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meetings

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Shining Stars

22 meetings industry luminaries who light the way

KIKI L'ITALIEN, CEO & FOUNDER, AMPLIFIED GROWTH, AND ASSOCIATION CHAT



Good Day!
Global Wellness Day at Four Seasons L.A.

Business Means Meetings
Cities leverage local intellectual capital

Bonding to the Beat
Six companies get groups into the groove

Inventive Incentives
Personalized, global and tech-forward prevail

2017 MEETINGS TRENDSETTERS

WESTSIDE STORIES

L.A.'s Westside and Beach Cities beckon beyond the freeways

While often associated with urban sprawl and traffic-clogged freeways, Los Angeles County is largely comprised of communities that are pedestrian-friendly and filled with neighborhood charm. This is especially true of the Westside and Beach Cities, where places such as Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, Long Beach and Marina del Rey are cohesive meetings destinations, each with a distinctive atmosphere all its own.



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MARINA DEL REY
convention and visitors bureau



RODEO DRIVE, BEVERLY HILLS

Proximity to LAX and Long Beach International Airport is a major asset offered by the Westside and Beach Cities, according to Darren Green, senior vice president of sales for the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board.

“People don’t realize how close the beach cities are to the airport—it’s often just 10 minutes away,” he said. “Furthermore, LAX itself is a great meeting destination, with hotels there offering attractive packages and availability.”

At the same time, the expanding Metro light-rail system, which began service between downtown L.A. and Santa Monica last year, is upping the convenience factor of basing a meeting near the beach, Green noted.

Beverly Hills

Although its image exudes exclusivity, Beverly Hills is a welcoming place for meetings, and is dedicated to helping planners create unique experiences for their attendees, according to Julie Wagner, CEO of the Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau. She urges planners who are basing a meeting in Beverly Hills to take advantage of the services her office provides.

“We’re not a membership organization, but a city entity, which means that we can cut through the red tape to facilitate street closures and other special perks for groups,” she said. “If the meeting is based in Beverly Hills, we can also help planners arrange experiences throughout greater Los Angeles, whether it’s attending a Clippers game or a studio tour.”

Within Beverly Hills itself, there is an array of experiences available, including closing down the cobbled walkway of Two

Latest + Greatest

BEVERLY HILLS

- The **Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills** (www.waldorfastoriabeverlyhills.com) opened in June next to the Beverly Hilton. The 170-room property offers 6,300 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting and event space, including a rooftop deck with panoramic views.
- The **Kimpton Hotel Palomar Los Angeles Beverly Hills** (www.hotelpalomar-beverlyhills.com) was redesigned with a film studio theme and completed a renovation of all 264 guest rooms and public spaces. The hotel also added a new restaurant named Double Take and a game room available for private events.

LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

- The **Sheraton Gateway Los Angeles Hotel** (www.sheratonlax.com) completed the second phase of a property-wide renovation that included its 805 guest rooms, lobby area and 50,000 square feet of meeting and event space.
- The **Cambria El Segundo LAX** (www.choicehotels.com) opened with 152 rooms, an outdoor pool and fitness center.

CULVER CITY

- The **Wende Museum of the Cold War** (www.wendemuseum.org), which features art, history and cultural exhibits from former Soviet Bloc countries, will move to a new home in the former Culver City Armory with triple the gallery space. The museum collection includes the longest stretch of the Berlin Wall outside of Germany.

MALIBU

- The former Casa Malibu reopened in June as **Nobu Ryokan Malibu** (www.noburyokanmalibu.com), a traditional Japanese-style inn operated by celebrity chef Nobu Matsuhisa. The ultra-luxury beachfront property, owned by tech magnate Larry Ellison, offers 16 rooms with private decks and fireplaces and is adjacent to Nobu Malibu restaurant.

LONG BEACH

- The 199-room **Hotel Maya, A DoubleTree by Hilton** (<http://hotelmaya.longbeach.com>) added two new event spaces: Lagunita Pavilion, a 6,400-square-foot space on the edge of Queensway Bay, and Vista del Mar Plaza, a 10,000-square-foot prefunction area with palm trees, water and fire displays, as well as a permanent stage and outdoor bar.

