

JANUARY 2026
VOLUME 43 • NUMBER 1

ConventionSouth

The national planners' resource for southern destinations



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Drivable Destinations Going the 'Distance'

IN BLOOM:
Top Garden & Outdoor Venues

HISTORICAL SITES & MUSEUMS
Leave a Lasting Impact

PUBLISHED BY:
KENILWORTH MEDIA INC.
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putting it in perspective

Insights & Inspiration for the New Year

January, the start of a new year, traditionally symbolizes a fresh start. For many, that means New Year's resolutions. However, there is more to look forward to in January besides New Year's resolutions. January brings all sorts of reasons to celebrate or show our appreciation, including National Spaghetti Day, January 4; National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, January 9; National Clean Off Your Desk Day, on the second Monday of January; Martin Luther King Jr. Day, on the third Monday of January; National Hugging Day, January 21; National Compliment Day, January 24; Holocaust Remembrance Day, Vietnam Peace Day, and National Chocolate Cake Day, all on January 27; National Puzzle Day, January 29; and National Fun at Work Day, on the last Friday of January—along with many others.

One other, in particular, brings a smile to my face: National Winnie the Pooh Day, January 18. It reminds me of an encounter while seeing Disney's® *Christopher Robin*, starring Ewan McGregor. After the movie, my husband and I waited patiently behind a group of senior adults as they slowly exited the theater, assisted by canes and walkers. Just in front of me, a dear lady turned to her friend and said with a sweet smile, "It's fun to feel like a kid again." I thought my heart would burst from such a tender moment.

Winnie the Pooh can tug at the heartstrings, too. The tubby bear with the gentle voice and a heart as big as his love for honey always delights with his generous spirit and thoughtful musings, called "Pooh-isms." Some of my favorite Pooh-isms include:

"People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day."

"Life is a journey to be experienced, not a problem to be solved."

"A friend is someone who helps you up when you're down, and if they can't, they lay (sic) down beside you and listen."

"A hug is always the right size."

"A day without laughter is a day wasted."

As I start this new year, I hope to keep these insightful Pooh-isms close to my heart and quick in action. Maybe you have a few favorite Pooh-isms to inspire you as well.

Just as Pooh-isms are meant to inspire you personally, our January issue brings great new ideas to inspire your meetings and events. Our cover story, "On the Right Track," beginning on page 17, looks at destinations that go the distance for their accessibility, affordability, and versatility. "History, Heritage & Hospitality" (page 6) examines how historical sites and museums leave a lasting impact on attendees, while "Meetings in Bloom" (page 12) showcases lovely garden and outdoor venues. We also explore what's new for meetings and events in Texas (page 38).

Be sure to check out ConventionSouth.com for more news, online exclusives, and resources for planning your next event in 2026 and beyond.



Making Meetings Matter More,

Michelle

Michelle Martin
Editor-in-Chief



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ConventionSouth (ISSN 1074-0627) is published monthly by Kenilworth Media Inc., 30 Leek Crescent, Suite 201, Richmond Hill, ON Canada L4B 4N4. It is mailed under standard mail rates.

POSTMASTER: CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED TO ConventionSouth, P.O. Box 2267, Gulf Shores, AL 36547. Editorial ideas, photographs, and content suggestions are welcomed; however, the publisher and editorial team retain the right to edit all content in print and online. Photos are typically obtained from direct sources and credits are given at the discretion of the editorial team. Copyright 2025 by Kenilworth Media.

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ON THE RIGHT TRACK¹⁷

Drive-in destinations that go the 'distance'



Jake Gee/Courtesy VisitAthensGA.com



Courtesy Savoy Museum

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Garden and outdoor venues add natural beauty to events



Courtesy Visit San Antonio

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On the cover: Shreveport, La. Courtesy Visit Shreveport-Bossier

The Boca Raton Celebrates 100-Year History with New Modernity

A conversation with Daniel Hostettler of The Boca Raton



With a background in leading independent luxury properties, Daniel Hostettler draws upon the guiding principles of individuality, excellence, and craft in his role as president and CEO of The Boca Raton since 2021. This year, the luxury Florida resort debuts a dramatic transformation as it celebrates its 100th anniversary, opening in 1926 as the Cloister

Inn. Hostettler shares his vision for protecting the legacy of The Boca Raton while stewarding the resort into its next century of hospitality by combining heritage, craft, and modernity.

What are your primary goals and responsibilities as president and CEO of The Boca Raton?

My focus is on empowering our teams to innovate, elevate, and deliver excellence across every touchpoint so that every guest experience feels effortless and genuine. We average 300 event bookings annually, from intimate C-suite retreats to full-resort buyouts. As we approach our centennial, our vision remains clear: more choice, better flow, and a continued sense of place—so that even the most complex programs feel personal and seamless.

What makes The Boca Raton a great destination for meetings and events?

The Boca Raton is where history and innovation meet. Across 200 acres of waterfront property, we offer five distinct hotels, 97,000 square feet of flexible event space, and access to world-class amenities, including our Forbes Five-Star Spa Palmera and signature dining by Major Food Group. Add to that our location—within easy reach of three international airports—and planners quickly find that the experience is both extraordinary and effortless.

How did the resort's rich history, opening in 1926 as the Cloister Inn, factor into its recent \$375 million reinvention?

Our reinvention was rooted in honoring Addison Mizner's original 1926 vision while redefining it for a new generation. Working alongside the Boca Raton Historical Society and such design partners as Rockwell Group, we restored architectural details, revived Mizner's Mediterranean spirit, and layered in contemporary luxury. Our reimagined resort celebrates its past while feeling completely of the moment.

What types of special programming, promotions, and incentives can groups enjoy in 2026 as part of the resort's 100-year celebration?

Our 100th anniversary will be a celebration of legacy and imagination. Throughout 2026, groups can enjoy centennial-inspired culinary experiences, vintage cocktails, and wellness activations that draw from our glamorous history. We'll offer commemorative amenities, custom décor, and a Centennial Events Guide to help planners integrate these

touches into their programming. It's a once-in-a-century opportunity to create events infused with nostalgia and sophistication.

How does The Boca Raton's reinvention and renovation enhance the resort as a meetings destination?

The reinvention gives planners something rare: true flexibility within one resort. Each of our five hotels brings distinct style and scale, allowing planners to customize experiences while benefiting from integrated logistics and flow. Enhanced pre-function spaces, new outdoor venues, and improved production infrastructure make it easier than ever to bring ambitious concepts to life—without losing our defining warmth and personality.

What unique spaces, features, amenities, and experiences of the newly reinvented resort will appeal most to meeting and event planners?

Our spaces invite creativity. From grand waterfront lawns and rooftop terraces to private gardens and the marina, each venue tells its own story. The Harborside Pool Club becomes a show-stopping evening venue, while Beach Club offers sleek oceanfront spaces perfect for sunset receptions. Flybridge at The Yacht Club hosts intimate dinners with panoramic views. Every touchpoint—from room drops to curated menus—is designed to feel bespoke.

Beyond the meeting spaces, how might planners incorporate the incredible history and enduring allure of The Boca Raton into their events?

The Boca Raton's century-long story is a planner's dream. Whether hosting a 1920s-inspired cocktail hour, private tour of the Cloister Inn Museum, or centennial-themed gifting experience, the resort's heritage adds authenticity and depth. It's a chance for planners to craft events that feel connected to time, place, and purpose.

What do you envision for The Boca Raton's next chapter, and how will the \$375 million reinvention help position the resort to continue its legacy for another 100 years?

Our reinvention was never about change for its own sake; it was about positioning The Boca Raton for the next century. We've deepened our focus on wellness, culture, and culinary excellence, all while enhancing the guest journey. The goal remains timeless: Deliver experiences that are effortlessly orchestrated, emotionally resonant, and uniquely Boca Raton.

What would you want to share about The Boca Raton as a meetings destination that might surprise, and resonate with, planners?

What surprises many planners is the breadth of possibility within a single campus. From drone shows over the pool to yacht departures from our private marina, from a MICHELIN Key-awarded suite to an after-party at Palm Court, The Boca Raton turns imagination into reality. Five hotels, one vision—every event elevated, every detail considered. It's a destination that makes the extraordinary feel easy. 🍷



Courtesy Cartersville Museum City

HISTORY, HERITAGE & HOSPITALITY

Historical sites and museums leave a lasting impact on attendees

By Matt Swenson

With the trend toward unique event experiences and locations, destinations offering an array of historical attractions and museums can give them an advantage. As the country enters a historic year, celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, meeting and event planners have the opportunity to ride the interest in our past

to create memorable moments for groups. Museums, regardless of their subject matter, can serve as the perfect backdrop for events that inform and entertain attendees.

While our nation's capital is home to many Smithsonian Institution venues, Cartersville, Ga., proclaims itself "Museum City USA." Given its size, the small town northwest of Atlanta boasts an extraordinary number of cultural venues. Planners had the opportunity

to experience Cartersville's museums firsthand during a recent FAM tour.

"Museums are a nice way to encourage natural networking," says Lauren Steele, global events manager for OneStream Software. "You can go through the exhibits and see something that starts a conversation. If you are an introvert, it gives you something to do."

Steele, along with other Georgia-based event planners participating in a progressive

At the colonial capital of Williamsburg, Va., visitors can tour the historic grounds, featuring original 18th-century structures and costumed tradespeople representative of the era.



Courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Resorts

dinner during the Cartersville FAM tour, got a glimpse of three of its top attractions: Booth Western Art Museum, Tellus Science Museum, and Savoy Automobile Museum. The night at the museums encouraged mingling and showcased the power of atypical meeting spaces, Steele says.

Here, we explore some of the South’s premier museums and historical sites to consider for your next meeting or event.

America’s turning points

With 250 years’ worth of American history to explore, sites around the South are gearing up to welcome hordes of guests.

What better place to start than with Virginia’s colonial capital, **Williamsburg**? The town is a veritable living museum, offering a diverse mix of amenities to create an enjoyable experience for youth groups, associations, and corporations. Williamsburg pays tribute to the country’s origins and its legacy as the first colonial capital across 301 acres of attractions and exhibits, including tradespeople dressed in colonial costumes, historic taverns, and two art museums. Remarkably, 88 original 18th-century structures still stand in the historic part of town.

Lodging options include high-end resorts and budget hotels. For offsite and teambuilding activities, groups can consider golf outings, excursions to Jamestown and Yorktown, and Busch Gardens amusement park.



The Alamo is a distinct event venue for its historic structures, priceless artifacts, immersive living history, and serene gardens.

Courtesy Visit San Antonio

Another colonial site worth considering is **Old Salem Museums & Gardens** in Winston-Salem, N.C. Cobblestone sidewalks lead to more than 100 preserved and restored buildings, where costumed interpreters perform daily tasks of the 18th and 19th centuries. Old Salem offers several sites with meeting options, including the Horton Museum Center at the home of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

As the battle cry goes, “Remember **The Alamo**” when eyeing historic sites. Scheduled to open in 2027, The Alamo Visitor Center and Museum will include a 4D theater and special event spaces, including a rooftop

terrace with a scenic view of San Antonio. The 160,000-square-foot facility will feature 5,000 artifacts tracing The Alamo’s notable 300 years of existence. In the meantime, Alamo Gardens, Alamo Plaza, Ralston Family Collections Center, Alvarez Family Terrace, and two courtyards are available for private rental.

Trying to convey all the stories of the Civil Rights Movement in one building would be a challenge. Instead, the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) created the **Legacy Sites** in Montgomery, Ala., featuring three sites: The Legacy Museum, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and Freedom Monument Sculpture Park. EJI’s website notes the

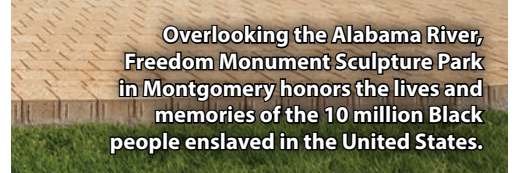
Human Pictures/Courtesy Equal Justice Initiative



Arkansas Dept. of Parks, Heritage and Tourism/Courtesy Travel South USA



Little Rock Central High School National Site remains a symbol of education reform ushered in by the 'Little Rock Nine.'



Overlooking the Alabama River, Freedom Monument Sculpture Park in Montgomery honors the lives and memories of the 10 million Black people enslaved in the United States.

