Professionals at ibtm world, the IAPCO Edge Seminar, the AIPC Academy, the Association Expert Seminar at IMEX (Frankfurt) and the Future Leaders Forum (IMEX America), and of course the ECM Summer School.

MIM Europe: Can you tell us more about the ECM Summer School?

Bettina Bunge: The ECM Summer School is a door opener to understand the

About European Cities Marketing (ECM)

European Cities Marketing is a non-profit organisation improving the competitiveness and performance of leading cities in Europe by providing a platform for professionals of the meetings industry, the leisure business and city marketing to exchange knowledge, best practice and widen their network to build new business. European Cities Marketing is promoting and linking the interests of 100 members from 36 countries.

For more information, please contact:
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Meetings Industry right from the beginning of a career; it's a four-day course with a faculty of 15 widely recognised industry professionals. The programme sets out the background and context of the industry (key players, exhibitions, press, social media, sustainability, clients, intermediaries, RFP and decision making processes) with a focus on European and international best practices.

The ECM Summer School has consistently been the bridge to a successful career in the Meetings Industry. More than 1,500 students graduated from the School and now hold strategic positions. It's also important to note that the ECM Summer School is qualified for CMP certification, and students earn a total of 17.75 clock hours for their overall CMP certification.

The next edition will be held in Zagreb (Croatia), August 27-31, 2016 and we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the ECM Summer School!

MIM Europe: Are there other tools developed by ECM to provide education to its members?

Bettina Bunge: Well, that's the least we can say! One of the main missions

of ECM is to provide its members with educational opportunities all year long. First through ECM meetings twice a year; this is when members exchange knowledge and best practices, benchmark among themselves and anticipate future needs. [The next ECM Meeting will be held in Madrid (Spain), February 24-27, 2016]. Then through the ECM Knowledge Groups; they are expert teams focusing on specific aspects of the Meetings Industry, city marketing and urban tourism development. They discuss issues, share best practices, prepare reports, conduct surveys and, in certain cases, undertake joint marketing activities through meetings, expert meetings and monthly chats.

Additionally, the Future Leaders Award is a friendly competition around best practices in the industry - and is open exclusively to ECM's members. It allows a young talented professional, employed by one of ECM member organisations to win and study for a part-time two-year MBA at MODUL University in Vienna.

Then ECM is part of IMEX Smart Monday educational session, prior to IMEX America in Las Vegas, providing clients (agencies, associations and corporate involved with meetings, conferences, and conventions) with a full education day of various learning formats for cutting-edge career development. ECM is proud to provide a 45-minute educational session. People should never stop learning and teaching in the Meetings Industry!

Next ECM Events for the Meetings Industry and education possibilities

- IMEX Smart Monday, 12 October 2015, Las Vegas (USA)
- Meetings Industry Steering Group, 16 November 2015, Barcelona (Spain)
- ibtm world, 17-19 November 2015, Barcelona – Come & visit ECM at stand D75!
- Meet Europe Workshop, 10 December 2015, Paris (France), followed by a networking educational session on 11th December
- India Meetings Industry Workshop, March 2016, three cities in India
- ECM Spring Meeting, 24-27 February 2016, Madrid (Spain)
- ECM Annual Meeting and General Assembly, 8-11 June 2016, Madeira (Portugal)



Students and Faculty members of the last ECM Summer School in Vienna



© Sven Döring

Bettina Bunge

Bettina Bunge, the fast facts

- Born in Lueneburg (Germany) in 1967
- Studied Business Administration in Muenster (Germany) and San Diego (USA) with a Fulbright Grant
- Taught, worked and received a PhD degree in the research field of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in the financial industry at the European Business School (Germany)
- Worked at Lufthansa German Airlines, German National Tourist Board, Hamburg Convention Bureau
- Since 2009: CEO and Managing Director of the Dresden Marketing Board in Germany, responsible for promoting Dresden as a Meetings, Tourism, Business and Science destination worldwide
- Since June 2015: Newly elected Vice President Meetings Industry of European Cities Marketing Association
- More than 20 years of work experience
- Very passionate about education, training and teaching

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Or join us in Copenhagen for the EMEC in February.
We are also at IBTM - come say hi at stand #E20

Business Events
Denmark



Olga Navarro

Pride is Back

When you work in an industry that has a hard time defining its name, you get used to misperceptions. Across the globe, the Incentive Travel sector is described in many ways - “Motivational Events”, “MICE”, “Meetings and Events”, “Hospitality Business”, etc. All of these labels don’t adequately address the business that we are in; the business that uses the power of bringing people together to reward performance, create engagement and generate business results.

This lack of understanding is due to limited knowledge of the value proposition for incentive travel, and I don’t only mean a lack of understanding of people that are alien to our industry. It is true that in the past there have been some bad practices in the implementation of incentive travel programs and scandals have marked the industry’s reputation. It is also clear that, as incentive industry advocates, we need to do a much better job communicating the value of this important business tool beyond its reputation of exotic destinations, lavish entertainment and fine dining.

Increasing expectations

In today’s world where global travel is no longer limited to wealthy people, there are numerous opportunities available to the average consumer. Destinations and activities that used to be considered unique and special are now at the reach of everyone on their home computer. This is why the expectations of clients and program participants are constantly increasing and incentive travel planners are having to work harder to design experiences that a typical traveler would

not think to do on their own, financially afford to do on their own, or even be able to do on their own.

At SITE, we have proof that incentives are connected to business results

The day has come where an increase in the use of incentive travel is no longer a trend, but a fact. At SITE, we have proof that incentives are connected to business results. In a survey by the SITE Foundation, corporate executives who use incentive travel report that it pays for itself many times over and has a positive impact on future economic investments and job growth. And, companies that use incentive travel have seen individual performance increase by 22% and team performance by 44%.

Value of incentive travel

To spread the word about the benefits and value of incentive travel, SITE has recently launched a campaign “Incentive Travel (it) Works”. SITE members around the world believe in what we do and the effect “it” causes on people’s

performance. We use creativity to design once-in-a-lifetime, high-end travel experiences that result in lasting memories and motivate future performance. We have the powerful ability to connect incentive travel to business results and we provide research that confirms that incentive travel is an important business tool used by companies to change behavior and create a measureable return on investment.

We are Loving “it”, Knowing “it”, Experiencing “it”, Proving “it”, Growing “it” and Living “it”. And we are proud, because pride in our industry is back, and here to stay.

To learn more about SITE visit www.SITEglobal.com

This text was written by Olga Navarro, CIS, Vice President, SITE International Board of Directors, and Executive Director, ITB dmc - Destination Management Services in Spain

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of exhibition spaces, the large Henry Le Boeuf Hall (2,100 seats), which is ranked among the five best concert halls in the world for its acoustics, the Chamber Music Room (480 seats), the

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Azerbaijan, an emerging meetings hub

An interview with Florian Sengstschmid

Baku

Since 2014 Austria born Florian Sengstschmid is the Executive Director of the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau (AzCB). With his wide-ranging experience combining multiple perspectives on tourism development with a strong strategic and operational approach, he explains to MIM Europe how Azerbaijan is set to become a major player in the meetings industry.

MIM Europe: The Azerbaijan Convention Bureau is rather young and leading in the region, we understand. Can you tell us about the beginnings and the development and your strategy to put Azerbaijan on the map?

Florian Sengstschmid: Azerbaijan has been a key transit point along the famous Silk Road in Europe-Asia trade for centuries. Throughout the history the country has served as a business hub. Centuries later and thanks to a great development of the country - Azerbaijan has all what it takes to be a successful meetings destination - the Ministry of Culture and Tourism together with private sector partners have founded the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau (AzCB).

The AzCB is a public private partnership and non-profit organisation to support the development of the meetings industry. In spring 2014 we started with a handful of partners, while in 2015 our 'Azerbaijan Meetings Alliance' already counts 27 members - Azerbaijan Airlines, Skytrax awarded four-star national flag carrier and leading carrier in the region, top quality hotels, venues, a network of selected PCOs and DMCs and technology

partners. Our aim is to put Azerbaijan back on the meetings industry map. Welcome to the 21st Century Silk Road!

MIM Europe: Is there some kind of collaboration between countries around the Caspian Sea to promote themselves as a region? What's the role of Azerbaijan in it?