WEST HOLLYWOOD

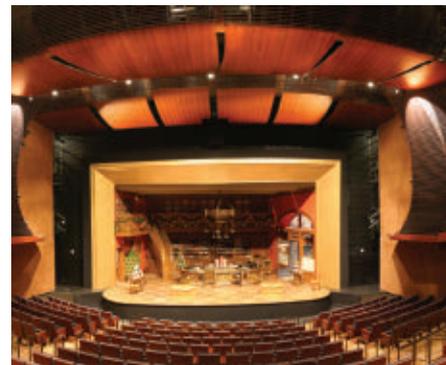
- The **Kimpton La Peer Hotel** (www.lapeerhotel.com) is set to open this fall with 105 rooms, 1,500 square feet of indoor meeting space, a landscaped rooftop pool deck available for events, a fitness center and indoor and outdoor dining.
- The **James West Hollywood-Sunset** (www.jameshotels.com) is slated to open by the end of summer in a mixed-use complex on Sunset Strip with 208 rooms, two restaurants, a rooftop bar and 10,000 square feet of meeting space.

Rodeo for a gala reception or giving attendees private after-hours access to stores such as Versace, Lanvin and Jimmy Choo, Wagner added.

“We’ve taken over Neiman Marcus at night for a fashion show and held elegant dinner parties in a mansion with a celebrity chef,” she said. “Based on the needs of the group, the possibilities are endless.”

Among the city’s major assets for groups is its concentration of restaurants, stores and meetings-friendly hotels, including the Four Seasons Los Angeles at Beverly Hills, The Peninsula Beverly Hills, Beverly Hilton, The Beverly Hills Hotel and Beverly Wilshire Hotel, within a compact area, she added.

“The fact that our hotels are so close together means that we can easily handle large groups of 1,500 or 2,000,” Wagner said. “There’s no need for cars or buses.”



WALLIS ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, BEVERLY HILLS



THE RITZ-CARLTON, MARINA DEL REY

The city's newest hotel, the 170-room Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills, the first in the Los Angeles area under Hilton Worldwide's luxury Waldorf Astoria brand, is a new option for high-end incentive groups, she added. Located next to the Beverly Hilton, it will also enable larger meetings to provide a top-tier option for senior executives.

While lacking a convention center, Beverly Hills offers such venue alternatives as the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, which provides two theaters and an outdoor garden available for events. The elegant Greystone Mansion & Gardens is another choice, a 1920s estate with indoor and outdoor event spaces for up to 300 guests.

Santa Monica

With its prime beachfront location, historic amusement pier and pedestrian-only Third Street Promenade lined with myriad shopping and dining options, Santa Monica has long been a magnet for meetings, especially in creative areas such as fashion and advertising, according to Kim Sidoriak, chief marketing officer for Santa Monica Travel & Tourism.

"We're really the beachfront

for L.A., ideal for creative retreats where you don't want to be stuck in a ballroom all day," she said. "You can focus on health and wellness here. We offer the ability to walk from your hotel to everything. You don't need a car when you're here."

Sidoriak noted that group business is continually expanding, some of it driven by the burgeoning number of start-ups in the area, often called Silicon Beach. Another positive factor is the completion last year of the Metro Expo light-rail line that connects Santa Monica with Downtown L.A. and points in between.

"Light-rail access has been a real game-changer for us," she said. "Now we have a car-free connection to L.A. Live, Staples Center, the Coliseum. If you're attending a Downtown convention, you now have a convenient option of staying at the beach."

Another asset is Santa Monica's hotel inventory of over 3,500 hotel rooms that include high-style boutique properties and deluxe meetings-friendly resorts such as Loews Santa Monica, Shutters on the Beach, Hotel Shangri-La at the Ocean, Casa Del Mar, JW Marriott Santa Monica Le Merigot and Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows. Last year saw the opening of Courtyard by Marriott and Hampton Inn properties, both

across from the new light-rail terminal.

While the sweet spot for meetings in Santa Monica is groups of around 200, Sidoriak noted that the city plays host each year to the American Film Market, which takes over Loews Santa Monica for its tradeshow and draws 7,000 international film distributors to the city.

Activities and off-site venues abound in the city, most famously the Santa Monica Pier, where Pacific Park amusement park offers numerous event opportunities for groups. Another popular option is the Annenberg Community Beach House, a historic property built by William Randolph Hearst, which offers indoor and outdoor function spaces and teambuilding opportunities on the beach.

Beach Cities

Just south of Santa Monica, beachside communities such as Marina del Rey, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach and Redondo Beach also offer attractive hotel and venue options for groups.

According to Lawrence Stafford, business development manager for the Marina del Rey CVB, Marina del Rey, where meetings-friendly hotels include The Ritz-Carlton, Marina del Rey Marriott, Hilton Garden Inn and Jamaica Bay Inn, is a sought-after destination for high-end corporate business where rates are often more affordable than in Beverly Hills and Santa Monica.

"Marina del Rey is a waterfront play-



THE COVE, LONG BEACH