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SUPPLEMENT TO

Successful  
MEETINGS

# california





# los angeles

by Stephen Wynne

VARIETY AND VALUE STEAL THE SHOW IN THIS SPRAWLING METROPOLIS.

**TINSELTOWN. HOME OF THE STARS.** Hollywood. Beverly Hills. Rodeo Drive. Bentleys and Rolls-Royces. Television and film capital of the world.

Even the name "L.A." has come to symbolize glamour and glitz. Yet Los Angeles is also a place where serious meetings take place—and serious business gets done. And the reason is because it offers so much more than just the gilded images of popular culture.

In fact, this is one of the most diverse places in America...in its ethnic mix; in its cuisine; in its topography; and in its hotels and meeting spots. And it's this variety that makes Los Angeles such a surprising value for meeting planners.

"We have an area of some 500 square miles," says Michael Krouse, CHME, CMP, vice president of sales and services at the Los Angeles Convention & Visitors Bureau. "You can climb in the mountains in the morning and go to the beach in the afternoon. You can shop on Rodeo Drive in the morning and shop at a crafts market in the afternoon. You can eat a hundred different kinds of food. And you can find hotels and meeting places to fit every budget."

There are nearly a thousand hotels,

with some 96,000 guest rooms. And meeting spaces range from the Los Angeles Convention Center's 720,000 square feet of space to executive boardrooms at boutique hotels.

## PROPERTY PRIMER

The beach community of Santa Monica offers one of L.A.'s great hotel properties: Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel is a favorite of meeting planners, for a variety of reasons. For one thing, this colorful oceanside community has always attracted all sorts of creative and innovative types, along with funky shops and restaurants. For another, there are 342 luxurious guest rooms. And for a third, there's more than 20,000 square feet of meeting space.

Another landmark hotel is the Hilton Los Angeles Universal City, with 486 rooms and 60,000 square feet of space for meetings. This hotel sits on a hilltop at the entrance to Universal Studios Hollywood and Universal CityWalk, with some 60 restaurants and shops, an amphitheater, and nightspots. There's even indoor skydiving, at the new iFLY Hollywood.

New hotels are opening regularly. On

the magnificent Palos Verdes peninsula, overlooking the beach, the Terranea Resort opened in June. In addition to its 380 guest rooms and 82 villas and casitas, the resort boasts 60,000 square feet of state-of-the-art meeting space as well as 75,000 square feet of outdoor event space.

Scheduled for a December opening is the W Hollywood Hotel & Residences, part of the \$600 million Hollywood & Vine mixed-use project. In February, the JW Marriott Hotel Los Angeles will open, with 879 rooms, 35 suites, and 77,000 square feet of indoor meeting space. Outside its doors is the 27 acres of L.A. LIVE, a \$2.5 billion sports and entertainment district that's re-shaping the face of downtown. There are athletic events and concerts at the Staples Center; the Nokia Theater for all kinds of awards shows and TV events; the Grammy Museum; and imaginative entertainment concepts like the Lucky Strike Lanes & Lounge, a luxury bowling center. And it's all adjacent to the Los Angeles Convention Center.

"L.A. LIVE will change this city forever," says Michael Krouse of the CVB. "It will give us a world-class city center."



A number of hotels have undergone extensive renovations, among them the Kyoto Grand Hotel (formerly the New Otani); and the Holiday Inn at Los Angeles International Airport, which has been converted into an upscale property.

In Los Angeles, there's no shortage of interesting places to hold meetings. The Jim Henson Company encompasses the vintage soundstage built by Charlie Chaplin in 1917, and a courtyard that can accommodate 750 people. The Kodak Theatre at L.A. LIVE, home of the Academy Awards, has the 3,400-seat auditorium in which the stars parade to pick up their Oscars every spring. If you've ever fantasized about producing a film, you can realize your dream in teambuilding exercises at Universal Studios backlot. And if you bleed "Dodger Blue," you can hold your meeting—with up to 56,000 attendees—at Dodger Stadium, which also offers celebrity baseball speakers.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

L.A. is known for eclectic dining. Two of the local favorites are Chaya, with "Asian Fusion" cuisine; and Drago, with distinctive Italian. And one of the most interesting restaurants in town is The Bazaar, owned by Spanish celebrity chef Jose Andres, with two mini-restaurants serving tapas and other Spanish food, a bar, and a patisserie. Here, you can indulge in treats such as chocolate "pop rocks" (remember them?), or liquid olives. And Rosa Mexicano, just opened in L.A. LIVE, has wonderful South-of-the-Border cuisine.

The variety of places to play is as diverse as the city itself. A Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum just opened in Hollywood. The movie studios, of course. A drive along Highway 1, with the mountains on one side and the ocean on the other. The great weather, and the great golf. Star-hunting on Rodeo Drive. And, if your meeting has been particularly intense, there's the Spa Luce, at the Renaissance Hollywood.

"It's been a rough few years for the meetings industry, as we all know," Krouse says. "But we've learned how to adapt. In Los Angeles, planners can now find all price points, for all budgets...along with a million other things they can't find anywhere else."

Krouse also notes that Los Angeles is ranked as the second-safest large city in America, and that its efficient mass-transit system makes it easy to get around. "We're seeing the light at the end of the tunnel now," he says. "People are starting to realize the value of meetings again."

**CONTACT**  
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