Florian Sengstschmid: The Azerbaijan Convention Bureau is a proud member of ICCA and active partner in ICCA's Mediterranean Chapter. In 2017 we will be hosting the ICCA Mediterranean Chapter Summit in Baku. One of our objectives for this event is to actively involve relevant authorities and partners from neighbouring and Caspian Sea countries to jointly discuss the potential of the meetings industry in the region and its further development. On a bilateral level Azerbaijan is taking an active role in supporting the development of the industry in the region. For instance this September an official delegation from Georgia was invited to Baku to discuss possibilities of collaboration in tourism and meetings industry and to study the structure and strategy of the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau as a good practice.



Florian Sengstschmid

MIM Europe: We understand the country as a whole has grown exponentially in the last years. How is this reflected in the meetings industry?

Florian Sengstschmid: The Eurovision Song Contest, which was held in Baku back in 2012, has for sure been an important step in this context. The following years Baku and the rest of the country have gradually invested in the meetings industry sector.

It's true that Azerbaijan has been a hub for regional conventions, sporting contest, cultural conferences and trade fairs from mid 1990s on. And it's important that the country manages to keep the right balance and secures multilateral exchanges and developments.

This summer the country hosted the very first European Games in history, an amazing sports celebration. Baku is also on the preliminary Formula 1 Calendar

for July 2016 and the Islamic Solidarity Games are confirmed for 2017. On the other hand, Azerbaijan, and namely Baku, has always been selected to host (inter) cultural events, from the annual Baku Jazz Festival and the bi-annual World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue to the Regional Conferences of ISESCO and UNESCO.

Not to forget industry specific events - this year the city hosted the Asian Development Bank's 48th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors, the Caspian Oil & Gas Exhibition, the International Conference on Telecommunications and Information Technologies and many others.

MIM Europe: Can you tell us about Baku as a meetings destination, and in comparison with the rest of the country?

Florian Sengstschnid: Baku is a wonderful city with an amazing atmosphere: rich historical and cultural background, unique seaside location on the Caspian Sea, state-of-the-art urban and meetings infrastructure, delicious cuisine and... being a foreigner in Azerbaijan for some years now, I can testify that local people and society are amazingly hospitable, peace-loving and multicultural - when I look at the world today, this is truly important.

Baku is a world capital and a vivid national and regional hub. It boasts the best infrastructure in the country - some architectural gems like the H.A. Center, the brand-new Baku Congress Centre by Austrian architects Coop Himmelb(l)au or the awarded international airport with its giant wooden 'cocoons', top quality brand hotels and venues, cosy restaurants and much more. Apart from modern and booming Baku, the walled Old City with its narrow streets and stairways, the Maiden Tower, the Shirvanshah's Palace, traditional tea houses and Hamams, is one of the country's hotspots and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There are several other destinations with great meetings potential in the country.

One is the city of Gabala, located three hours drive or 30 minutes flight from Baku in the North-Western part of the country, offering a state-of-the art convention centre for up to 1,200 delegates, high quality accommodation, and an international airport, all set in beautiful nature on the slopes of the Great Caucasus Mountains.

MIM Europe: We heard about congresses and conventions taking place in Azerbaijan, but rarely about incentives. Can you share some activities you can do in Azerbaijan only?

Florian Sengstschnid: Azerbaijan has long been known for its rich oil resources. Few people know that the Nobel brothers Petroleum Company had its origins in a distillery founded in Baku in 1876, providing the funding for the prestigious Nobel Prize. No wonder that Baku is also the homeland to probably one of the most unique and fascinating forms of Art - the Oil Painting. There are a couple of studios in Baku where experienced artists hold master classes on oil painting. It's an amazing experience and I can say that it's getting more and more popular as an incentive programme.

Speaking of oil, I'd also highlight Azerbaijan's miracle oil *Naftalan*, which is a unique grade of oil, famous for its healing qualities. Our partners have been designing a variety of breath-taking programmes where everyone can enjoy this unique spa treatment and learn more about the incredible benefits of Naftalan oil.

MIM Europe: Give one example of a very unusual meeting venue you can find in Azerbaijan.

Florian Sengstschnid: That's definitely Heydar Aliyev Center, Zaha Hadid's architectural masterpiece and landmark of modern Baku. This state-of-the-art venue is a proud host of high profile government meetings and international events. The architectural design and facilities are simply amazing. It is definitely a venue one won't forget.



Heydar Aliyev Center



Baku Old City



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A Melting Pot of Landscapes & Cultures Around the Caspian and Black Sea

A meeting place for continents, spots surrounding the Caspian and Black Sea from Tbilisi to Tehran are thriving with cultural riches, from brand-new ski slopes to astounding wine routes where delegates can soak up 8,000 years of history in one glass.

TEXT LANE NIESET

Astounding Architecture in Azerbaijan

Strolling through the Icheri Sheher, Baku's mazelike core of medieval alleys with 12th century walls surrounding three sides, it's hard to imagine that just beyond the fortress and its tower a modern city is thriving with skyscrapers and luxury yachts cruising on the Caspian.

The capital of Azerbaijan and the largest city on the Caspian Sea, Baku is seen as the spot where East meets West, where modern marvels mix with ancient architecture. Baku's Heydar Aliyev International Airport is the main entry point into the country, with direct flights to nine major European cities like Paris and Frankfurt, as well as the Middle East, the Gulf, China and New York City. The city boasts 530 hotels and resorts – with 15 international hotel brands – including the stunning seaside Four Seasons Hotel Baku and the Jumeirah Bilgah Beach Hotel, just 10 minutes away from the airport on its own stretch of private sand.

With Baku's building boom, five-star hotels as well as modern 21st century venues have popped up around town, putting the city on the map when it comes to astounding architectural feats. Baku is even in the process of topping Dubai when it comes to tallest

building in the world, constructing the kilometer-high Azerbaijan Tower. You'll have to wait a few more years before you see this vision come to life, but in the mean time, there's plenty of other skyscrapers to gawk at. The trio of 30-story buildings forming the Flame Towers – currently the city's tallest skyscrapers – look just like their name suggests, a series of flames shooting up over Baku Bay, with a funicular bringing visitors up to catch views over the city and sea. Swing by after sunset for a light show transforming the buildings into a true vision of flames.

Then there's the Heydar Aliyev Cultural Center, designed by celebrated architect Zaha Hadid, seen as a landmark of modern Baku with its wave-like design symbolizing an eternal cycle. With a roof composed of 12,000 panels, not one of which features a straight line, the 57,519 sqm center makes for quite a unique spot to meet in Baku.



Baku, Azerbaijan



Day Trips Beyond Baku

In less than four hours, you can get out of Baku and explore a number of activities in the countryside. Three hours away you'll find Azerbaijan's two newest ski resorts, Shahdag and Gabala, both set up with state-of-the-art equipment. Shahdag is still in the process of expanding, so the longer pistes and cablecars aren't up and running just yet, but you can still hit the lower slopes or set off on a hike from the base and to the nearby village of Laza. Shahdag is also home to the luxe mountain resort Pik Palace Hotel that's a favorite for conferences and events.

For a more extreme experience through the mystic mountain villages, head up to Azerbaijan's highest town, Khinalug, crossing canyons and rough roads by 4WD. Get a truly local feel with a village homestay by spending the night en route in a guesthouse.

Walking through Tehran's Cultural Beauties

Set in the northern part of the country at the foot of the Alborz mountain range, the city of over 14 million inhabitants beautifully blends its past and present through a series of museums, palaces and modern towers that captivate visitors.