Courtesy Visit Sarasota



The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Fla., provides a sophisticated and eclectic backdrop for events in such venues as the Museum of Art, Circus Museum, Ca' d'Zan, and the Historic Asolo Theater.

ambitious learning experience is “situated on lands occupied by Indigenous people for centuries, in a region that once held the largest population of enslaved Black people and would later become the heart of the Civil Rights movement.” The recent opening of Elevation Convening Center and Hotel adds an extra layer of ease for meeting planners to access the sites. The convening center has space for 200 attendees. Aya Soulful Dining, an onsite restaurant, continues the experience with offerings inspired by African, Caribbean, and Southern roots.

Groups meeting in Little Rock, Ark., can tour **Little Rock Central High School**, where the battle over integrating U.S. schools came to a head in 1957.

Arts & culture

Art galleries and museums are visual reminders of the importance of creativity. Drawing a record profit or a new five-year strategic plan may not seem like a beautiful achievement, but to planners, achieving such a goal is a work of art.

Crystal Bridges and the Momentary prove there is more to Bentonville, Ark., than Wal-Mart. Set on 134 acres against the Ozark landscape, the acclaimed arts center and creative hub offer several visually stunning venues for receptions

Courtesy Virginia Museum of History & Culture



Located on North Arthur Ashe Blvd., named for the tennis legend born in Richmond, the Virginia Museum of History & Culture offers a variety of spaces for meetings, conferences, ceremonies, receptions, and other special events.

and gatherings, including the Great Hall, onsite restaurant Eleven, and the Modern Art Gallery, which is an elegant space for cocktail hours. Walker Landing, Frank Lloyd Wright House Lawn, and the South Lawn make for memorable outdoor events. A complete venue buyout provides space to accommodate up to 1,000 attendees.

The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, located in Sarasota, Fla., is as heralded as it is eclectic. It is a tribute to art, circus, history, architecture, and performance. The gardens and waterfront views of Sarasota Bay are a marvelous backdrop. Indoor meetings and retreats will gravitate toward the Chao Lecture Hall.

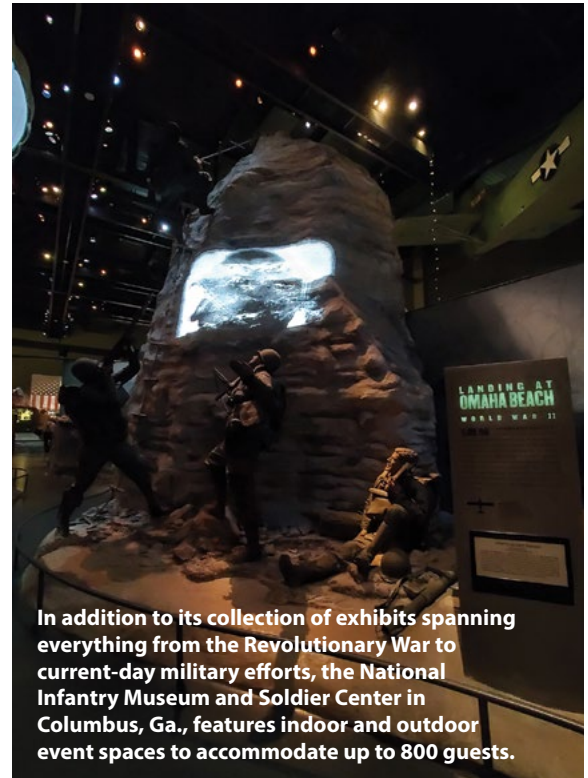
“The Ringling really sets the stage for unforgettable meetings and events,” says Kelly Harb, vice president of marketing and communications for Visit Sarasota County. “It’s such a unique setting—where world-class art, stunning architecture, and those beautiful waterfront views all come together. Hosting a gathering there naturally sparks creativity and connection.”

The former capital of the Confederacy has played a significant role in the country’s culture since its inception. The **Virginia Museum of History and Culture (VMHC)** is a testament to that fact, as its roots predate the Civil War.

Founded in 1831 as the Virginia Historical Society, the museum cares for a renowned collection of more than nine million items representing centuries’ worth of the Commonwealth’s history. Offering a mix of indoor and outdoor space, VMHC accommodates 50 to 300 guests.

Richmond Region Tourism often directs groups to VMHC. The International Motorcoach Group (IMG), for instance, held its summer 2025 conference at the museum. Clymer Berry, executive vice president of IMG, says the museum blended history with modern touches, making for a memorable reception, hosted by the Richmond CVB. “The venue itself provided a great open-concept hall with a stage with live music and wonderful food stations throughout,” says Berry, noting each station highlighted cuisine from different parts of the Commonwealth. “Upstairs, the exhibits showcased the state from both a historical and modern perspective, and allowed attendees to understand the depth of the city and the state in a way they otherwise wouldn’t have. The event and venue allowed us to connect with the city and the culture beyond that of a standard venue.”

The VMHC is living up to the moment with its 250th Initiative, a multi-year collection of commemorative activities for the semiquincentennial. Buoyed by more than \$30



In addition to its collection of exhibits spanning everything from the Revolutionary War to current-day military efforts, the National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center in Columbus, Ga., features indoor and outdoor event spaces to accommodate up to 800 guests.

Michelle Martin/ConventionSouth Staff Photo

million in philanthropic support, the museum, in partnership with the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, produced Virginia’s official 250th commemorative exhibition. The artifacts will be displayed at Richmond International Airport (RIC) and at more than 50 museums and community venues across the Commonwealth.

Planners interested in Cold War history with a touch of pop culture will find the **International Spy Museum** in southwest Washington, D.C., an intriguingly good time. The museum’s various exhibits celebrate the contributions of James Bond, Julia Child, and Austin Powers. Erica O’Brien De, general manager of the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore markets for Hosts Global, gives an enthusiastic “Yeah, Baby,” when clients sign off on an event at the International Spy Museum.

“We’ve designed highly curated evenings there, featuring custom ‘spy-inspired’ cocktails on the terrace, followed by a dramatic king’s table dinner inside—complete with a mysterious smoke-filled cloche presentation for the first course, lifted in perfect unison by waitstaff for a truly cinematic moment,” says De, noting Hosts Global has hosted myriad events at the museum.

De recommends an immersive cocktail hour within the galleries to allow guests to explore the museum’s interactive experiences, including photo ops with James Bond’s Aston

Courtesy International Spy Museum



Groups choosing the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C., are in for an intriguingly good time; museum tours, hands-on exhibits, scavenger hunts, and teambuilding activities ensure a memorable experience for guests while private event spaces offer spectacular views of the D.C. skyline.

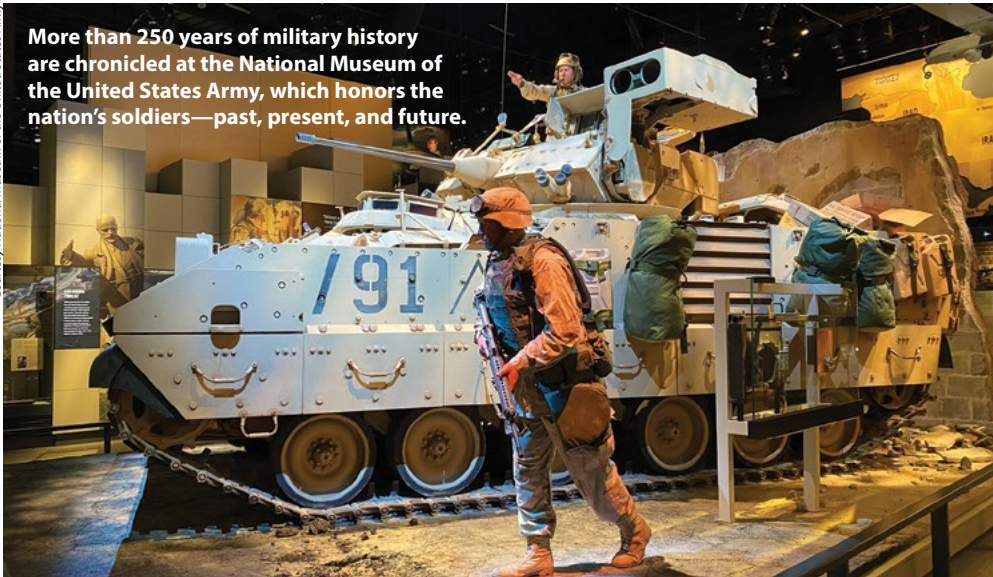
Martin, known as “Mr. Bond.” Amanda Lincoln, director of private events at the museum, adds, “The International Spy Museum’s content has a special ‘cool’ factor.”

The venue is more than special effects. The rooftop features a climate-controlled indoor lounge and an open-air terrace with sweeping views of the Washington Monument, the U.S. Capitol, and The Wharf; it can accommodate up to 40 guests. Larger groups (150 to 500 guests) can host receptions and dinners across the exhibits, ballroom, and rooftop levels.

Engineering & science

Museums dedicated to innovation and invention are among the most visually stunning venues in Southern destinations.

Courtesy National Museum of the United States Army

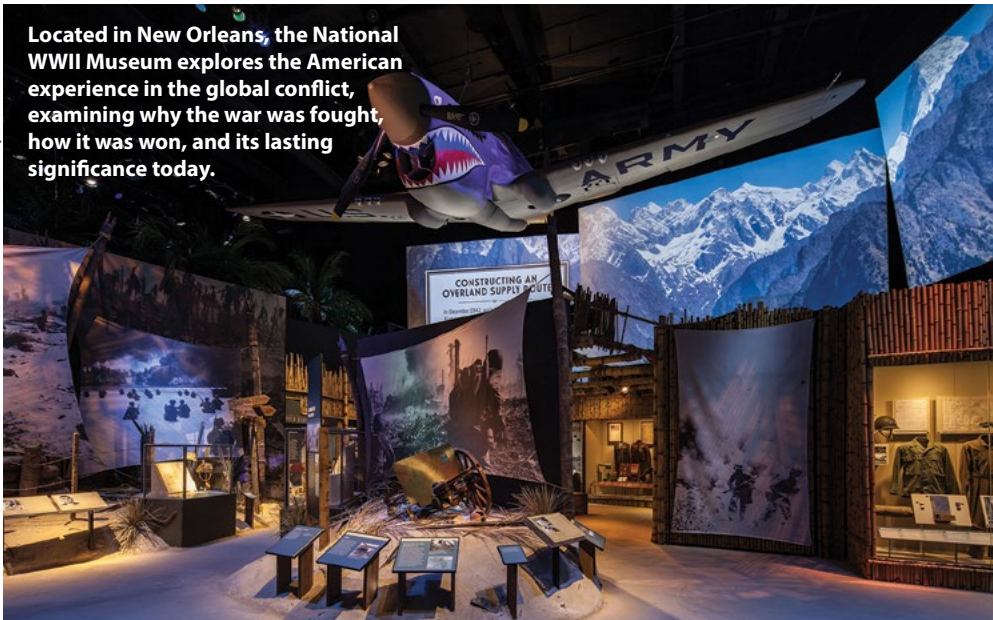


More than 250 years of military history are chronicled at the National Museum of the United States Army, which honors the nation’s soldiers—past, present, and future.

The Great Hall inside the **National Building Museum** in Washington, D.C., is among the most dramatic settings within one of the world’s most powerful cities. The building is a marvel unto itself and has quite the backstory. Built between 1882 and 1887, the museum was designed for three distinct purposes: to house the headquarters of the U.S. Pension Bureau, to provide a suitably grand space for Washington, D.C.’s social and political functions, and to commemorate the service of Union soldiers during the Civil War.

The American Institute of Architects held its awards gala at the National Building Museum in June 2024. The Great Hall, with a capacity of 2,000 attendees, is the largest of five venues. The museum is steps from the Chinatown/Gallery Place Metro Station, making it easily accessible for visitors.

Courtesy National WWII Museum



Located in New Orleans, the National WWII Museum explores the American experience in the global conflict, examining why the war was fought, how it was won, and its lasting significance today.

As the largest natural science museum in the Southeast, the **NC Museum of Natural Sciences** in Raleigh, N.C., offers some of the region’s most Instagrammable photo ops. Its dramatic two-story waterfall, mammoth dinosaur fossils, and whale skeletons provide incredible backdrops for events. The venue can accommodate up to 2,000 attendees across its two connected buildings.

Julie Keith, director of administration and event logistics for the Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC), says she loves hosting the group’s annual legislative reception at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences. “The facility offers lots of flexibility for setup options and a unique space for conversations.”