Joining the ranks of Istanbul and Cairo, Iran's capital Tehran is one of the three largest cities in the Middle East. The city is teeming with UNESCO World Heritage sites like the Safavid-period Golestan Palace, once home to the Qajar kings, featuring a series of buildings and manicured gardens dating back five centuries. Another don't-miss is the mazelike grand Bazar-e Bozorg, a bazaar of arched passages with vendors selling carpets, silver and spices. While the area has

been home to trade for over a thousand years, the oldest parts of the marketplace date back to the 16th century. The sprawling bazaar continued expanding in the 19th century, earning its current reputation as a "city within a city". For a more modern look at Tehran, visitors can head up to the 280 meter-high observation deck at Milad Tower, the



Tehran, Iran

Daytripping from Tehran

A few hours from Tehran, groups can delve deeper into the country's history touring landmarks in the city of Kashan, which dates back over 6,000 years. Strolling through town, stop and take in the architecture of the 18th century Agha Bozorg mosque, located smack-dab in the centre of Kashan, with its sunken courtyard and wooden door, rumored to have as many studs as the Quran has verses.

sixth-tallest tower in the world, for panoramic views of the city and a revolving restaurant seating up to 300 people just below – giving diners 360-degree views as it makes one complete turn per hour.

Armenia's Cultural Wonders

Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Armenia, measuring the same size as Belgium or the state of Maryland, is made up of mostly mountainous terrain that ancient geographers gifted the title of "Island of Mountains" or "Rooftop of Asia Minor."

Once upon a time, Armenia stretched from the Caspian to the Mediterranean Sea, but now the nation borders

Georgia in the north, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran in the south. Armenia's natural features are as breathtaking as

they are diverse, with mineral springs, rapids and rich basins, but its cultural wonders are also a major attraction for visitors heading to the landlocked country.

Groups can feel like New Age explorers, hopping throughout Armenia's cultural highlights like the ruins of the Zvartnots Temple, which served as Armenia's main cathedral in the 7th century, or visiting the pagan Garni Temple, the summer resort for Armenian kings two thousand years ago.

Meanwhile, at the Yerevan Brandy Company, groups can learn more about Armenian spirits with a tour through Yerevan's first workshop and factory, which has been crafting Armenian brandy since 1887.



Kohrvirab, Armenia



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Cyprus may be the third smallest member of the EU, but it's teeming with a large history – spanning 10,000 years – scattered around an island the size of a large metropolis.

Located in the Eastern Mediterranean, tucked between Turkey to the north and Syria and Lebanon to the East, Cyprus is a compact destination enjoying over 300 days of sun a year. Thanks to its size, it's quick for groups to get from point A to point B, with 309 conference rooms around the island, 30,604 people seating capacity and 34,189 beds in hotels with conference facilities alone.

A number of unique venues and archaeological sites throughout Cyprus lend themselves to small conferences, gala dinners, themed nights or opening ceremonies, offering unusual surroundings that are bound to impress your conference participants or incentives group like the ancient Kourion Theatre, the Pafos Castle square, the Medieval Manor at the Aphrodite's Temple.

With a fascinating blend of cultures, it's no surprise the country is rich in cuisine that's essentially Mediterranean with hints of Middle Eastern and Asian influence. There's no better way to witness Cypriot food firsthand than with a Jeep excursion into the countryside, tasting local fish and vegetables, olive oil and wine, straight from the farms and vineyards. Spend the afternoon soaking up village life, drinking freshly brewed Cypriot coffee in the humblest coffee shop, while playing a traditional game of backgammon. For companies looking to strengthen the bond between employees, add a local touch to teambuilding experiences learning how to bake olive pies or halloumi bread with the locals.

Better yet, pair Cypriot cuisine with local wine exploring one of the six wine routes snaking their way around the island, with 40 boutique wineries along the way. You can for instance explore the Commandaria region, known for producing Cyprus' most popular wine. Commandaria is acknowledged as the oldest named wine in the world and probably the first ever to be given an 'Appellation of Origin', having had the same name for eight centuries. Richard the Lionheart is said to have enjoyed it greatly at his wedding in Cyprus and to have pronounced it *"the wine of kings and the king of wines!"*

Outdoor activities also take place all year round in Cyprus, especially on the island's many beaches, which have been named the cleanest in Europe! Cycling, golf, trekking, paragliding, bird-watching and windsurfing are among the many additional activities for delegates to enjoy outside of the meeting room. Whether you want your share of adventures, need to converse with nature and are fond of learning all about traditions, anything seems to be possible in Cyprus!

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Luxurious Island Incentives

It's not hard to sit back and lap in luxury on Cyprus. The warm, Mediterranean climate makes it a dream for those looking to get out on the sea setting sail on a private yacht cruise around the island's coastline. If spas are more your speed, the island has plenty resorts with world-class facilities. Visitors can be whisked off on a limo tour of the bustling city Limassol before retreating to a five-star boutique beach hotel for VIP treatment at the spa. And don't forget Mark Anthony once gave Cyprus to the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra, as a token of his love. Doesn't it say everything about the beauty of the island?

Stroll Through History in Sofia

One of the oldest cities in Europe, the Bulgarian capital has a history dating back to the 7th century B.C., with tribes settling around the thermal springs in today's downtown as early as the 8th century B.C.

Centrally located in the Balkans, with Bulgaria's longest river, the Iskar, cutting across the city, Sofia is a mix of cultural and natural beauty that's easily accessible to travelers thanks to five mountain passes leading to town and Sofia Airport, just a 15-minute drive from the city center, offering 400 flights on 24 airlines weekly. The city features Southeastern Europe's largest multifunctional complex, the National Palace of Culture, a congress centre with 14 halls, the largest with

4,000 seats. And while the modern meeting venues are a plus for groups visiting the capital, the city also has a bevy of historical sites to see, from the largest church monument on the Balkan peninsula, the Neo-Byzantine St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral with its crypt containing a museum-like collection of Bulgarian icons, to the National History Museum, showcasing a vast collection of 650,000 Balkan items.



Sofia, Bulgaria



Tbilisi, Georgia

Exploring Georgia's Traditional Food & Winemaking

At the point where Europe meets Asia, Georgia boasts Black Sea beaches on its western edge and the Caucasus Mountains in the north, prime for skiing, snowboarding and scaling, with 12 peaks taller than Mont Blanc.

The New York Times named Georgia one of the "52 Places to Go in 2015" because it has "the makings of the next great wine destination," but it's been known for winemaking techniques for the past 8,000 years. Seen as the birthplace of wine, Georgia has all the right conditions for producing over 500 varieties of grapes thanks to the Black Sea air.

Groups coming in the fall can take part in the ancient tradition of *rtveli*, or

harvest, checking out the *satskneheli*, or wooden tub, where grapes are pressed while wearing special footwear, and exploring the *marani*, the cellar where the grapes are fermented in clay vessels called *qevri*. All of the hard work is followed by a traditional dinner, or *supra*, with a feast of herb-heavy dishes, local pork and lamb, cheese, eggplants, and soups, while toasting the guest of honor through poetry.

Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, is easy to reach from both Europe and the Middle East, with direct flights into Tbilisi International Airport in under three hours from Dubai, Vienna and Istanbul; four hours from Munich; and six hours from London. Pair convenient flight times with a history dating back to the 5th century AD, as well as a number of four- and five-star business hotels, and you've got the perfect home base for groups to start their wine tasting tour through Georgia.

Three Ways to See Bulgaria's Natural Beauty

- **Catch views of Sofia from Vitosha Mountain.** Just 10 km from the city, visitors can head here for skiing in winter or trekking in summer, with chairlifts starting on the outskirts of Sofia. Even if you're not one for sports, the cabin lift ride alone is worth it for the views you'll get over the city.
- **Explore Vitosha National Park.** The oldest nature park on the Balkan peninsula, the park not only includes the mountain, it's also home to 61 types of habitats, 200 bird species and over 300 km of paths.
- **Go windsurfing and yachting in the nearby Pancharevo Lake.** Set between the Vitosha and Lozenska mountains, the man-made lake is just a quick drive away with tons of options from watersports and hiking the surrounding trails to posting up at a restaurant sampling local specialties while taking in the scenic views.

Medieval Castles and Towns in Transylvania

Move over Bucharest and Brasov. Groups are looking outside of Romania's main meeting hubs and heading straight to the heart of the country – Transylvania.

With its spa resorts dotting the Carpathian Mountains and Black Sea, charming medieval villages and castles, Romania has drawn large-scale international events, such as the 2008 NATO Summit and Universal Postal Union Congress in 2004, as well as incentive groups exploring the more cultural side of its cities. Bucharest alone features 37 museums, 22 theatres and two opera houses. But destinations outside of the capital are now stepping in the spotlight with new hotels and venues sprouting up just next door to historic towns. Case in point: Transylvania.

Now the second-most popular meeting spot in the country, the centrally located region is surrounded by the Carpathian mountain chain and home to some of the most well preserved medieval villages in Europe. From 14th century castles and fortresses to Saxon-fortified churches and palaces boasting art museums, Transylvania is a wealth of opportunity for incentives. Plus, the region features three international airports with direct flights from major European hubs like Madrid, Munich, Rome and Vienna.

Travelers can go medieval town hopping on a sightseeing roadtrip through Transylvania, where they'll eat and drink their way through the historic region. Using Bucharest or Brasov as a starting point, groups can make their way to Sinaia, a ski resort at the foot of the Bucegi Mountains where the 19th century Peles Castle is located. The first European castle to be lit by electrical current, the 160-room Neo-Renaissance beauty is decorated with handmade silk embroideries, German stain-glassed windows and Murano crystal chandeliers. After touring the architectural masterpiece, pause for a group lunch at the nearby Rhein-Azuga Cellars, where guests can sample Romanian specialties, as well as sparkling wine right where it's made, learning the traditional techniques used to produce the wine that supplied the Romanian royal court between the world wars.

If groups are looking for more adventure-driven days, the Apuseni Nature Park has great spots for caving, such as Bears' Cave with its 22,000-year-old stalactites, or Piatra Craiului Natural Park, with its challenging hiking trails and traditional villages scattered along Romania's highest (and longest) limestone ridge.



Peles Castle, Transylvania

Dracula-Filled Day

When most people hear Transylvania, visions of vampires come to mind. Set out and explore the eerie side of Transylvania's medieval towns starting at the source – the Gothic-style Bran Castle, which inspired author Bram Stoker's classic "Dracula." Perched on a 60-meter cliff overlooking the village of Bran, the castle sits on the Teutonic Knights stronghold from 1212 and features 60 rooms connected by underground passageways and winding staircases, filled with furniture and weapons spanning from the 14th to 19th centuries. After wandering through the castle's museums, it's time for lunch at a local farm in town dining on specialties like *pastrama*, dry-cured lamb meat and aged cheeses. The day doesn't end there, though. That evening, groups continue feasting over traditional music and dance in the Old Town of Brasov, which dates back to medieval times and has been used as a backdrop in a bunch of period piece films.



Switzerland's Meeting Trophy 2015

All fun... and a bit of work

It has become a habit for MIM Europe Magazine to participate in the Switzerland Meeting Trophy. Every year, the Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau (SCIB) indeed organises an annual event for about a hundred congress and incentives professionals from Europe and North America. Last year's champion, Belgium, came just second after Russia and missed - by only 3 points! - the coveted title again after three days of non-stop activities and entertainment.

REPORT RÉMI DÉVÉ

2015 was the 11th edition of the Switzerland Meeting Trophy. Like any other year, the fam trip was a unique and innovative experience, combining great networking opportunities and inspection of fantastic venues. The trip started with a short stay in Zurich, before delegates travelled by train to Lucerne for a two-night stay. On the Saturday, the teams travelled by car to Bern, with a stop in Emmental, where they enjoyed a fondue reception and a cheese-rolling competition.

The Swiss Trophy was the occasion for me to ponder over the whole fam trip experience. As a journalist, I have attended many trips with no spirit, where they just take you from hotels to conference centres, from venues to restaurants, with no "feeling" whatsoever. The Trophy was totally different: not only was it well organised, with a smooth commuting of the teams, but we got to taste what Switzerland is really about: a "serious" destination, but with a twist, and the ability to provide your event with an

added "je ne sais quoi" your participants will remember.

The Switzerland Meeting Trophy trip is a unique and innovative experience, combining great networking opportunities and inspection of fantastic venues

To my humble opinion, highlights included a climb to Mount Pilatus, just outside of Lucerne - from Hotel Pilatus-Kulm, you have breathtaking views and you can host meetings for up to 100 people - the Swiss Museum of Transport, in Lucerne as well, where you can organise gala dinners amidst planes, cable cars and old-timers, and Congress Centre Kursaal Interlaken, seating up to 1,300 people in a fascinating historical venue. As to Bern, in addition to the nicely located Allegro Hotel adjoining the congress centre, it can provide, among many other things, a host of team-building activities including chocolate tasting, duck hooking, tower building and flag dancing – all this against a leafy background of green mountains or in the UNESCO listed medieval centre of the city.

Oh, and one note about moving around in Switzerland. In three days, we saw

four different destinations, and it didn't feel like a hassle. With five international airports, Switzerland is easy to reach, and once you're there, going from one place to another is fast and smooth, not only because of the relatively small size of the country, but because of the efficient transport network covered by a single system, and especially the Swiss Travel Pass that grandly facilitates the commuting from one place to another!

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iMADRID!

Luxembourg

A European gem waiting to be discovered

Luxembourg is one of Europe's best-kept secrets – I can say so with absolute confidence after a three-day fam trip in early September. Widely seen as a financial haven, Luxembourg is commonly known to the outside world as a major financial hub and headquarters for many European institutions such as the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB). However, this scenic little country is full of pleasant surprises – it has a lot more to offer than just a place for bankers and diplomats. Its natural beauty, diverse population, history and culture, as well as the cuisine and wine make the country a vibrant and cosmopolitan place – ideal for organising meetings and teambuilding activities.

REPORT KATIE LAU

Easy access

Located at the crossroads between Belgium, France and Germany, Luxembourg is well connected to the major European cities and hubs, be it by car, train or plane. Cities like Frankfurt, Paris, London and Amsterdam are just one hour away by air. Luxembourg also boasts a trilingual and multicultural population of more than 500,000, about two thirds of which hold a foreign passport. English is widely spoken and the locals are often friendly and eager to help.

With residents from more than 160 nationalities, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg can be considered as a model for integration and a melting pot of different cultural influences that coexist harmoniously. As Anne Hoffmann, managing director at Luxembourg National Tourist Board, told me, *“This amazing mixture of nationalities and cultures reflects in all aspects of Luxembourg society through the use of languages, in gastronomy, the arts, leisure, sports, and others.”*

Recent revamps

Luxembourg is also a country that constantly reinvents itself. During the visit, I couldn't help but notice that many projects were underway throughout the city and beyond, from venue extensions to hotel renovations to construction of highways. This upgrade of infrastructure is a testament to Luxembourg's resolve in becoming a more competitive and attractive MICE destination.

The current upgrade of Luxembourg's infrastructure is a testament to Luxembourg's resolve in becoming a more competitive and attractive MICE destination

Indeed, a lot has changed in recent years. According to Tom Bellion, director of Luxembourg City Tourist Office & Luxembourg Convention Bureau, the country has considerably increased its hospitality and meeting infrastructure and know-how for more than a decade. Most recently, **Luxexpo**, an iconic venue for international congresses and trade shows, has been undergoing a massive upgrade, to be completed by mid-2017. The renovation includes recreating the



Luxembourg City

exhibition halls, upgrading the conference space and logistics (two separate entrances instead of one), and improving public access (the impending construction of a tramway) and parking facilities. Just located 7km from the airport and 2 km from the city centre, Luxexpo currently offers nine conference halls with the total area of 4,000 sqm, which will become more flexible and versatile after the renovation.

While some parts of Luxembourg City can be commercialized like any major cities, the capital city balances it out with its UNESCO-listed historic old town perched on a plateau above green gorges. After witnessing the magnificent Luxembourg fortress myself, there's little doubt why the capital city was formerly known as the “Gibraltar of the North”. Featuring narrow old town alleys, charming old quarters and magnificent fortifications in a hilly, picturesque setting, the



Bourscheid Castle



European Museum

old town offers a convenient, relaxing break from the urban hustle-bustle of the city. The beautifully restored **Neimënster**, a former Benedictine Abbey, was inaugurated as a culture, meeting and event centre 10 years ago, and it has become one of the most symbolic meeting venues in Luxembourg.

Charming countryside

As my guide drove us away from the capital city, Luxembourg continued to fascinate me with its compact size and ease of access. As Luxembourg's well-maintained roads took me through the scenic landscapes with rivers meandering past vast meadows and forests, I realised it takes only less than hour to go between different venues and spots. Clervaux, a small town in the Ardennes northern Luxembourg, only takes about 35-40 minutes by car from the airport with the opening of the newly built highway in October. With the major venues and hotels located within walking distance and the very well organised public transportation, *"This unique situation enables event organisers to combine urban and countryside activities easily,"* Hoffman said.