NC Museum of Natural Sciences is an ideal venue for corporate board meetings and VIP dinners, with spaces to accommodate

Courtesy National Corvette Museum



The Skydome venue at the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Ky., often hosts receptions and private events against its spectacular 'Corvette Salon' exhibit.

Courtesy Delta Flight Museum



Housed in renovated 1940s airplane hangars, the Delta Flight Museum offers historic charm with striking modern design throughout.

Transportation

Looking to help your attendees reach new heights or fast-track their progress? Transportation-themed museums are enjoyable options, often including interactive experiences.

The National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Ky., will fill your need for speed. Its four venues can accommodate up to 1,500 attendees or can be divided into smaller spaces, depending on group size. Corvette Boulevard is a unique spot for receptions and trade shows, while the conference center is its largest traditional venue. Two onsite dining areas are available. Coming in fall 2026 is the 66,000-square-foot Collections facility, which will serve as the future home for some of the world's most important historic Corvettes, Corvette artifacts, and Corvette preservation efforts.

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) serves as the premier hub for Delta Airlines. The onsite **Delta Flight Museum** provides an incredible backdrop for group events. Unique opportunities include seated dinners staged under the wing of Delta's first Boeing 767, *The Spirit of Delta*, within the Spirit Hangar, which can accommodate 800 guests for seated dinners or 1,200 for receptions. Other unique offerings include a full-motion flight simulator and the 747 Experience—a retired plane now serving as an event space, featuring a custom-designed wing walk overlooking the airport.

Back in Cartersville, the **Savoy Automobile Museum** is a love letter to vintage cars. It includes a great hall, two private dining rooms, the Presentation Theatre (with stadium seating for 297 guests), and a pavilion. The museum has hosted corporate meetings, retreats, car shows, donor dinners, holiday parties, and TEDx events.

Meredith Dollevoet, director of sales for Cartersville Museum City, says the museum experience typically exceeds attendee expectations, which is why the organization leans into its "Museum City" reputation.

"A meeting planner recently shared a sentiment we hear often: 'A ballroom can feel the same no matter the city; but when you choose a museum or historic attraction, the venue itself becomes part of the experience,'" Dollevoet says. "It gives guests a sense of place and makes the experience feel uniquely local." 🍷

up to 400 attendees. Groups can create different experiences by trying out the various venues. AENC has held events at the Nature Exploration Center and the Nature Research Center, located on the other side of the museum.

Military

The bravery and camaraderie of our armed forces, captured at museums and historical sites, can be inspirational for attendees. These venues can evoke strong emotions and foster bonds among coworkers.

Since opening in 2020, the **National Museum of the United States Army**, located at Fort Belvoir in northern Virginia, has hosted galas, board meetings, receptions, and other events. Immersive features include ride simulators and virtual reality activities. The 8,600-square-foot lobby is the facility's largest indoor venue, capable of hosting receptions for up to 400 people.

The National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center, located approximately 20

minutes from Fort Benning in Columbus, Ga., features exhibits spanning from the Revolutionary War to present-day efforts. It specializes in hosting teambuilding and networking activities, including interactive moments in its Virtual Reality Center. With indoor and outdoor venues, the museum can host up to 800 attendees. The museum offers flexible setup options and programming, including murder mystery events.

The National WWII Museum is one of the most popular attractions in New Orleans, a destination renowned for its rich cultural heritage. Private tours are available to journey through relics of the German and Pacific war fronts. Onsite catering features dishes inspired by the "Greatest Generation," as well as local Louisiana traditional favorites. The Boeing Center holds 650 guests for seated dinners or 1,000 for receptions. Six World War II-era planes hang overhead and can be viewed up close via a catwalk. Other venues include boardrooms, pavilions, and a theater.

MEETINGS IN BLOOM

The Allure of Outdoor Venues

By Paige Townley



Courtesy Visit Mobile

When it comes to meetings and events, the best ideas don't always happen under a roof. Across the South, gardens and outdoor venues offer a fresh and inspiring alternative to standard conference rooms and ballrooms. From manicured lawns shaded by centuries-old oaks to vibrant botanical gardens bursting with color, these open-air spaces bring a whole new energy to gatherings, resulting in more relaxed and more memorable events uniquely rooted in the region's captivating charm.

Bellingrath Gardens & Home | Alabama

With sweeping river views, century-old oaks, and vibrant seasonal blooms, Bellingrath Gardens & Home in Theodore, near Mobile, offers a collection of outdoor spaces perfect for any type of gathering. The South Terrace overlooks the peaceful Fowl River, an elegant open-air setting ideal for cocktail receptions and even an alfresco speaker session for up to 200 guests. Nearby, the Live Oak Plaza delivers ambiance beneath a canopy of moss-draped branches—a breathtaking scene for everything from intimate dinners to large-scale celebrations complete with live music and dancing. For grander events, the Great Lawn's 4.5 acres of manicured green space can easily host concerts, galas, or large corporate gatherings. For smaller, more personal affairs, the Summer House, Secret Garden, and North Terrace provide charming backdrops for dinners, teas, and breakout sessions.

Horsehead Lake Lodge | Arkansas

Nestled in the heart of the Ozarks, Horsehead Lake Lodge blends rustic charm with modern comfort to create an unforgettable setting for outdoor events of all kinds. With panoramic lake and mountain views, this picturesque property offers multiple flexible spaces designed to keep nature front and center. The Ceremony Hall is a standout favorite, featuring massive sliding barn doors opening to reveal the lake beyond, creating a seamless and weatherproof indoor-outdoor experience. Just steps away, the Reception Hall offers 3,000 square feet of space plus a spacious covered patio and rooftop sky deck for gatherings under the stars. Between the two buildings, the Courtyard provides a casual, open-air space perfect for mingling, dining, or teambuilding activities. With lodging for up to 70 guests, a new swimming lagoon, pickleball and basketball courts, and even a lakeside micro venue, Horsehead Lake Lodge is ideal for groups wanting to combine the beauty of the outdoors with the convenience of full-service amenities.



Courtesy Horsehead Lake Lodge

Sunken Gardens | Florida

Sunken Gardens invites groups to step into a world of tropical tranquility, seemingly worlds away from the hustle and bustle of St. Petersburg. Once the city's best-kept secret, this century-old botanical garden transforms after hours into a serene setting surrounded by lush greenery, colorful blooms, and the soothing sound of waterfalls. The venue's flexible spaces make it easy to customize the flow of an event—attendees can be greeted with cocktails at the Fountain Plaza before strolling the pathways to the Oak Pavilion for a seated dinner or networking reception. Larger gatherings come to life beneath a tent on the Wedding Lawn, while the amphitheater provides a naturally beautiful spot for intimate presentations or live entertainment.



Courtesy Sunken Gardens

Callaway Resort & Gardens | Georgia

Surrounded by 2,500 acres of vibrant gardens, sparkling lakes, and towering Georgia pines, Callaway Resort & Gardens sets the stage for meetings and events that are anything but ordinary. This iconic destination in Pine Mountain, just an hour from Atlanta, offers a mix of outdoor spaces—from sweeping lakefront lawns and open meadows to intimate garden courtyards and scenic terraces—perfect for everything from corporate retreats to elegant receptions. The Beach Pavilion overlooking Robin Lake delivers a breezy, waterfront vibe, while the Ida Cason Callaway Memorial Chapel grounds and Discovery Center provide picturesque settings for gatherings both grand and intimate.



Courtesy Callaway Resort & Gardens

The Kentucky Castle | Kentucky

With storybook towers rising above Kentucky's bluegrass hills, The Kentucky Castle seems straight out of a fairytale while being located just minutes from downtown Lexington. Set on more than 100 acres of farmland, the castle's outdoor spaces are equally enchanting and unexpected. The courtyard invites groups to gather for yoga sessions, lawn games, or casual networking under the open sky, while the tented East Terrace offers a graceful setting for alfresco meetings or dinners for up to 200 guests. For a truly unforgettable experience, the rooftop terrace is a showstopper. Its sweeping views of the countryside pair perfectly with bourbon tastings, sunset receptions, or starlit concerts.



Courtesy The Kentucky Castle

Longue Vue House and Gardens | Louisiana

Tucked away in the heart of New Orleans, Longue Vue House and Gardens offers a one-of-a-kind setting where history, horticulture, and hospitality come together to create an inspiring backdrop for meetings and events. Spanning eight acres of lush, meticulously designed gardens by famed landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman, Longue Vue provides a serene escape from the city's bustle while remaining just minutes from downtown. Planners can pair elegant indoor spaces like the Whim House and Playhouse with outdoor venues, such as the Yellow Garden, a vibrant, sunlit courtyard perfect for breakout sessions, networking events, and cocktail gatherings overlooking the portico terrace; or the Spanish Court, a spacious green lawn ideal for wellness activities or open-air receptions.



Courtesy Longue Vue

Woodend Sanctuary & Mansion | Maryland

Just minutes from downtown Washington, D.C., yet surrounded by 40 acres of tranquil forest, Woodend Sanctuary & Mansion offers a rare balance of accessibility and natural serenity. The stately mansion provides indoor options like the library and conference room, perfect for meetings or breakout sessions, while the adjacent tented terrace (available April through November) and surrounding lawns extend the experience outdoors with ample room for networking, dining, or team activities under the canopy of trees. For a more immersive experience, attendees can explore Woodend's scenic nature trails and peaceful pond boardwalk, ideal for wellness breaks or informal discussions in nature. Just minutes from Bethesda's hotels and dining, Woodend Sanctuary combines the convenience of an urban venue with the restorative calm of the great outdoors.



Ben Israel

Mississippi Museum of Art | Mississippi

In the middle of downtown Jackson, the Mississippi Museum of Art offers a refreshing and inspiring destination for outdoor meetings and events, blending creativity, culture, and connection. Surrounding the museum, a series of beautifully designed outdoor spaces—comprising 1.2 acres of green space—offers planners a distinctive mix of beauty and flexibility. The Art Garden serves as the centerpiece, featuring lush lawns, water features, and art installations reflecting Mississippi's cultural spirit. Within it, the Native Plant Garden showcases one of the state's largest collections of native flora, while the Gallery Garden provides a lively walkway and gathering space linking art and community. Just beyond, the Walker Garden—filled with heritage plants and greenery inspired by the gardens of Eudora Welty and William Faulkner—offers an intimate, shaded retreat ideal for receptions, small performances, or creative breakout sessions. Adding to the atmosphere is the colorful Payton Cutting Garden, with its beautiful blooms as a naturally artistic backdrop.



Courtesy Mississippi Museum of Art

Jewel Box | Missouri

Perched within the sprawling greenery of St. Louis' Forest Park, the Jewel Box is a showstopper for meetings and events, offering both historic architecture and lush garden surroundings. Built in 1936 in the Art Deco style, this glass-walled conservatory fills with natural light, showcasing seasonal flowers, tropical foliage, and a central fountain, while offering incredible views of the surrounding park. Outside, manicured gardens, a lily pond, and winding walkways provide spaces for networking, cocktail hours, or breakout sessions in the fresh air. Nestled on a 17-acre site within the 1,300-acre urban oasis, the Jewel Box also offers attendees an option for strolling the trails, enjoying nearby lakes, or taking in Forest Park's cultural treasures like the St. Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis Zoo, and Muny Theatre.



Steve Jett for Forest Park Forever/Courtesy Jewel Box

Biltmore Gardens | North Carolina

Tucked into the rolling hills of Asheville, the Biltmore Estate is more than just a grand mansion; it's an outdoor venue destination seemingly tailor-made for meetings and events. While many consider Biltmore for weddings or tours, its garden spaces—like the manicured terraces, historic lawns, and the intimate Walled Garden—provide an unexpectedly elegant backdrop for corporate retreats, receptions, or breakout sessions. The Walled Garden alone can host up to 120 people for a reception or approximately 42 in a conference setup. The South Terrace offers sweeping views of the Blue Ridge Mountains—ideal for large-scale gatherings (750+ guests) under the open sky. For a more rustic yet refined feel, the Lioncrest Veranda combines the estate's pastoral charm with modern amenities, perfect for dinners, celebrations, or casual team events.



Courtesy The Biltmore Company

RIVERSPORT | Oklahoma

RIVERSPORT transforms the concept of an outdoor meeting venue into something truly extraordinary. Within Oklahoma City's Boathouse District, this destination offers a mix of waterfront spaces and one-of-a-kind experiences to effortlessly energize a group. The Devon and UCO boathouses impress with floor-to-ceiling river views and outdoor access that bring attendees right to the water's edge, while the elevated Finish Line Tower provides an unmatched vantage point above the river—perfect for intimate receptions or executive events. For larger functions, the McClendon Whitewater Center offers patios, firepits, and open decks overlooking both the river and Olympic-style whitewater channels, blending nature, adventure, and flexibility in one unforgettable setting.