Clervaux might be small in size, but the locals know how to think big and make the most of its attractions. The **Le Clervaux Boutique & Design Hotel** and the **Hotel International** came up with the "Rent-A-City" concept for

Luxembourg at a glance

- Population: 562,958
- Area: 2,586 sqm
- Hotels: 36 and about 3,600 rooms, mostly in the four-and five-star category
- Conference venues: 108 (including hotels)
- Getting there: By air: Amsterdam (1h30), Berlin (1h20), Frankfurt/Geneva (50min), London (1h10); By train: Paris (2h), Metz (1h), Brussels (3h) and Trier (43min).
- Official languages: French, German, and Luxembourgish (national language)
- Climate: Temperate maritime with cool summers and moderate winters
- Government system: A representative democracy within a constitutional monarchy

organising meetings and events, in collaboration with the town's mayor, local representatives and other organisations. This synergy enables Clervaux to unite all participants to professionally and efficiently organise teambuilding activities and events in just one single place with just one single contact person, who is in charge of arranging and coordinating services such as accommodation, infrastructure support, catering and entertainment options. Another advantage is that instead of

hosting your event in a traditional indoor location, you can customise your event in an outdoor setting.

Besides doing your shopping in Grand-Rue and Rue Philippe II, visiting the world-class museums and dining out at many Michelin-starred eateries in the city, the countryside boasts a good number of charming villages nestled in the rolling hills, a perfect setting for sightseeing and teambuilding activities. The Moselle Valley, best known for producing white wines and sparkling wines, is well worth visiting for its wine tastings and wine cellars. In the Moselle region you can also visit the small village of Schengen, located on the border with Germany and France where the influential Schengen Agreement was signed in 1985. In the following pages, you shall get more ideas for incentives and teambuilding activities that suit different needs and budgets.

Last but not least, Luxembourg ranks very highly for personal safety with a very low crime rate, and usually features in the top 20 countries in global surveys on "quality of life", such as the one conducted by Mercer's.

There is so much to do and see in this little landlocked country. What are you waiting for?

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Experts know best

Anne Hoffmann, managing director at Luxembourg National Tourist Board, and Tom Bellion, director of Luxembourg City Tourist Office & Luxembourg Convention Bureau, share their thoughts and insights on Luxembourg as a MICE destination.

Anne Hoffman: “Luxembourg fosters the human dimension”

MIM Europe: What can Luxembourg offer as a MICE destination?

Anne Hoffmann: Luxembourg is one of the few European countries to present and foster the human dimension. This means all its hotels, its tourism and business infrastructure are within easy reach, which represents a major advantage for MICE organisers: the costs and loss of time associated with lengthy journeys are not on the Luxembourg agenda. Not to forget that the country's linguistic system is based on the use of three administrative languages: Luxembourgish, French and German – with English widely spoken everywhere. Its geographic location



places Luxembourg City less than half an hour away from France, Belgium and Germany. This amazing mixture of nationalities and cultures reflects in all aspects of Luxembourg society through the use of languages, in gastronomy, the arts, leisure, sports, etc.

MIM Europe: What are the latest infrastructure developments in this small country?

Anne Hoffmann: Throughout the country, you will find modern and well-equipped conference and meeting infrastructure to suit your requirements and expectations. Our venues provide high-quality, frequently modular and easily personalised facilities equipped with the latest communication technologies, allowing for easy organisation of meetings, seminars, exhibitions and other corporate events. In order to meet the growing demand for overnight stays, the country is constantly looking for new investors in the hotel industry.

Tom Bellion, the incentives to attract more meetings

MIM Europe: What are the government incentives to attract more meeting planners?

Tom Bellion: Completely new in 2015, the government offers a special financial incentive programme to help people attend and organise international congresses and conferences in Luxembourg. The event should show at least 100 attendees (of which at least 50% coming from foreign countries) and a minimum of 100 registered hotel nights at local hotels.

MIM Europe: Please describe the synergies between the city convention bureau (Luxembourg Convention Bureau) and the newly formed Cluster MICE Luxembourg.



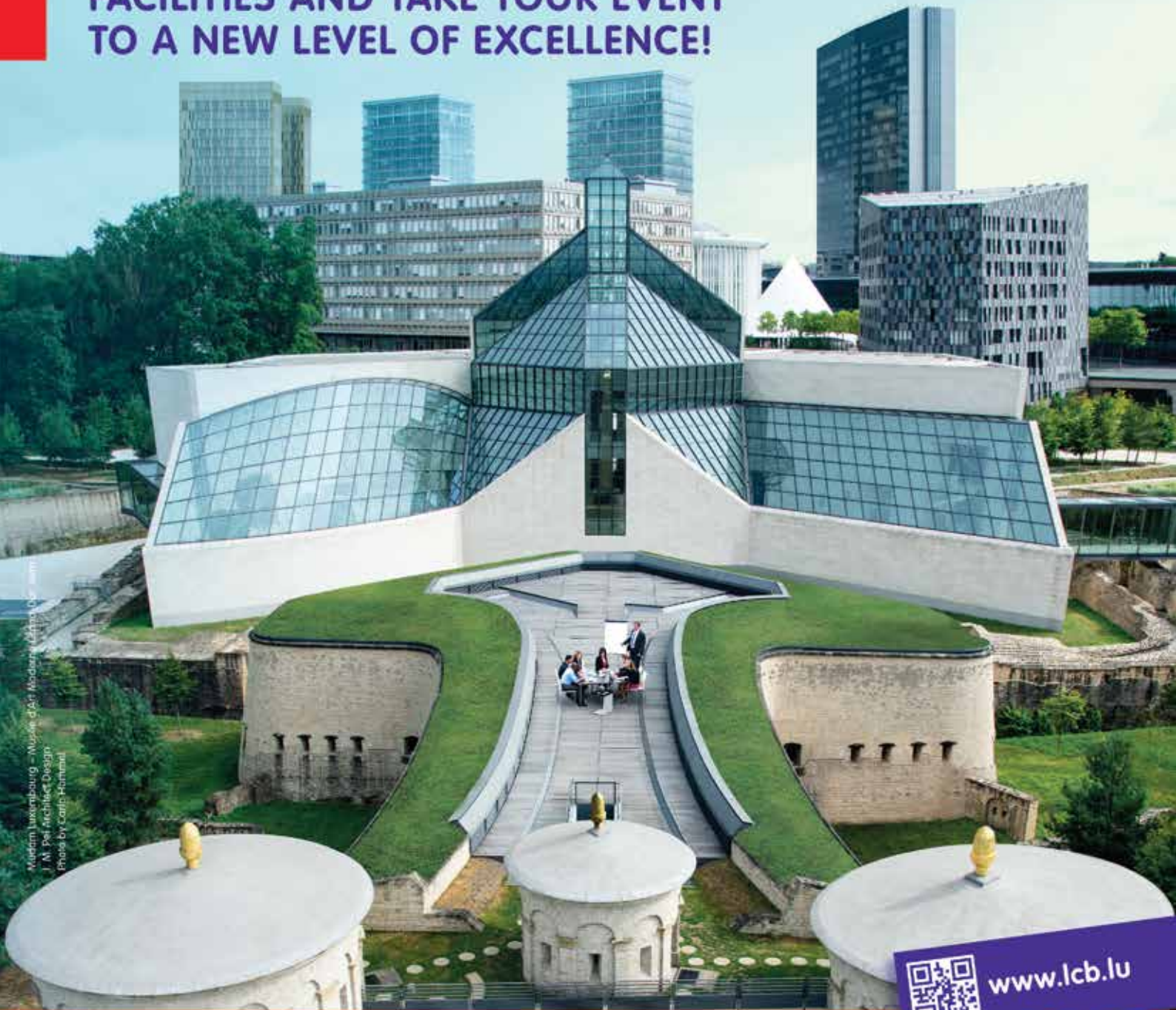
Tom Bellion: The Cluster MICE Luxembourg is a cooperative project between 25 public institutions and private suppliers (venues, hotels, transport companies, PCOs, DMCs), created in 2014. All members combine their efforts in order to develop a vision and business strategy together for Luxembourg as a MICE destination.