Courtesy RIVERSPORT

Brookgreen Gardens | South Carolina

Steeped in natural beauty, Brookgreen Gardens offers a meeting experience unlike any other. Spanning more than 9,000 acres of luscious Lowcountry landscape, this National Historic Landmark inspires creativity and connection. Towering live oaks draped in Spanish moss frame lawns and sculpture-lined pathways—ideal for breakout sessions, teambuilding activities, or open-air receptions. The new Leonard Pavilion, nestled beside the Lowcountry Center, extends into the arboretum, offering panoramic views of the historic rice fields and Magnolia Allee. Its versatile design accommodates up to 300 guests and transitions easily from professional presentations to elegant evening gatherings.



Courtesy Brookgreen Gardens

Memphis Botanic Garden | Tennessee

Spanning 96 acres of vibrant greenery and featuring 30 specialty gardens, the Memphis Botanic Garden is one of the city's most captivating outdoor event destinations, where nature itself sets the stage for unforgettable gatherings. From casual networking mixers to large-scale celebrations, every corner offers a distinctive setting infused with beauty. The Water Garden offers a serene patio and adjoining indoor space, perfect for cocktail hours or small meetings with a seamless indoor-outdoor flow. The Glass House—glowing in customizable colors at night—connects to the Rose and Sculpture gardens, which together can accommodate larger events. Shaded beneath a canopy, the Blecken Pavilion is ideal for intimate dinners or receptions. The Great Lawn provides expansive space for tented galas and corporate celebrations of 200 to 300 guests. Even the Sensory Garden, a tucked-away gem, lends itself beautifully to garden parties and relaxed outdoor socials.



Courtesy Memphis Botanic Garden

Hudson Bend Ranch | Texas

Set on five scenic acres in the heart of Texas Hill Country, the family-owned Hudson Bend Ranch offers a refreshingly authentic alternative to traditional meeting spaces. The property's flexible outdoor areas—from the courtyard strung with twinkling lights to the rustic Horseshoe Meadow barn—create an inviting atmosphere for everything from casual networking receptions to elegant dinners under the stars. Overnight lodging can accommodate up to 26 guests while event spaces can host up to 175, making it ideal for both intimate retreats and larger gatherings. For planners who value creativity and freedom, Hudson Bend Ranch operates as a DIY venue, providing tables, chairs, and a tent while allowing guests to bring in their own vendors and catering. The ranch is just minutes from Lake Travis and Lake Austin, making it convenient for attendees to extend their stay and enjoy lakeside adventures, boat rentals, or nearby hiking trails.



Diana Accarrunz/Courtesy Hudson Bend Ranch

Boar's Head Resort | Virginia

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Boar's Head Resort offers far more than a traditional meeting destination and invites groups to step beyond the boardroom and into nature. With massive lawns, lakeside patios, and scenic greens, the resort provides endless opportunities for meetings, receptions, and teambuilding activities beneath Virginia's open skies. The Green is a favorite for groups who set up tented meetings or alfresco luncheons for up to 100 guests, while the Ednam Hall Lawn and poolside terrace set a relaxed tone for evening receptions. After dinner, guests often gather around the lakeside firepits. For a more adventurous twist, Boar's Head Outfitters brings corporate groups outdoors with activities like falconry, axe throwing, kayaking, or even bridge-building challenges designed to foster collaboration and camaraderie.



Courtesy Boar's Head Resort

U.S. National Arboretum | Washington, D.C.

In a city known for its monuments and museums, the U.S. National Arboretum offers a refreshing surprise just three miles from the U.S. Capitol Building: a sprawling, 446-acre retreat where lush landscapes and historic landmarks create an unforgettable backdrop for gatherings of all kinds. From intimate receptions in the Water Garden to large-scale dinners along the Flowering Tree Walk or picnics beneath the Grove's canopy of state trees, the arboretum's outdoor spaces combine natural beauty with versatility. Guests can sip cocktails by the koi pond, dine beneath the original Capitol Columns, or mingle among centuries-old bonsai trees—all while surrounded by a sense of peace rarely found in the nation's capital.



Courtesy Washington.org

Highgate Carriage House | West Virginia

Surrounded by vibrant gardens and perfectly manicured lawns, Highgate Carriage House in Fairmont offers a timeless setting. Whether it's an intimate gathering on the patio or a grand celebration beneath the event tent, the estate's versatile outdoor spaces can host up to 300 guests with ease. Every detail, from the serene pond to the colorful blooms, creates a picture-perfect backdrop, and thoughtful amenities like a full sound system make planning effortless. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Highgate shines brightest from May through October, yet its year-round charm ensures every event feels nothing short of unforgettable.



Tyler Kovar/Courtesy Highgate Carriage House



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Drive-in destinations steer planners to their accessible, affordable, and versatile event spaces

By Lisa Plummer Savas

As the rising costs of larger destinations price out many meeting and event groups, smaller drive-in destinations are emerging as increasingly attractive options for planners seeking accessibility, cost efficiency, and flexibility. Ideal for regional meetings, conferences, and smaller conventions, these modest but mighty cities offer a range of appealing benefits for both attendees and organizers.

Drive-in destinations offer attendees value-added savings and convenience as they avoid airfare costs, baggage fees, and long travel times, thus reducing travel fatigue. Choosing a drive-in destination can also encourage last-minute registrations and accommodate late schedule changes, while attendees' regional familiarity with locations can reduce attendance barriers.

For organizers, drive-in locations not only encourage higher attendee turnout but also

offer reduced expenses related to group travel coordination and shuttle services, as well as extended accommodation blocks that can result in improved cost efficiency. Additionally, reduced air travel supports corporate sustainability goals, and flexible scheduling options for daytime or half-day events become more feasible. Many drive-in destinations also offer appealing outdoor or nature-related activities for networking or teambuilding, which aren't always available in large metro areas.

According to Stasha Irby, vice president of sales and services for Little Rock (Ark.) Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), the demand for drive-in destinations remains strong as planners continue to prioritize accessible, flexible, and more cost-effective options for hosting their events.

“Rising travel costs, unpredictable flight schedules, and smaller budgets have made regional, drivable cities more appealing,” Irby says. “Many organizations also value the flexibility and convenience of hosting meetings closer to home, while attendees appreciate the ability to combine business with local leisure experiences. Drive-in destinations also make it easier and more affordable for attendees to turn business trips into family getaways. Traveling by car offers flexible schedules, lower costs, and the convenience of parking for both work and leisure.”

When it comes to drive-in meeting destinations, location is everything. These five cities stand out for their unique combination of

accessibility, infrastructure, attendee experience, and, of course, genuine Southern hospitality.

Athens, Ga.: Accessibility meets college-town charm

Just 75 minutes northeast of Atlanta, the vibrant college town of Athens combines convenient drive-in access with state-of-the-art venues, a thriving cultural scene, and the spirited energy of the University of Georgia (UGA), all within a walkable downtown area.

Athens’ location makes it a natural gathering point for regional meetings across the Southeast, with the city situated approximately 2.5 hours from Augusta, Ga., 3.5 hours from Charlotte, N.C., and roughly four hours from both Birmingham, Ala., and Nashville, Tenn. This central positioning allows planners to draw attendees from Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama without the added cost or logistics of air travel.

According to Elyse Harris, Visit Athens’ director of sales, Athens is particularly

attractive for education and association groups, with medical, insurance, and technology sectors emerging as key growth markets. Planners in these industries value Athens’ walkability, affordability, and connection to UGA, which together create an engaging and accessible environment. “Athens combines small-town accessibility with big-city amenities, creating an ideal setting for drive-in meetings and events,” Harris says. “Drive-in destinations like Athens give attendees the flexibility to travel on their own schedule and easily bring family members or colleagues along, without the stress of flight delays or baggage restrictions.”

Attracting drive-in meetings averaging approximately 500 attendees, Athens offers a variety of meeting and event venues. The Classic Center, which serves as the city’s premier conference venue, features 373,000 square feet of meeting and event space; it includes the 22,000-square-foot 440 Foundry Pavilion, the 18,000-square-foot Athena Ballroom, and the 2,100-seat Classic Center Theatre. The new Akins Ford Arena, which debuted in December 2024, expands the city’s group capacity even further, with seating for up to 8,500 guests.

Athens offers 2,664 hotel rooms, including 1,377 located downtown within walking distance of The Classic Center. Major hospitality brands are just blocks from the convention center, including Hyatt Place Athens/Downtown, Courtyard by Marriott, and Hotel Indigo. Meanwhile, local boutique properties, such as The Athenian and Rivet House, serve as a good fit for smaller groups and VIP stays. Rivet House, located in the Southern Mill development, also offers six stylish event spaces, including outdoor patios and a private tasting room.

Athens boasts a vibrant culinary scene. From Puma Yu’s by James Beard semifinalist chef Pete Amadhanirundr to Five & Ten by Peter Dale, attendees can enjoy inventive Southern and international flavors. Tours of local breweries and cooking classes at Athens Cooks are fun group and teambuilding options.

For post-meeting recreation and fun, attendees can explore the city’s live-music legacy at the historic Georgia Theatre and intimate 40 Watt Club, visit UGA’s iconic North Campus, or tour Sanford Stadium, one of college football’s most storied venues. The adventure series of ropes, cables, and logs at

Courtesy The Classic Center

The Classic Center in Athens, Ga., offers distinctive meeting spaces, exceptional event services, and diverse entertainment options, making it a premier choice for conferences, meetings, and special events.



UGA's Challenge Course is a great option for teambuilding as well.

Free attractions, ideal for attendees traveling with their families, include the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, the Georgia Museum of Art, and the Athens Music Walk of Fame.

Greensboro, N.C.: Dynamic, welcoming, and culturally rich

Greensboro is a vibrant, welcoming city celebrated for its rich history, thriving cultural scene, outdoor activities, and culinary delights. Situated at the intersection of major interstates 40, 85, and 73, Greensboro provides straightforward highway access, enabling attendees to enjoy short, predictable commutes. In addition, most hotels, venues, and dining outlets are within a 10- to 15-minute radius.

According to Tony Cordo, president and CEO of the Guilford County/Greensboro Tourism Development Authority, Greensboro attracts drive-in business from nearby major metros, such as Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham/Chapel Hill, and Washington, D.C., as well as from surrounding states, including South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. Typical meeting sizes range from 100 to 1,200 attendees, scaling up to trade shows and performance events attracting thousands of guests.

“Since 2020, Greensboro has garnered increased attention as a regional drive-in meeting destination, favored for its cost-effectiveness, accessibility, and the ability to accommodate family participation alongside business travelers,” Cordo says. “The city’s shorter lead times facilitate easier event pivots, while its drive-in model supports sustainability goals with reduced per-attendee emissions and simplified ADA logistics, presenting a smart option for meeting planners focused on value, ease, and engagement.”

Event spaces in Greensboro are both versatile and well-equipped to support a wide array of meetings, conventions, and trade shows. Offering approximately 250,000 square feet of meeting space with a capacity of 6,000 attendees, Koury Convention Center at the Sheraton Greensboro Four Seasons features large, column-free halls with dozens of breakout rooms, ideal for hosting 200 to 5,000 attendees and mid-sized expos. Greensboro Coliseum Complex & Special Events Center is well-suited for large general sessions and trade shows. Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts offers a 3,000-seat venue

With easy access to interstates 40, 85, and 73, Greensboro, N.C., attracts drive-in meetings from nearby major metros and surrounding states.



Courtesy Guilford County/Greensboro Tourism Development Authority

Sheraton Greensboro at Four Seasons offers approximately 250,000 square feet of meeting space at the Koury Convention Center.



Courtesy Sheraton Greensboro at Four Seasons

ideal for keynote addresses and receptions, with walkable access to downtown dining and entertainment. University and museum venues, such as Weatherspoon Art Museum and Greensboro Science Center, can serve as culturally rich offsite meeting options.

Boasting approximately 11,000 guest rooms spanning full-service, select-service, boutique, and extended-stay brands, the city’s diverse lodging options offer competitive hotel rates with no resort-style fees and free or low-cost

parking. Popular hotels with meeting spaces include the Sheraton Greensboro, the sustainable Proximity Hotel, and the O.Henry Hotel.

When meetings conclude, Greensboro’s cultural, recreational, and culinary assets invite attendees to explore.

Visitors can delve into American history at the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, enjoy performances at Steven Tanger Center, or visit local art museums. Family-friendly attractions include Greensboro Science

Center and seasonal Wet 'n Wild Emerald Pointe waterpark. For outdoor enthusiasts, Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, greenways, and golf courses, such as Sedgfield Country Club, provide a breadth of offsite activities.

The city's lively culinary community features authentic North Carolina barbecue, chef-driven dining experiences, and a burgeoning craft brewery scene. Favorites among event groups include Print Works Bistro, Green Valley Grill, and Kau Restaurant, says Cordo.

Little Rock, Ark.: Historic, innovative & affordable

For planners seeking a drive-in destination that combines convenience, value, and a convivial setting, Little Rock offers all the infrastructure and amenities necessary to support successful drive-in meetings and events.

Centrally located at the crossroads of Interstates 30 and 40, the city is within a day's drive of nearly 40% of the U.S. population, making it a natural gathering point for regional associations and corporate groups across the South and Midwest.

Key markets include Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas, says Irby, adding that Little Rock attracts a wide range of organizations, including healthcare, education, agriculture, fraternal, and nonprofits, along with religious and professional associations hosting annual meetings or training sessions.

"Little Rock's location makes it easily accessible from many major cities across the South and Midwest," Irby says. "Memphis, Tenn.; Dallas; Tulsa, Okla.; and Shreveport, La., are all within a five-hour drive, while Nashville, Tenn., St. Louis, and Oklahoma City are approximately a six-hour drive. This centrality allows planners to draw attendees from multiple markets without requiring air travel."

For attendees bringing family members along, Little Rock's entertainment and recreational offerings include a walkable downtown with attractions, restaurants, and outdoor spaces all within easy reach.

Providing more than 245,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, Little Rock is anchored by two premier downtown venues: the Statehouse Convention Center, boasting 220,000 square feet, and Robinson Center, with 25,000 square feet. Connected directly to the convention center, Little Rock Marriott adds nearly 45,000 square feet of additional meeting space. Conveniently connected to Robinson Center, the 288-room DoubleTree by Hilton Little Rock offers approximately 13,000 square feet of meeting and conference space.

With approximately 7,200 hotel rooms—including downtown properties within walking distance of major venues—the city is equipped to host everything from intimate board meetings of 25 to 50 attendees to regional conferences and trade shows attracting hundreds to thousands of participants. Additional properties across the city offer

Courtesy Little Rock CVB



Spanning 33 acres, Riverfront Park connects downtown Little Rock, Ark., with the Arkansas River and provides a tranquil setting for attendees to enjoy a relaxing riverside stroll.

Courtesy Travel South USA



Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock provides an inside look at Arkansas native Bill Clinton's presidency.

competitive rates and amenities to suit all types of travelers and budgets.

Little Rock's walkable downtown means meeting venues, hotels, and dining are steps apart, with plentiful parking and a welcoming Southern atmosphere. The River Market District features dining, nightlife, and local shopping along the Arkansas River.

Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy the scenic Arkansas River Trail and nearby Pinnacle Mountain State Park. History and culture lovers will appreciate the Clinton Presidential Center, Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, and Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts. Foodies will enjoy experiencing the city's award-winning Southern restaurants and craft breweries, such as Cache, 42 Bar and Table, Allsopp & Chapple Restaurant + Bar, and Brave New Restaurant.

Shreveport, La.: Big-city amenities, small-town charm

Located in northwest Louisiana, Shreveport delivers a compelling proposition for meeting planners with its plentiful amenities, easy accessibility, and intimate appeal. The city's multiple highways and convergence of two major interstates allow planners and drive-in attendees to skip the hassles of large airports while still enjoying comprehensive, full-service meeting destination offerings.

Located along the Red River, the inland waterfront city sits at the intersection of I-20, I-49, and I-220, positioning it within three hours of Dallas/Fort Worth, four hours of Little Rock and Houston, and five hours from Jackson, Miss., and New Orleans. Its central location makes Shreveport ideal for regional meetings drawing from Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas.

According to David Bradley, vice president of business development for Visit Shreveport-Bossier, Shreveport attracts a diverse mix of meeting segments, including sports tournaments, state associations, and SMERF, corporate, government, and medical groups.

"Our destination is seeing particular growth in faith-based gatherings, government and military meetings, sports tournaments, and infinity groups centered on hobbies and special interests," Bradley says. "These groups find exceptional value in Shreveport's accessible venues, wide range of accommodations, and opportunities for authentic local experiences that make every meeting feel both productive and memorable."



The 549-room Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana® in Bossier City features the 25,000-square-foot multipurpose Event Center.

Combined with neighboring Bossier City, Shreveport offers approximately 10,500 hotel rooms spanning full-service downtown properties, resort-style casino-hotels along the Red River, boutique properties, and chain-brand options. Properties with meeting space include Hilton Shreveport, Sam's Town Casino & Hotel, Horseshoe Bossier City Casino & Hotel, and Live! Casino & Hotel Louisiana.

The 350,000-square-foot Shreveport Convention Center can accommodate large expos, association meetings, religious conferences, and sports events, while the historic Shreveport Municipal Auditorium (famous for launching Elvis Presley's career) hosts concerts, receptions, and meetings. Additionally, Bossier Civic Center serves smaller groups, with 24,000 square feet of convention space. The 14,000-seat Brookshire Grocery Arena can be configured for sporting events, banquets, and conferences.

Shreveport's culinary scene features award-winning chefs, including chef Niema DiGrazia at Abby Singer's Bistro, recently featured on televised cooking competition *Beat Bobby Flay* and other Food Network specials. Private dining experiences can be arranged with chef Hardette Harris, James Beard semifinalist for Best Chef South and creator of the "Official

Meal of North Louisiana," a curated menu of classic regional dishes (including Natchitoches meat pies, fried catfish, purple hull peas, collard greens, and peach cobbler) showcasing the culinary heritage and authenticity of north Louisiana cuisine. Along Cross Lake, groups can experience Orlandeaux's Café, one of the country's oldest continuously operating African American restaurants, where chef Damien Chapman serves iconic Shreveport-style stuffed shrimp. The city also offers authentic Hispanic, Indian, Vietnamese, Mediterranean, Cajun, soul food, and barbecue favorites.

"Shreveport-Bossier is a food lover's paradise—a destination where every meal tells a story," Bradley says. "From upscale dining to hidden local gems, our culinary scene is as diverse and authentic as the people who call this region home."

Beyond dining, groups can enjoy glass-blowing workshops, dinner and a movie at Robinson Film Center, or explore the East Bank District, a walkable arts and entertainment hub featuring breweries, restaurants, antique shops, axe throwing, and live outdoor music. Attractions like Gators & Friends Alligator Park and Exotic Zoo, Sci-Port Discovery Center, and Chasing Aces are great options for attendees who want to combine their business trip with a family getaway.

Tallahassee, Fla.: An eclectic mix of modern amenities and local culture

Offering easy access to scenic day trips, charming nearby towns, and the natural beauty of north Florida, Tallahassee provides convenient drive-in access from across the Southeast. The city is situated just a few hours from major cities, including Atlanta, Mobile, Ala., New Orleans, and Florida's Jacksonville, Pensacola, and Orlando.

Home to more than 400 associations, Florida's capital city thrives as a hub for association and government business. Anchored by Florida State University (FSU) and Florida A&M University, Tallahassee benefits from a powerful research ecosystem fueling applied sciences, innovation, and technology, with growing opportunities in manufacturing and transportation logistics, according to Janet Roach, meetings, conventions, and group sales director for Visit Tallahassee.

"Tallahassee serves as the ideal hub for meetings and events in north Florida," Roach says. "With four major highways and an easily accessible regional airport, Tallahassee allows planners to draw attendees from multiple markets throughout Florida and the Southeast. With more than 80% of visitors arriving by car, Florida's capital city has become the perfect hub for exploration."

For attendees bringing family members, Tallahassee's drive-in accessibility offers myriad possibilities for memorable excursions. The 220-mile Big Bend Scenic Byway starts in Tallahassee, while day trips to coastal communities, historic towns, caverns, and marine labs offer nature, history, and authentic Southern charm—all within easy driving distance.

Tallahassee's event venues range from intimate boutique spaces to large-scale facilities, including Donald L. Tucker Civic Center, which boasts more than 54,000 square feet of meeting space and arena seating for 8,000, and Augustus B. Turnbull III Florida State Conference Center, which features state-of-the-art technology across 11 meeting spaces, including a 350-seat auditorium.

Located within Doak Campbell Stadium, the premium FSU Dunlap Champions Club delivers 34,000 square feet of versatile meeting and event space for groups seeking a unique sports-oriented atmosphere. Downtown, the AC Hotel Tallahassee Universities at the Capitol features 154 rooms and more than 13,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, complete with a rooftop bar and an observation deck overlooking the 24-acre Cascades Park.



Groups in Shreveport, La., can explore approximately 150 alligators and wildlife at Gators & Friends Alligator Park and Exotic Zoo in nearby Greenwood.

Louisiana Office of Tourism/Courtesy Travel South USA



Restored to its 1902 appearance, Florida's Historic Capitol Museum in Tallahassee is available for meetings, receptions, and other special event rentals.

Courtesy Leon County Tourism/Visit Tallahassee

Additional venue and hotel options include Hotel Indigo Tallahassee – CollegeTown, Hyatt House Tallahassee Capitol – University, and Hotel Duval, Autograph Collection. Citywide, Tallahassee offers more than 6,000 hotel rooms, ranging from full-service downtown properties to affordable options near award-winning restaurants and entertainment.

To further enhance the attendee experience, Tallahassee's nightlife scene and culinary landscape feature rooftops with spectacular views, such as Charlie Park atop the AC Marriott, Level 8 Lounge at Hotel Duval, and Eve on Adams at DoubleTree by Hilton. Seven unique local breweries, from Ology to the newly expanded Deep Brewing, provide craft ales and creative atmospheres. Live music venues, such as Fire Betty's, Blue Tavern, and Duke's and Dottie's, deliver everything from indie rock to authentic country.

Dining options for groups range from upscale establishments like Il Lusso, Savour,

and The Huntsman to Tallahassee staples like Kool Beanz Cafe and Table 23. Fun spots include Bird's Aphrodisiac Oyster Shack and Black Radish.

As meeting planners navigate rising costs and shifting attendee expectations, drive-in destinations across the South are proving that accessibility, affordability, and authentic experiences can coexist with modern meeting infrastructure. From Athens' college-town energy to Tallahassee's capital-city sophistication, these five cities demonstrate that successful regional meetings don't require major metros or air travel—just the right combination of convenient access, flexible venues, genuine hospitality, and memorable experiences to keep attendees engaged long after the closing session. For planners seeking to maximize ROI while delivering value to attendees, these Southern drive-in markets offer a compelling alternative worth exploring. 🍷

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When the goal is impact and inspiration, having the right partner makes all the difference in creating real meetings magic.

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One of the Walt Disney World’s resort collection offerings includes Disney’s Coronado Springs Resort, an oasis set along the shore of Lago Dorado and is the ideal venue to host your meeting or convention. This resort celebrates the daring spirits of the great Spanish explorers, artists, writers, and architects. The majestic 15-story Gran Destino Tower serves as the main entrance for the resort and features a gorgeous

two-story lobby ideal for gathering and networking. The resort now has a total of 2,385 guest rooms and suites within the main tower and neighboring bungalows.

Tolédo – Tapas, Steak & Seafood, a grand table-service restaurant, adorns the rooftop of the Gran Destino Tower. This dining experience features Spanish-inspired cuisine and serves up incredible panoramic views of the Walt Disney World Resort and was recently recognized by the MICHELIN Restaurant Guide. A welcoming oasis can be found on the waters of Lago Dorado with Villa del Lago’s Three Bridges Bar & Grill, which can be accessed via walkways traversing the lake, making it very convenient no matter where you are staying within the resort. Beautiful and unique spaces at both venues will provide wonderful private dining options for hosting clients or VIPs.

Other exciting features of the resort include meeting and event spaces in the Gran Destino tower, including three multipurpose rooms, a 24-seat boardroom, and outdoor event spaces. These additional spaces expand the meeting and event space to more than 220,000 square feet within the resort.