On the other hand, the Luxembourg Convention Bureau, department of the Luxembourg City Tourist Office, has already been in service for over 30 years as a one-stop shop for MICE planners by providing a comprehensive, impartial and free-of-charge consultation on MICE services both in the city and beyond. Moreover, Luxembourg Convention Bureau plays a special role in the bidding process for international congresses. It provides a coordinated approach and presents extensive “thought-through proposals” by collecting the offers of all local suppliers. And don't forget that we do offer a performant on-line registration and hotel booking system.

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Small city with big appeal

With a lively urban lifestyle, sweeping forests, picturesque landscapes and historical sites all reachable within an hour, Luxembourg is never short of things to see and do. Anne Hoffmann picks out a selection of unmissable teambuilding activities in Luxembourg.

Promenade Gourmande

Luxembourg boasts top culinary achievements and many Michelin-starred restaurants throughout the country, where you can find anything from world cuisine to local specialties such as the famous Cremant sparkling wine. During this culinary walk, a guide will explain the picturesque quarters of the city and take delegates to three different restaurants to taste delicious regional food.

The Seven Keys of Melusina

The legend of Melusina is an integral part of the city of Luxembourg's cultural history. Discover more about the water nymph in a treasure hunt-style event based on her legend where participants have to find her seven keys dotted around the city. Not only does this encourage team building, participants also learn more about the city's hidden gems and legends.

An Ice-breaking 2CV Rally

The Citroen 2CV is one of the iconic cars ever built known for its minimalism. A rally in a convoy of brightly coloured 2CVs is the ultimate team-building ice-breaker. A countryside 2CV rally team-building event can incorporate a barbecue at one of the local vineyards along the Moselle river.

Segway Sightseeing

Discover the UNESCO-listed old town of Luxembourg on a Segway, an innovative

and eco-friendly electric mode of transportation that allows you to visit sites that are otherwise inaccessible to most other means of transportation. Tours can also be adapted to a particular theme, ranging from art to gastronomy or ecology.

Cult Express and Cool Bus

Want to organise impress an event in an original setting? Look no further than hiring one of these two distinct vehicles. With 5 tables, 20 seats, a 5m-long bar and freshly tapped beer, Cool Bus is a truly transportable bar available to rent with a driver, mostly used for celebrations and events such as weddings and company presentations. On the other hand, The Cult Express is the perfect bus that accommodates up to 45 people, an ideal mobile venue for events such as workshops and exhibitions in an unforgettable setting.

Boat trip along the Moselle

A trip along the Moselle in a pleasant cruiser is a great way to reward your colleagues. The boats, anchored at Remich and Grevenmacher, sail up and down the channeled river, passing by its vine covered slopes and historical villages. Why not throw in samplings of local cuisine and wines as well for a nice half-day out in Moselle? A visit to Schengen, where the famous Schengen Agreement was signed in 1985, is also highly recommended.



Rent a City



SegWay Tour



Princesse Astrid, Moselle

Hot air balloon rides

It's a rare treat to admire Luxembourg's most beautiful landscapes from a bird's eye perspective, floating serenely above the countryside. A hot air balloon flight can be arranged just after dawn or a few hours before sunset for an unforgettable experience.

Hospitality at its best

Despite its small size, Luxembourg features an amazing variety of hotels (about 3,600 hotels rooms, mostly in the four-and five-star category) and venues in unique settings. Some of these properties are newly renovated or refurbished to cope with an increasingly savvy clientele, including, most recently, Le Royal Luxembourg, part of the “Leading Hotels of the World” (www.leroyal.com/luxembourg).



Orange, Mondorf Parc Hotel

© mondorf.lu

Nestled in a beautiful parkland just 18 km from the capital city, **Mondorf Parc Hotel** is a sanctuary for spa lovers featuring many old thermal baths occupying a 100-acre private estate close to the Moselle vineyards. Newly renovated with an elegant earthy-toned décor, the hotel offers 108 rooms including 38 suites in both traditional and contemporary atmosphere.

The hotel provides a wide choice of rooms and halls to host your events and meetings. Besides offering 15 flexible function rooms filled with natural daylight (10-350 delegates), the hotel boasts prestige buildings such as L’Orangerie, an elegant venue facing a lushly landscaped French garden, a perfect setting for events such as the Concours d’Elégance of Classic Cars. (www.mondorf.lu)

Another sparkling gem is **Château d’Urspelt**, a family-owned hotel set in a 300-year-old castle in the heart of the nature reserve in northern Luxembourg, about 40 minutes from the capital city by car. The hotel currently has 29 double castle rooms and one 100 sqm magnificent suite with a new extension wing being built. The renovation, which will be completed this December, will add 26 more Castle Suites (30-45 sqm) and a rooftop “infinity spa”. There is also an eclectic choice of venues for hire, including meeting rooms, a large reception hall (500 guests), and an elegant interior courtyard. (www.chateau-urspelt.lu)

Parc Alvisse, a four-star hotel, is a local favourite because of its open-to-public swimming pool, and 320 well-appointed rooms with parking space for 400 cars. Located on the edge of the forest just a short drive from

Luxembourg, the hotel just had a makeover with recently refurbished rooms, indoor pool and spa rooms, and meeting facilities. (www.parc-hotel.lu)

Opened in 2012, the **European Convention Centre Luxembourg** (ECCL), has become one of the most outstanding congress venues in Europe, boasting over 30 breakout rooms and 2,600 sqm exhibition space. As part of a new “joint venture” concept, ECCL is well connected with nearby attractions such as the awe-inspiring Philharmonie Concert Hall, and MUDAM (the Museum of Modern Art). Its public restaurant, “La Table du Belvédère”, is a spacious, elegant venue filled with daylight, which serves up “bistronomic” cuisine and boasts a banquet room ideal for buffet meals and cocktails. (www.luxcongress.lu)

Located in the southern industrial city of Belval, **Rockhal** is the epitome of rock-star glam as a popular venue for concerts (up to 6.500) or events (the “Aquarium” area is perfect for exclusive receptions for up to 150 people). The neighborhood, best known for its steel production, is now a regeneration area featuring a shopping complex and the science faculty of the University of Luxembourg. (www.rockhal.lu)

Located in the heart of the old quarters, **CCRN-Abbaye of Neimenster** offers spectacular views of the city and boasts about 12000 sqm of meeting space for large open-air events and indoor venues for galas and events. This historic building of more than 400 years old took 10 years to renovate before opening in 2004 as a congress centre. (www.ccrn.lu)



ECCL



Rockhal in Belval



Château d’Urspelt

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DESTINATION UPDATE
ANTWERP



Inge Marstboom,
Visit Antwerp

With the opening of many new and renovated venues, it looks like hosting events in Antwerp has never been more exciting. As the new marketing campaign suggests, Antwerp will wow meeting planners and delegates as an atypical destination of art, fashion, gastronomy, and much more.

REPORT KATIE LAU

“Atypical” is the specific word used by the city government to promote Antwerp in a new way. “Antwerp is a unique city in many ways. It’s a small city with lots to do and see. Many attractions are just within walking distance. It’s also a port city about 80km from the sea while the sea is usually close to the urban area in other cities,” said Inge Marstboom, business development manager of Visit Antwerp.

Melting pot

Furthermore, Antwerp is a melting pot of different cultures and nationalities, like Paris and London. “It’s such a diverse city on a small scale,” she continued. “As an innovative city of knowledge, Antwerp is one of the world’s most important diamond centres with four trading exchanges. It’s rare for a small city to do so,” she said.

Most notably, Antwerp is a vibrant and creative city known for its fashion, culture, gastronomy and people. Seamlessly combining arts and culture into events is what makes Antwerp such a wonderful congress destination, and the ISWA (The International Solid Waste Association)

World Congress, held this early September, is a good case in point.

“I was really surprised to find that during the plenary sessions, there was a small interval of 3-4 minutes featuring art performances, such as opera and dance, after each speaking session. I find it very original and beautiful... It shows that Antwerp can make these things happen,” she said.