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Your Perfect Getaway is Just a Drive Away at Paragon Casino Resort



Courtesy Paragon Casino Resort

Looking for the ultimate drive-in destination combining business, relaxation, and fun? Paragon Casino Resort in Marksville, La., is the perfect place to escape, whether you're planning a quick weekend getaway, a family trip, or a business retreat. Located in the heart of central Louisiana, Paragon Casino Resort offers a one-of-a-kind experience that's just a short drive from major cities across the region.

At Paragon Casino Resort, there's no need for long flights—simply hop in the car and drive to one of the most exciting destinations in Louisiana. Located just off Louisiana Highway 1, Paragon Casino Resort is easily accessible to locals from cities like Alexandria, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette in Louisiana, plus Houston, Biloxi and Jackson, Miss., and more.

Whether you're visiting for a corporate event, a weekend of relaxation, or a fun family outing, Paragon Casino Resort has something for everyone.

For businesses and groups, Paragon Casino Resort offers flexible meeting spaces to accommodate a wide range of events, from small board meetings to large conferences. The resort's 14 event spaces are designed for versatility, with retractable soundproof walls that can accommodate gatherings from a few people to hundreds. With more than 35,000 square feet of meeting space, Paragon Casino Resort can bring your event's vision to life, whether intimate or grand.

Meeting spaces include:

- **Avoyelles Boardroom** – Perfect for executive meetings and small teams.

- **Paragon Ballroom** – An 8,000-square-foot venue equipped to host conferences, banquets, or large social events.
- **Mari Showroom** – A 23,000-square-foot space ideal for trade shows, performances, and larger social events.

After your business is done or the work day is over, the real fun begins. Paragon Casino Resort offers the latest exciting slot machines and all your favorite table games—giving you all the options you need on the casino floor.

For families and guests looking for something different, Paragon Casino Resort offers a wide range of attractions and activities, including:

- **Live Alligator Habitat** – Paragon is the only casino in the country to feature live alligators in the bayou-themed atrium.
- **Spa la Vie** – Unwind with a relaxing massage or treatment at our full-service spa, adjacent to the fitness center.
- **Retail Shops** – Check out Voila and Paradise Gifts for all your shopping needs.
- **Pools and Play Areas** – Three pools (one indoor, two outdoor), Kids Quest supervised childcare, Cyber Quest arcade, and a three-screen movie theater offer entertainment for kids and families.
- **Tamahka Trails** – Named after the Tunica-Biloxi word for “alligator,” the golf course meanders through a beautiful 230-acre tract of rolling terrain unique to central and southern Louisiana. The course features an 18-hole, par-71 championship layout and offers five sets of tees.

- **Topgolf Swing Suite** – For those who want to try something new, the Topgolf Swing Suite in our Draft Room combines sports, games, and relaxation in a fun and lively setting.

When it's time to eat, enjoy a variety of options that showcase the best of Southern cuisine. From casual bites to fine dining, Paragon Casino Resort offers something for every taste. The resort's award-winning buffet is open on weekends. Other dining options feature everything from Cajun specialties to classic American favorites, plus Legends Steakhouse for special occasions. Don't forget Lucky Wok, Marksville's only destination for Asian cuisine.

Paragon Casino Resort isn't just about fun and games—it's about making you feel at home. Since opening in 1994, Paragon Casino Resort has been committed to providing guests with an exceptional experience and has earned a reputation for outstanding service and hospitality. We pride ourselves on our community involvement, ensuring that the guests who walk through our doors not only have fun but also feel like part of the Paragon family.

Ready for a quick escape? Paragon Casino Resort is waiting for you. Just hop in the car, drive to Marksville, and let the fun begin. Whether you're here for a business meeting, a weekend getaway, or to experience the best of Louisiana, we're ready to welcome you with open arms. 🍷

Paragon Casino Resort

Larry Robertson
Director of Sales

Larry has worked at Paragon Casino Resort for over 15 years and has more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry. His passion lies in interacting with people and ensuring they have a memorable experience at our property, leaving them eager to plan their return visit.



318-253-2090
avoler@paragoncasinoresort.com
ParagonCasinoResort.com

ANYTHING BUT MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD



MAKE MEMORABLE MOMENTS BEYOND THE MEETING ROOMS

When you meet in Bowling Green, the Home of Corvette, we'll help you curate a supercharged experience that's sure to rev up relationships! After the day's sessions at one of several convention and conference centers, offer attendees exhilarating team-building activities. Whether it's feeling the adrenaline racing Corvettes at the NCM Motorsports Park, exploring Lost River Cave hidden beneath the city's streets, or networking over live music and craft cocktails, there's a memorable conference waiting to be made only in Bowling Green.



*Connect with our
Meeting Services!*



www.VISITBGKY.COM

TEAM
KENTUCKY

Host Inspired Meetings at Lanier Islands Resort

Just outside of Atlanta, Lanier Islands Resort offers a refreshing alternative to typical city venues. Nestled on the serene shores of Lake Lanier, this scenic destination provides a tranquil setting that inspires focus, creativity, and collaboration—perfect for productive meetings, corporate retreats, and immersive events. With newly refreshed spaces throughout the property, including updated guest rooms, renovated lakehouses, and a brand-new Lakeside Café, Lanier Islands Resort delivers an elevated experience from the moment your guests arrive.

Scenic lakeside location sparks creativity and focus

The natural beauty of Lake Lanier creates a peaceful, inspiring backdrop for any meeting or event. Attendees benefit from stunning water views, fresh air, and the calming presence of nature—all of which have been

proven to reduce stress and spark innovative thinking. Whether your group prefers indoor meeting spaces with panoramic lake views or outdoor gatherings by the water, the resort’s picturesque environment promotes a calm, productive atmosphere that encourages deeper engagement and fresh ideas.

Comprehensive amenities for effortless, seamless planning

Lanier Islands Resort is a true destination resort, with everything your group needs all in one place. Enjoy comfortable, updated accommodations, multiple dining outlets, and 38,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. Between sessions, attendees can take advantage of championship golf, boat rentals, a full-service spa, a fitness center, hiking trails, and a heated pool area with cozy firepits. With so many onsite amenities close at hand, planners enjoy simplified logistics

and more time for meaningful connections and productivity.

Unique and energizing teambuilding & entertainment experiences

What sets Lanier Islands Resort apart is its innovative approach to teambuilding and group entertainment. Professionally led teambuilding programs help strengthen collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills in engaging, memorable ways. Meanwhile, the Game Changer Entertainment Center offers duckpin bowling, axe throwing, adult gaming, virtual sports, and more—creating unforgettable experiences that bring teams closer together.

Convenient proximity and easy access to Atlanta

Located just outside of Atlanta and easily accessible via major highways, Lanier Islands Resort is ideal for groups traveling from the city and surrounding region. Guests enjoy a peaceful escape without sacrificing convenience, thanks to quick access to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) and metropolitan amenities. It’s the perfect blend of accessibility and serenity.

With its refreshed accommodations, new spaces, breathtaking lakeside setting, all-inclusive amenities, and unique entertainment options, Lanier Islands Resort is a game-changing destination for impactful, memorable meetings. Discover a place designed to help your team connect, create, and recharge—all just a short drive from Atlanta’s vibrant metro area. 🍷

Courtesy Lanier Islands Resort



Lanier Islands Resort

Shannon Galbraith
Director of Sales

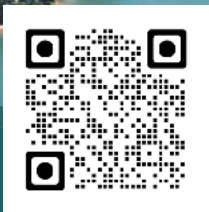
Shannon Galbraith is a results-driven director of sales with 25 years in hospitality, known for strategic leadership and a guest-centric approach. Outside work, he enjoys tennis, golfing, and spending time with his family.



678-318-2027
lisa@lanierislands.com
LanierIslands.com

RETREAT, RELAX AND RECONNECT

at Lanier Islands Resort



Visit Our Website
for Details

Meet Beyond the Boardroom

Just outside of Atlanta, Lanier Islands Resort offers an inspiring lakeside setting for your next corporate meeting or retreat. Enjoy updated accommodations, professional team building, state-of-the-art conference rooms, lakeside meeting spaces and even excursion yachts with full catering options. With customized packages including meals and lodging, every detail is handled—so you can focus on big ideas in a breathtaking setting.



Professional Team Building



Unique Meeting Spaces



Refreshed Guest Rooms

PLAN YOUR MEETING TODAY!

LanierIslands.com

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Lanier
ISLANDS

The Maxwell Center: There's No Place Like *OUR* Home!

Since opening March 1, 2018, Maxwell Regional Agricultural and Convention Center, referred to as The Maxwell Center, has **generated an estimated \$5 million+ in new revenue for the local economy** each year. As we approach our eighth anniversary, The Maxwell Center continues to stay booked with both new and returning clients. From multi-day corporate trainings to holiday parties for the local U.S. Air Force base and the different Fighter Wings, blood drives,

assorted meetings, conferences, conventions, trainings, weddings, receptions, reunions, church gatherings, and many other events, The Maxwell Center shows all its clients how much we appreciate them and their events.

The Maxwell Center offers top-quality rental areas and provides many in-house services, including lighting and décor packages. Working with regional caterers, The Maxwell Center offers delicious food options, with dozens of caterers serving everything

from boxed lunches, barbecue, elegant hors d'oeuvres, or a plated multi-course dinner.

Located in Goldsboro, in Wayne County, N.C., in the eastern part of the state, The Maxwell Center is approximately one hour from Raleigh, Greenville, New Bern, and Fayetteville. Only slightly farther from Wilmington, Cary, and other cities in North Carolina, The Maxwell Center is a great, centrally located convention center for your regional gathering in eastern North Carolina. 🍷

Photos by Joyce Vollmer



The Maxwell Center offers 10,000 square feet of outdoor space for events, including weddings, receptions, and reunions.



The Maxwell Center's massive glass front offers plenty of light and sunshine into our lobby pre-function areas.

The Maxwell Center

James Wade Jr.
General Manager

James Wade Jr. is very proud of his staff and venue. The Maxwell Center has been operationally profitable from its opening day. Last year, the facility hosted 236 events and 80,000+ guests.



Office: 919-731-1422
Cell: 919-273-8807
james.wade@waynegov.com
TheMaxwellCenter.com



MAXWELL CENTER

There's No Place Like OUR Home!



Flexible Space:
Up to 14,500+ sf Halls
Four Breakout Rooms
9,500 sf Outdoor Courtyard
Prefunction Lobby Space

Contact Us: 888 359-3303

The Maxwell Center
3114-A Wayne Memorial Dr
Goldsboro, NC 27534
TheMaxwellCenter@waynegov.com

IMPORTANT NOTE:
*Homewood Suites by Hilton
Now Open On Our Campus*

Meet in Florida's St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches

Courtesy St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches



With 42 miles of scenic Atlantic coastline, an array of extraordinary hotels and resorts, legendary golf, and a vibrant cultural scene, you won't have to work hard to motivate your team for a meeting or group getaway in St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches.

Florida's Historic Coast offers a seamless blend of Old World charm and modern sophistication, where centuries-old landmarks meet cutting-edge venues, and every gathering draws inspiration from the setting itself. Whether you're hosting a small executive retreat, a high-powered corporate meeting, or a memorable incentive trip, local experts will make planning effortless, ensuring every detail is an exercise in excellence, surprising and delighting your attendees at every turn.

Located just south of Jacksonville and easily accessible from major airports, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches offer convenience without compromise. Groups can choose from an impressive collection of venues, including

oceanfront resorts, elegant golf clubs, historic inns, and cultural landmarks that lend a sense of authenticity and history to every event. Imagine hosting a reception in a centuries-old courtyard, a dinner overlooking the Atlantic, or a teambuilding outing on a championship golf course designed by legends of the game.

Beyond the boardroom, your attendees will find endless ways to recharge and connect. Explore the charming brick streets of the nation's oldest city, sample fresh coastal cuisine at world-class restaurants, or unwind on miles of pristine shoreline. Art galleries, live music, museums, and local festivals add a rich cultural layer, keeping the experience fresh and inspiring.

With a temperate climate year-round and a reputation for warm Southern hospitality, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches make every group feel welcome and every event unforgettable.

When it comes to creating a meeting that motivates, inspires, and endures in memory, it's hard to imagine a better destination. We've been

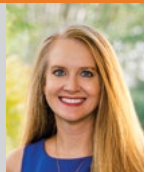
welcoming guests for more than 450 years, and we welcome the opportunity to make your next event one for the history books.