Ongoing upgrade

Antwerp has also been busy upgrading its infrastructure. The Flanders Meeting & Convention Center Antwerp (FMCCA), scheduled to open in November 2016 with a capacity for up to 2,000 guests, is located right next to the Antwerp Zoo and the Central Station with easy access to “beautiful gardens perfect for cocktail receptions and coffee breaks. I’m looking forward to it because we have been focusing on attracting bigger international conventions,” Inge said.

This year also sees the openings of venues like **The Shop**, restored from a historical building located in the trendy waterfront area Eilandje. The recently

revamped **Café Local**, in the south

of Antwerp, is ideal for corporate events and private parties. Comprehensive renovation plans are also being developed to turn **Antwerp Expo** into a state-of-the-art venue as well. **Museum Plantin-Moretus**, a special venue for incentives and workshops, is also undergoing renovation while the **MAS Museum** will celebrate its fifth anniversary next year, not to mention the many cultural events and festivals that take place all year round.

Antwerp seems to have a busy year ahead. Apart from focusing on bigger international conventions, Marstboom said her team would “work harder for association markets. We’ll keep working actively on primary markets (Belgium, Holland, Germany, France, the UK and the USA) but we also hope to increase our visibility in secondary markets such as the BRIC countries. We will do it one step at a time.”

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Philip Heylen

In August this year on a sunny terrace, I met Philip Heylen, Antwerp's Vice Mayor for Culture, Economy and City Maintenance. He told me about his successful bid to bring the ISWA World Congress 2015 (International Solid Waste Association) to Antwerp, defeating Birmingham in the home stretch with a string of solid arguments. He aroused my curiosity!

TEXT MARCEL A.M. VISSERS

The example of ISWA World Congress 2015

I was so taken by his story that we met again a while later to allow him to brief me about his project in more detail. Meanwhile, Philip chaired the convention from 7 through 9 September. He fought for his baby, travelled, lobbied and took more than a few aspirins whilst juggling to find sponsors and speakers. He and his team discovered first-hand how tough it is to be a successful event organiser because after all that's the job they had been doing. And I was pretty proud that the cream of international waste management travelled to my city in order to find out more about the prominent position that Flanders and Belgium occupy on the international stage with respect to waste management. I immensely enjoyed this

convention and I would definitely recommend to anyone operating in our sector to take time out now and again to attend a conference that is not about the meetings industry. I guarantee it will open new windows in your mind!

Politicians can be helpful in the meetings industry

Philip Heylen is good example of a politician who understands the importance of international conventions for a city's economy. He also provided me with insights about what Global Waste Management means for a city. Convention delegates like neat and clean cities but they are still pretty scarce around the globe. Barely 45% of the major cities in the world are actively engaged in sustainable development.

Can you believe it? Philip is now a happy man: a record-breaking 1260 participants from over 90 countries attended the congress.

It seems indeed ISWA delegates were in heaven in Antwerp. Here's what some had to say.

Sumaira Gul, program manager, Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan Memorial Trust, Pakistan

"I enjoyed the welcome party on my first evening at the MAS Museum and also the gala at Hilton Antwerp. The dinner was informative and productive. It was my first time in Antwerp. It's a very beautiful and innovative city. I find the people very caring and loving. They were very eager to help when I asked them for directions.

During the visit to the port, I was impressed by our guide who shared information about all the activities happening in the port, such as which countries participate in import/export trade. We also visited a glass recycling plant to see how glass was reused in different ways. Overall, the visit is a very positive experience for me.”

Jagdeep Singh, Ph.D candidate at Division of Industrial Ecology, KTH Royal Institute of Technology

“I think Antwerp, as congress destination, is wonderful. I liked the architecture of Antwerp in general, especially the train station, and many other historical buildings. I stayed at TRYP by Wyndham Antwerp so I cycled to and from the venue every day. All the venues are easily accessed by foot or bike. I liked the cycling infrastructure in Antwerp (the bike lanes and 24-hour conveniently located bike stations). The food arrangements at the congress were great – they really took care of the needs of the delegates. However, I would like them to

promote more sustainable (vegetarian) options at such events - locally produced and/or fair-trade food would fit the themes of the congress better.”

Ng Weng Mun, senior project manager, SWM Environment, Malaysia

“It’s very interesting for me to see behind the scenes how waste is managed and how departments are involved here. We visited the main square with all these historical buildings and then we learned about how the Belgians incorporate the historical and cultural legacy of the buildings into the waste management design. While Antwerp is not a bustling metropolis, there is a laid-back atmosphere which I enjoy and the people are very efficient.”

Davide Mainero, plant manager and environmental project manager at ACEA Pinerolese Industriale, Italy

“I have seen most of the city. It’s packed with rich culture and history. It was really nice to spend a couple of hours at the MAS Museum in the port area.

I found a nice old building for my stay via Airbnb. It was a lovely area with lots of historical buildings. The transportation was easy. I took a tram and bus to and from the venue, which I find very effective and well organised.”

Mustafina Vera, executive director of KazWaste, Kazakhstan

“I stay in a hotel near the cathedral, It’s a very old, medieval building. It is an interesting way to feel the vibes in the old city. I like the cathedral and Belgian chocolate. The Belgian hospitality is first class. I enjoy the walk to the venue, and I find the catering very good. I am looking forward to visiting the Rubens House and more of the city later.”

Dr. Vivek S Agrawal, managing director of Kanak Resources Management, India

“I find the venue very impressive. I enjoy the pleasant weather here too. I feel connected to the city because there is an Indian community of diamond traders here.”



Sumaira Gul and Jagdeep Singh



Davide Mainero



Dr Vivek S Agrawal



Ng Weng Mun (right) and Ben Chong (left)



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Antwerp Expo

A conversation with Philippe Willegems

In his own words, Antwerp is a hidden gem that still needs to be discovered by the international conference market. Philippe Willegems, Antwerp Expo Manager, tells MIM Europe how the venue operates and how it can help meeting planners.



Antwerp Expo



Philippe Willegems

MIM Europe: What are the actual priorities of Antwerp Expo Now? Do exhibitions come first?

Philippe Willegems: Right now our focus is indeed on the Antwerp Expo tradeshows and B2C events, which have always been our core business and will remain so in the foreseeable future. With an area of 6000m², Antwerp Expo boasts a Meeting Centre with six meeting rooms for 25 up to 500 guests. It is clear that this Meeting Centre initially was constructed to complement and support the exchange activities. A trade show usually involves a lot of lectures, presentations, discussions and workshops and these spaces provide an interesting setting for all those activities.

Nevertheless, the Meeting Centre is also “autonomous” in the sense that it can be rented separately from the exhibition halls and this happens about 50 times a year for various clients.

MIM Europe: What are the important congresses and exhibitions you will host in the future?

Philippe Willegems: Indeed, this season sees a lot of interesting seminars and conferences, all of which are trade shows in need of adequate exhibition space. I myself believe that we might not be able to host these conferences if we do not provide enough exhibition space. The five most important international events for us are: Breakbulk Europe:

the largest exhibition and educational forum in the world addressing the needs of traditional breakbulk and project cargo logistics professionals; StocExpo, the world’s leading international event for the tank terminal industry; PEFTEC, an international conference and exhibition on petroleum, refining & environmental monitoring technologies; Marine Maintenance World Expo, an international ship maintenance and repair exhibition including the renowned Marine Maintenance Conference; and World Water Works, an international exhibition and conference on coastal, waterway and port developments.

MIM Europe: How do you feel about the opening of Flanders Meeting & Convention Center Antwerp in 2016?

Philippe Willegems: I find it a blessing that the city of Antwerp is welcoming such a respectable convention centre. It looks very promising and I am confident that many PCOs and DMCs will be impressed by the possibilities it offers. I think we view each other more as complementary, not as competitors. The convention centre has the capacity to host conferences for 2000 guests while our venue keeps the clear boundary between exhibitions and conferences. While we might overlap in certain areas, but if there is no availability in one venue then another venue can help out, so we will certainly complement each other.

MIM Europe: What are the extension plans being developed for Antwerp Expo?