For more information or to start planning your next group event, visit MyFloridaMeetings.com. 🍷

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches

Jennifer Jenkins
Director of Conference Sales

With 25+ years of business and tourism experience, Jennifer Jenkins promotes Florida's Historic Coast (FHC) as a premier convention and meetings destination to associations and corporations nationwide. She develops and executes comprehensive sales strategies, working closely with Directors of Sales from local meeting properties to position the destination to group, incentive, and conference planners.



904-209-4432
jjenkins@floridashistoriccoast.com
MyFloridaMeetings.com

Where accomplished people get more done.



**ST. AUGUSTINE
PONTE VEDRA**
& THE BEACHES



Whether you're planning a retreat for your top performers, or a reward for all their hard work, it's hard to imagine a more inspiring destination than Florida's Historic Coast. With 42 miles of scenic Atlantic coastline, world-renowned golf, amazing cuisine, and an extraordinary array of meeting venues, your group will come back refreshed, recharged and ready to take on the world again.

MYFLORIDAMEETINGS.COM

Plan Meetings with Meaning on the Emerald Coast

As meeting priorities evolve, attendees increasingly seek experiences that fuel inspiration, spark connection, and support overall well-being. They want destinations that feel energizing, not exhausting, and spaces that make it easy to blend productivity with purpose.

Groups return to Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa year after year because everything they need is right here in one restorative beachfront setting. With enhanced meeting areas, numerous wellness options, and carefully selected group activities, planners can create gatherings that are both enjoyable and effective.

Partner with onsite experts

Creating an impactful program is easier when you don't have to do it alone. At Hilton Sandestin Beach, our expert onsite event manager and skilled professional team collaborate with you from the start, bringing deep knowledge of our 62,500 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space to every step of the planning process.

From room layouts and coffee breaks to transportation and logistics, they help streamline the details. Looking to add a wellness component? They can also connect you with specialists for guided meditation and other health-forward enhancements.

Build in wellness breaks

Modern meeting agendas benefit from intentional pauses that re-center and recharge attendees. At Hilton Sandestin Beach, those breaks can take place just steps from your meeting room on our private white-sand beach. A quiet walk, a few minutes of Gulf views, or a deep breath of salt air can make all the difference in sustaining engagement. For longer breaks, our onsite Serenity by the Sea Spa offers a 24-hour fitness center and a range of services to be enjoyed in an hour or less.

Strengthen connections with group activities

Set against the Gulf of Mexico, the resort offers a natural backdrop for teambuilding and shared experiences. Planners can customize activities to match their group's interests, from relaxing with massages at our award-winning spa and joining beachfront yoga sessions to enjoying sunset bonfires or competing in beach Olympics.

For smaller gatherings or executive teams, you can host a memorable dinner at our AAA



Four-Diamond steakhouse or choose from a collection of onsite dining venues highlighting fresh Gulf flavors.

Inspire longer stays

Whether your attendees are traveling from near or far, the Emerald Coast offers a perfect blend of business and relaxation. Promote a positive work-life balance or create an extra incentive for participation by encouraging guests to extend their stay before or after the event. Reach out to our sales team to inquire about extending your group rate dates.

Ready to meet at Hilton Sandestin Beach? Visit [HiltonSandestinBeach.com/Florida-Meetings](https://www.HiltonSandestinBeach.com/Florida-Meetings) to customize your next event! 🍹

Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa

Kevin Rosa
Director of Sales & Marketing

With more than 30 years of experience in sales, marketing and incentive travel, Kevin Rosa specializes in luxury group incentive travel, full-service meetings and events and employee recognition programs.



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[HiltonSandestinBeach.com/Florida-Meetings](https://www.HiltonSandestinBeach.com/Florida-Meetings)

the beach
IS
JUST
THE beginning.

When a meeting is more than just a discussion,
but an opportunity to **foster deeper collaboration**,
our beach inspires teams to go further.



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8 Reasons Why Memphis is the Southeast’s Boutique Meetings Capital

Justin Fox Burks/Courtesy/Memphis Tourism



Beale Street Flippers

1. Memphis is a music city like no other

In the home of blues, soul, and rock ‘n’ roll, live music rocks seven nights a week on Beale Street. Legendary music attractions—including the Blues Foundation’s Blues Hall of Fame, Sun Studio, Stax Museum of American Soul Music, and Elvis Presley’s Graceland—double as event venues.

2. The all-new Memphis’ Rensant Convention Center

The city debuted the fully modernized **Rensant Convention Center** in 2021. Just steps from iconic Beale Street, the venue connects the Mississippi Riverfront with Memphis’ walkable downtown. With 300,000 square feet of flexible space, it’s sized just right for groups wanting to enjoy a “takeover” rather than lose themselves in a larger venue, while offering unique spaces for any group, including a 118,000-square-foot

column-free exhibit hall, a riverfront terrace, a glass-walled boardroom overlooking Memphis’ Main Street, and the 2,051-seat Cannon Center for the Performing Arts. At nearby Liberty Park, a \$200 million sports-and-events center debuted in 2023, offering more flexible meeting spaces near the downtown area.

3. Hotel rooms downtown abound

Approximately 2,000 new hotel rooms opened in Memphis between 2020 and 2022, and more than 6,000 additional rooms are in development through 2026. Currently, 4,000 rooms are ready to book downtown.

4. Memphis is easy to get to (and around)

Memphis International Airport (MEM) debuted a \$245 million passenger terminal upgrade in 2022. The ticketing and check-in experience is being transformed next at this facility, which services 100 flights daily with 30 nonstop destinations. Yet, Memphis’ central location means the city

is a short flight, drive, or train ride from almost anywhere in the United States. In-market groups will enjoy Memphis’ compact, walkable downtown and vintage trolleys.

5. Memphis is a value for groups

Airport upgrades and new sports facilities are helping to keep Memphis’ offering fresh, though the city remains a value for groups. In fact, *USA TODAY* 10Best Readers’ Choice ranked Memphis No.1 for Best U.S. Destination on a Budget, and research shows that nightly hotel rates are 28% lower in Memphis compared to the national average.

6. Memphis Tourism is a one-stop shop for planners

The Memphis Tourism team works with planners every step of the way, whether you need logistics assistance or a local speaker in your vertical. When you host your event at the Rensant Convention Center, it is managed by Memphis Tourism—making your job even easier.

7. Memphis has many unique venues

From an after-hours tour of Elvis Presley’s Graceland to a reception on a glass-bottom deck atop Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid (one of the world’s largest pyramids), only-in-Memphis venues guarantee memorable events.

8. Last, but not least, the ‘Bluff City’ is known for delicious food

In Memphis, you’ll find world-famous barbecue, indulgent soul food, and MICHELIN-recommended eats all within walking distance of the Rensant Convention Center. 🍴

Memphis Tourism

Malvin Gipson
Vice President of Sales, Sports & Convention Services

Malvin Gipson is vice president of sales, sports & convention services for Memphis Tourism, the managing partner of Rensant Convention Center.



901-543-5366
malvingipson@memphistravel.com
MemphisTravel.com
RensantConventionCenter.com

Greensboro, N.C.: Big Impact, Smart Meeting Value

Greensboro, N.C., delivers affordable, high-impact meetings with the scale, flexibility, and hospitality planners expect. As one of the Southeast’s most accessible and cost-effective cities, Greensboro offers strong returns without compromising quality.

Organizers choosing Greensboro can save 45–55% compared to major markets, thanks to lower venue rentals, hotel rates, and food and beverage costs. Lodging averages 37% less than top-tier meeting cities, allowing budgets to upgrade programming and engagement options.

Greensboro offers an impressive range of venues. The Sheraton Greensboro at Four Seasons / Koury Convention Center features more than 900 guest rooms and 250,000+ square feet of flexible space. The Greensboro Complex adds 120,000 square feet of exhibit space and a 23,500-seat arena for general



Courtesy Greensboro Area CVB

sessions and trade shows. For executive retreats, Grandover Resort & Spa provides 45,000 square feet of meeting space and two championship golf courses.

Getting here is easy. Piedmont Triad International Airport (GSO) offers nonstop service to 15 major U.S. markets, and

Greensboro’s central location puts half the U.S. population within a 650-mile drive.

For planners seeking affordability, accessibility, and authenticity, Greensboro delivers standout value. 🍷

Greensboro Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Brian Ambuehl
Chief Business Officer

Brian Ambuehl, with 26 years at the Greensboro Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, leads sales to drive economic impact, build strong partnerships, and position Greensboro as a premier, accessible, and trusted destination for events.



336-274-2282
bambuehl@greensboro.live
GreensboroNC.com/Meetings

HALF THE COST. TWICE THE IMPACT.

TURN COST SAVINGS INTO
MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS
IN GREENSBORO.

Host your meeting here and
SAVE AN AVERAGE OF 45-55% ON CORE COSTS
compared to top destinations.
Lift your message higher, and let your resources focus on your mission, creating moments of fellowship that leave a lasting impact.

greensboro
NORTH CAROLINA

VisitGreensboroNC.com



Trilith LIVE: Your All-in-One Destination for World-Class Events

Courtesy Trilith LIVE



Located in the Town at Trilith, south Metro Atlanta’s premiere creative community, Trilith LIVE is a fully customizable, next-generation, multipurpose venue.

It’s equipped to host everything from corporate events, conventions and trade shows to concerts and live audience productions.

Spanning more than 530,000 square feet, Trilith LIVE features a state-of-the-art theater with seating for up to 3,000 guests. The facility also includes two 25,000-square-foot sound stages, two 5,000-square-foot insert stages, and more than 150,000 square feet of support space.

Additional amenities range from greenrooms and broadcast-ready infrastructure to flexible

meeting rooms configured for banquets, classrooms, or breakout sessions. The venue is also home to a luxury cinema, a 730-space parking deck, and a 51,000-square-foot outdoor plaza, perfect for conference functions and activations. With onsite catering, a Marriott Guesthouse Hotel, and retail and dining close by, Trilith LIVE seamlessly delivers a full-service, immersive experience.

This premium event space was designed to offer both scale and flexibility, providing meeting planners with the tools to create standout experiences in one easy-to-access location. Created for leaders and innovators, Trilith LIVE was built to inspire. 🍷

Trilith LIVE

**Matt McClain, CVP
Executive Director &
General Manager**

Matt McClain brings two decades of experience in event and venue management to Trilith LIVE. A Georgia native, he lives in Fayetteville with his family.



470-479-7784
mmccclain@trilithlive.com
TrilithLive.com

BUILT FOR BOLD

Located in South Metro Atlanta, Trilith LIVE offers a **fully tailorable venue** with theater capacity for **up to 3,000 guests**, 150,000 sq. ft. of support space, and **flexible meeting rooms** — perfect for **off-sites, conventions, and more**. With on-site catering, parking, and a full-service Marriott Guesthouse Hotel, it's **everything your event needs**, all in one place.

THINKING.



Theater venue capacity up to 3,000



Tailorable convention spaces



Located in South Metro Atlanta



TRILITH LIVE
BUILT TO INSPIRE

The vast state of Texas has ideal meeting and event locations to meet every planner's needs and budgets. Choose from urban hotels, venues, and attractions in such cities as Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, or San Antonio, or venues in the rolling green Hill Country, the plains of north Texas, the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico, or the expansive deserts of west Texas. From luxurious resorts to quirky historic properties, Texas truly has it all.

EVENT PLANNERS' GUIDE TO

TX

TEXAS

BY NICOLE DUFOUR AND D. FRAN MORLEY

San Antonio's mix of modern meeting facilities, ample accommodations, and historical and cultural attractions makes it a popular meetings destination.



Big bend country

Big Spring

VisitBigSpring.com; @VisitBigSpringTX

A gathering spot for centuries, thanks to a big, natural watering hole, Big Spring is an area of unique beauty and historic significance, located approximately halfway between Dallas and El Paso.

According to VisitBigSpring.com, historic Hotel Settles, which opened in 1930 as the tallest building in the region, today features 65 guest rooms and 15,000 square feet of event space, including lobby function areas and an elegantly restored 300-person capacity grand ballroom.

Additional venues include the Dora Roberts Community Center, which can accommodate 300 guests; the 3,900-seat Comanche Trail Park Amphitheater, and a variety of classroom, meeting, and exhibit spaces at Howard College,

including the 90,000-square-foot Dorothy Garrett Coliseum, featuring an arena, meeting and exhibit space, and athletic facilities.