Philippe Willegems: We have big plans for the Antwerp Expo definitely. Our ambition is to create a new Expo Centre in cooperation with the City of Antwerp. Renovation is set to be completed by 2022. In the first phase, the venue will grow by 30% in terms of area, and up to 50 % in the possible second phase. Multi-purpose halls will be built, which accommodate sports events, large company events and to a large extent, conferences. We also plan to offer a new Meeting Centre, which is flexible enough for 250/500/750 guests with a good number of break-out rooms.

MIM Europe: 5 What do you think sets Antwerp apart from other cities as a congress destination?

Philippe Willegems: Antwerp is a hidden gem. It is a beautiful city with a rich cultural past. It is the second-largest petrochemical port in the world and world-renowned for its diamond trade, fashion and architecture. The city council has clearly stated its ambitions that they want to invest in congress tourism and the facilities involved. And we feel that Antwerp Expo is moving in the same direction with more investment coming. We are confident that within a few years Antwerp will be much more visible on the map as a congress destination.

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The city of Vienna is at its best when congresses or major city events are organised. In fact, Vienna is a European leader in terms of city marketing. In 1999, a dedicated department was set up called 'Stadt Wien Marketing' which employs 17 staff. So it's time to focus on CEO Michael Draxler who can tell us how important events are for the Austrian capital.

REPORT MARCEL A.M. VISSERS

Two major attractions in Vienna

We've all heard about the traditional Viennese Balls, but the lesser-known Life Ball is the largest annual Aids charity event in the world. And it's held at the Vienna City Hall. I was lucky enough to attend the Life Ball in 2013 together with some of the world's most famous stars and celebrities. Bill Clinton, for example, is a regular guest. I was really impressed by the way Vienna was able to organise such a splendid spectacle. I was convinced that it was the work of an intelligent team.

example of Viennese organisational talents. How do you manage to successfully organise two major events like that, back to back? And believe me, they were really major and successful events.

Michael Draxler, CEO of Stadt Wien Marketing (www.wien-event.at), revealed some of their tricks: "Our department organises about 50 events every year for the city of Vienna. We also co-ordinate and contribute to events organised by third parties, such as the Life Ball and Eurovision. Over the years we have devel-

they are enjoyed enormously by the Viennese. All I can say is: come and visit!"

Other Viennese congress treasures

It doesn't always take the prestigious names of palaces to attract organisers of events or congresses. Vienna has several lesser-known venues and programmes that are just as interesting. For example, the **new campus for the University of Economics**, Vienna's brand-new business university, has stylish white buildings and it's a showcase of modern architecture (www.wu.ac.at).

"Events bring a city to life and attract foreign guests. In Vienna, events have become part of the city scene and they are enjoyed enormously by the Viennese."

This year I was invited to the Eurovision Song Contest (23 May), also in Vienna, which was held immediately after the Life Ball (16 May). That was another perfect

oped skills to execute complicated assignments. Events bring a city to life and attract foreign guests. In Vienna, events have become part of the city scene and

Another great venue is the **Leopold Museum** in Vienna's Museum Quarter that belongs to the artistic and cultural main attractions in the historic centre of the city. You could attend a special exhibition here during the Eurovision Song Contest: 'The Null-Pointers' or singers

who had scored zero points throughout the history of the contest. However, one real palace which is in fact worth mentioning is the **Palais Hansen Kempinski Vienna** which was originally built as a hotel for the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873. It's very well located on the famous Ring Boulevard (www.kempinsky.com/de/Wien).

Unusual locations for large events

Thanks to Michael Müllner of Büro Wien (www.buerowien.com), I discovered several other unknown gems. **Art for Art**, Europe's largest artist's workshop, was the first. The paintings and stage designs for Vienna's State Opera, the Volksoper, the Burgtheater and other internationally important theatres are created in this workshop. They are spaces where extravagant events can be held. **Marx Halle**, the former slaughterhouse, with its stunning architecture, endless amount of space and a number of possibilities, is another top venue. (www.marxhalle.at).

Dating back to the 17th century, **Aula der Wissenschaften**, with its beautiful lecture halls, was originally used by the university. On the top floor, the early baroque building has accommodated the impressive hall of the Jesuit theatre from the very beginning (www.srs.at). The **Spanische Hofreitschule** - Spanish Riding School- is a well-known venue where you always find something new. It houses the Winterreitschule, a magnificent baroque building intended for horse-riding, which can be transformed into a unique location for events, including the Stallburg which is equipped with a mobile roof construction.

Unfortunately, I don't have time to tell you about all the events that were ever organised at these exciting buildings. But Elisabeth Millington of the Vienna Convention Bureau (elisabeth.millington@vienna.info) is the ideal person to contact, or visit the website: www.vienna.convention.at.



Leopold Museum



Aula der Wissenschaften



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A destination less well travelled

Korean food is quickly becoming a global phenomenon. Nearly everyone has heard K-Pop, well, at least Psy's Gangnam Style. With LG, Samsung, Hyundai and Kia household names, Korea has touched nearly all of us. Think of Korea and most would now attest to Korean leadership in technology and entertainment.

Couple this with their proven ability to host large conventions¹ and major events offers a multitude of sound business reasons for meeting in Korea. Beyond Meetings, as the strapline suggests, Korea is also a perfect destination for incentivising staff, and certainly a destination less well travelled.

Land of Wonders

Korea's location in the Far East makes it the perfect hub in Asia from which to do business, with 88 airlines flying direct from 183 cities, and 1/3 of the world's population within a three-hour flight. However, do not expect to land, immediately, into a world of temples, hanbok (traditional Korean dress) and paddy fields; yes they are all there, but much of Korea is a developed and modern landscape.

International architects flock to see the Seoul cityscape, boasting a range of unusual and modern architecture, such as the Dongdaemun Design Plaza, designed by Zaha Hadid, hovering, like a spaceship, just above the ground. Arrival at the multi award winning, Incheon International Airport, is no less of a wonder. Created on reclaimed land named after Incheon Metropolitan city (South Korea's 3rd largest after Seoul and Busan) it borders Seoul.

Within 28 minutes the KTX high-speed bullet train whisks you into the capital, and onwards to the south east or south west of the peninsula in under 3 hours, offering excellent access to Busan, Daegu and Gwangju. There is also an extensive

road and air network including flights every half hour from Seoul's second airport, Gimpo to the New 7 Wonders of the World, UNESCO heritage, Jeju Island. This facilitates activities within an hour of the capital and further afield.

Of course traditional Korea is very much in evidence. Juxtaposed with the modern landscape, hanok buildings (traditional houses), sit nestled amongst the metropolis. Seoul boasts five palaces, Buddhist and Confucianist temples. Further on 'slow cities', Korea's traditional thatched villages, still preserve the ways of life that are centuries old. The country showcases twelve UNESCO world heritages and the latest to join the list is 'Baekje Historic Area'.

Wifi & Assistance

The Koreans are renowned as technologically advanced, and the country boasts the fastest mobile broadband speeds anywhere. Hotels offer excellent wifi for accommodation and meetings.

From 1st October the eagerly awaited Four Seasons Hotel Seoul offers 317 bedrooms, seven restaurants and bars, daylight function spaces and an architectural cool, now synonymous with Seoul. A 'must experience' venue, it has excellent meeting facilities including a 740sqm grand ballroom, a 470sqm second ballroom and 7 additional function spaces. And Korea offers plenty more international four- or five-star hotel chains from Hyatt, Hilton, IHG, Accor, as well as its own Lotte and Shilla brands.



Jeonju Hanok Village



Bongeunsa Temple, Seoul overlooking COEX Convention Centre and Mall in Gangnam



Dongdaemun Design Plaza

Korea MICE Bureau can assist event planners with a one stop shop: advice on venues, ideas for incentive activities, team building, offsite reception and dinners. For qualifying events there is support for international meetings and incentive support starts from just 10pax.

Korea has four distinct seasons, with festivals throughout the year to welcome spring blossoms, cool off in summer, harvest festival – Choesuk – and ice festivals in the snow. The Pyeongchang Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will take place in 2018, offering further reason to visit this country of contrasts.

Contact

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All photos courtesy of Korea Tourism Organisation

¹ UIA Statistics: 2014 Korea 4th and Seoul 5th, ICCA 2014 Statistics: Republic of Korea 17th and Seoul 15th

KOREA, BEYOND MEETINGS

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