Del Rio

**ExploreDelRio.com;
@DelRioChamberOfCommerce**

Whether visiting for pleasure or business, the border city of Del Rio offers local dining and shopping, a plethora of outdoor adventures, and unique cultural and historic experiences, according to ExploreDelRio.com. Outdoor experiences include hunting, fishing, hiking, and kayaking at Amistad National Recreation Area or at Seminole Canyon State Park/Historic Site, which features ancient rock art dating back 4,000 years.

The largest event facility, Del Rio Civic Center includes two primary convention halls with a maximum event capacity of 1,305, plus four additional meeting rooms. According to the

website, there are more than 600 convention-quality guest rooms throughout the city and at Lake Amistad. Ramada by Wyndham Del Rio, located near Amistad National Recreation Area, features 6,000 square feet of event space, including eight meeting rooms, to accommodate up to 300 guests.

Val Verde Winery, crafting wine for more than 141 years, offers tastings and includes a small event space.

El Paso

**VisitElPaso.com/Meeting-planners;
@VisitElPaso; @DestinationElPaso**

El Paso offers an incredible range of group opportunities to immerse event attendees in the region's culture, cuisine, and outdoor adventures, says Brooke Underwood, executive director of Visit El Paso. "Planners can create unforgettable experiences through hands-on cooking classes at the Texas Culinary

El Paso features an accessible downtown, which includes the convention center, numerous hotels and restaurants, and sports, entertainment, and cultural attractions.



Institute, group tours along the historic El Paso Mission Trail, or guided hikes through Franklin Mountains State Park, one of the largest urban parks in the nation. Beyond that, El Paso's festivals, art walks, and museum tours add endless options for teambuilding and cultural enrichment, much of which can only be experienced here in the 'Sun City.'"

Located in the heart of downtown, El Paso Convention Center has 133,100 square feet of usable space, including 17 breakout rooms and 80,000 square feet of column-free event space. Located across the street from the convention center, Hotel Paso Del Norte, Autograph Collection has 351 guest rooms and more than 32,000 square feet of function space. Also downtown, The Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park has 131 guest rooms and 7,600 square feet of event space. "Both properties deliver unmatched hospitality, perfect for rewarding top performers or hosting executive retreats," Underwood says.

There are more than 10,500 guest rooms throughout the city. Other hotels with event space include the 200-room DoubleTree by Hilton El Paso Downtown, 151-room Courtyard by Marriott El Paso Downtown/Convention Center, and 119-room Hotel Indigo El Paso Downtown.

Underwood says the city offers a wealth of creative recreation and teambuilding opportunities. "Groups can explore the natural beauty of the Franklin Mountains and new attractions like the revitalized Downtown Arts District, historic Plaza Theatre, and a growing mix of entertainment venues providing fresh options for offsite receptions or networking events."

Midland

VisitMidland.com; @VisitMidland

In the heart of west Texas, approximately halfway between Fort Worth and El Paso, Midland has more than 250,000 square feet of meeting and event space, ample hotels and meeting facilities, unique attractions, lively nightlife, and a great year-round climate, according to VisitMidland.com.

Downtown's Barbara & George H.W. Bush Convention Center has a 20,000-square-foot exhibit hall, a 6,000-square-foot ballroom, and 3,000 square feet of meeting rooms, plus additional function spaces.

The city has a variety of unique offsite event spaces, according to VisitMidland.com. The Permian Basin Petroleum Museum has space for up to 2,000 guests, including an auditorium. Kessler's Reception Hall includes a 4,000-

square-foot indoor room and a 3,000-square-foot patio to accommodate up to 300 guests. The Venue at Live Oak is available for concerts, galas, and corporate events, offering both indoor and tented patio space for up to 250 guests. The Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center features a 1,800-seat main hall, a recital hall, and lobby event space.

The 262-room Wyndham Midland Downtown features 8,979 square feet of function space with a capacity of 652 people. Springhill Suites Midland Odessa has meeting space for 180 guests. The Hilton Garden Inn Midland has 157 guest rooms and 4,005 square feet of event space; it can accommodate 200 people banquet style.

Odessa

DiscoverOdessa.org; @DiscoverOdessa

Just 30 minutes along the interstate from Midland, Odessa combines history, culture, and warm hospitality. "We're known as the home of *Friday Night Lights*, and Odessa shines with community pride and energy, especially during high school football season," says Ashley Flores, marketing and communications specialist for Discover Odessa. "We offer modern accommodations and venues, and we serve as the perfect gateway to outdoor adventures, with Big Bend National Park, Monahans Sandhills, two state parks, and the Balmorhea and Davis mountains all within easy reach."

Larger event spaces include the 227-room Odessa Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, which features 33,374 square feet of function space and can accommodate 2,000 guests theatre style; and 245-room MCM Grandé Hotel, with 19,000 square feet of event space and a capacity of 1,800 people. The 192-room MCM Eleganté can accommodate up to 400 event guests. Odessa offers 4,728 guest rooms throughout the city.

Groups visiting Odessa in January can take advantage of one of the city's longtime traditions. "The Sandhills Stock Show & Rodeo, held every January, is a west Texas tradition, perfect for groups wanting a true rodeo experience," Flores says.

Hill Country

Austin

VisitAustin.org; @VisitAustinTX

As the "Live Music Capital of the World®," Austin has a unique appeal for visitors, according to Steve Genovesi, executive vice president of

Visit Austin. “Our ‘soundtrack’ plays in hundreds of live-music venues every night of the week,” he says. “This energy extends beyond music into the city’s culinary scene, which is known for being local, inventive, and fresh, featuring everything from MICHELIN Guide-recognized barbecue to creative eateries.”

Expansion and redevelopment of the Austin Convention Center is projected to continue through 2028. “The new space will deliver a larger, more efficient meeting facility on a smaller footprint, ready to host more events and welcome greater community access,” Genovesi says. “During this time, Austin

continues to host in-house meetings along with campus-style functions, as hotels and venues work together to create cohesive, unique attendee experiences. There has never been a better time to host an event in Austin.”

Several major convention hotels completed renovations in 2025, including the 450-room Hyatt Regency Austin, which features more than 45,000 square feet of function space; 1,012-room JW Marriott Austin, with more than 120,000 square feet of event space, including a 30,000-square-foot ballroom; and 297-room AT&T Hotel & Conference Center, located on the University of Texas at Austin campus, with 85,000 square feet of meeting and event space.

Other major event hotels include the 1,048-room Fairmont Austin, with 138,815 square feet of function space; 801-room Hilton Austin, with 95,000 square feet of event space, including a theater with a seating capacity of 3,410; 613-room Austin Marriott Downtown, with 61,000 square feet of function space; and 492-room Renaissance Austin Hotel, with 65,000 square feet of meeting and event space. There are 51,025 guest rooms throughout the city, with 15,313 in downtown.

Just outside the city, Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa has 493 guest rooms and 76,192 square feet of event space, plus outdoor lawn venues. Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort and Spa has 491 guest rooms and 300,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space.

The Palmer Events Center features 131,000 square feet of space, including a 70,000-square-foot exhibit hall.

Expansion of the Barbara Jordan Terminal at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) is expected to be completed in the spring, adding 84,500 square feet of space over three levels, new passenger amenities, and additional airline support space.

Brownwood

VisitBrownwood.com; @VisitBrownwood

In Brownwood, visitors can bite into a burger served in a restored train car, sample award-winning Texas-made wines and beers, experience legendary barbecue, and take a kayak trip on the bayou. According to VisitBrownwood.com, a busy downtown, a lakefront golf course, a historic downtown theater, and plenty of outdoor recreational opportunities make Brownwood “feel like home.”

The new Brownwood Event Center Complex, renovated from a historic 1920s

★ See State Spotlight

City	Map Location	City	Map Location
Abilene.....	F4	Kerrville.....	F6
Amarillo.....	D2	Laredo.....	F8
Arlington/Tarrant County.....	G4, H4	Lubbock.....	D3
Austin★.....	G6	McAllen.....	G9
Bay Area Houston.....	I6	McKinney.....	H4
Beaumont.....	I6	Mesquite.....	H4
Big Spring.....	E4	Midland.....	D4
Brownsville, Port Isabel, & Harlingen/ Cameron County.....	G9	Nacogdoches.....	I5
Brownwood.....	F5	New Braunfels.....	F6
Conroe.....	H6	Odessa.....	D5
Corpus Christi/Padre Island.....	G7	Plano★.....	H4
Dallas.....	H4	Rockport-Fulton.....	G8
Del Rio.....	E6	Round Rock.....	G5
Denton/Denton County.....	H3	San Angelo.....	E5
El Paso★.....	A4	San Antonio.....	F6
Fort Worth.....	G4	San Marcos.....	F6
Fredericksburg.....	F6	South Padre Island★.....	G9
Frisco.....	H4	Tyler.....	I4
Galveston Island/Galveston County..	I6	Victoria.....	H7
Georgetown.....	G5	Waco/McLennan County.....	H5
Greater Houston.....	I6	Wichita Falls.....	F3
		The Woodlands.....	I6



Redefining the Event Experience

Welcome to the future of events in one of the U.S.'s most dynamic cities. The new Austin Convention Center, located between Lady Bird Lake and historic Sixth Street, offers unparalleled access to over 14,000 hotel rooms within a one-mile radius, making it the ideal destination for conferences, conventions, and special events.

Unmatched Event Space & Versatility

Reopening in 2028 in time for the 2029 Spring Festivals, the center boasts 620,000 square feet of rentable space, including 70,000 square feet of outdoor venues. Whether hosting intimate gatherings or large conventions, the center's versatile exhibition halls, meeting rooms, ballroom, and pre-function lobbies with stunning mass timber ceilings inspire creativity and connection.

The World's Most Sustainable Convention Center

As the world's first ILFI Zero Carbon-certified convention center, the Austin Convention Center

sets a new standard for eco-conscious design and aligns with the Austin Climate Equity Plan.

A Landmark for the Future

Spanning six city blocks and 14.1 acres, the center's 1.4 million square feet include five stories, two below grade and three above.

By the Numbers

- Total Rentable Space: 620,000 sq. ft. (550,000 indoor + 70,000 outdoor)
- Previous Space: 365,000 sq. ft.
- Cost: \$1.6 billion
- Completion: Late 2028, reopening for Spring 2029 festivals
- www.austinconventioncenter.com



Visitors can enjoy incredible views of west Austin and Texas Hill Country from the Lake Austin/360 Bridge Overlook Trail.

warehouse, is now a multipurpose facility featuring a 7,000-square-foot main hall, five breakout rooms, an upstairs lounge, two outdoor concert stages, a covered pavilion, festival grounds, and green space. Additional venues include Adams Street Community Center, with an auditorium seating 200 theater style; Depot Civic & Cultural Center, with a ballroom seating 185 theater style or 140 banquet style; Brownwood Country Club, which can seat 150 banquet style; and Howard Payne University, with a 4,000-seat auditorium, classrooms, and other gathering spaces.

The 1,400-acre Hideout Golf Club & Resort, adjacent to Lake Brownwood State Park, has resort lodging, cabins, and ranch homes, as well as indoor and outdoor event spaces.

Fredericksburg

VisitFredericksburgTX.com; @VisitFredTX

Fredericksburg brings together the best of Texas Hill Country charm and modern luxury, according to Shannon Overby, national sales director for Visit Fredericksburg. “From boutique hotels and sophisticated wineries to beautifully restored historic venues, our town offers an upscale yet welcoming setting

for meetings, retreats, and special events, all wrapped in genuine Texas hospitality,” she says.

Fredericksburg’s newest hotel, The Albert Hotel offers 105 guest rooms and indoor and outdoor event space, including a 2,400-square-foot event hall and 1,200-square-foot mezzanine, plus a private four-bedroom guesthouse suitable for a small meeting or 50-person reception. Other hotels with event space include the 1940s-themed Hanger Hotel, with 50 guest rooms and event space to seat up to 500 guests theater style; 103-room Fredericksburg Inn & Suites, with 3,700 square feet of flexible event space; and the Inn on Barons Creek, which includes a conference center with a capacity of 250 people. The city offers approximately 1,200 hotel rooms, plus additional vacation rentals, cottages, and bed-and-breakfasts.

Unique offsite venues include Alstadt Brewery, a 120-acre property with a fine-dining restaurant and numerous event spaces, including a grand hall; the National Museum of the Pacific War, with indoor and outdoor meeting and event options to accommodate 200 guests; the Lyndon B. Johnson National and State Historic Site, with a 70-person-capacity group hall and 250-seat amphitheater; a historic dance hall in nearby Luckenbach,

which can seat 400 theater style; and more than 100 vineyards, wineries, and tasting rooms.

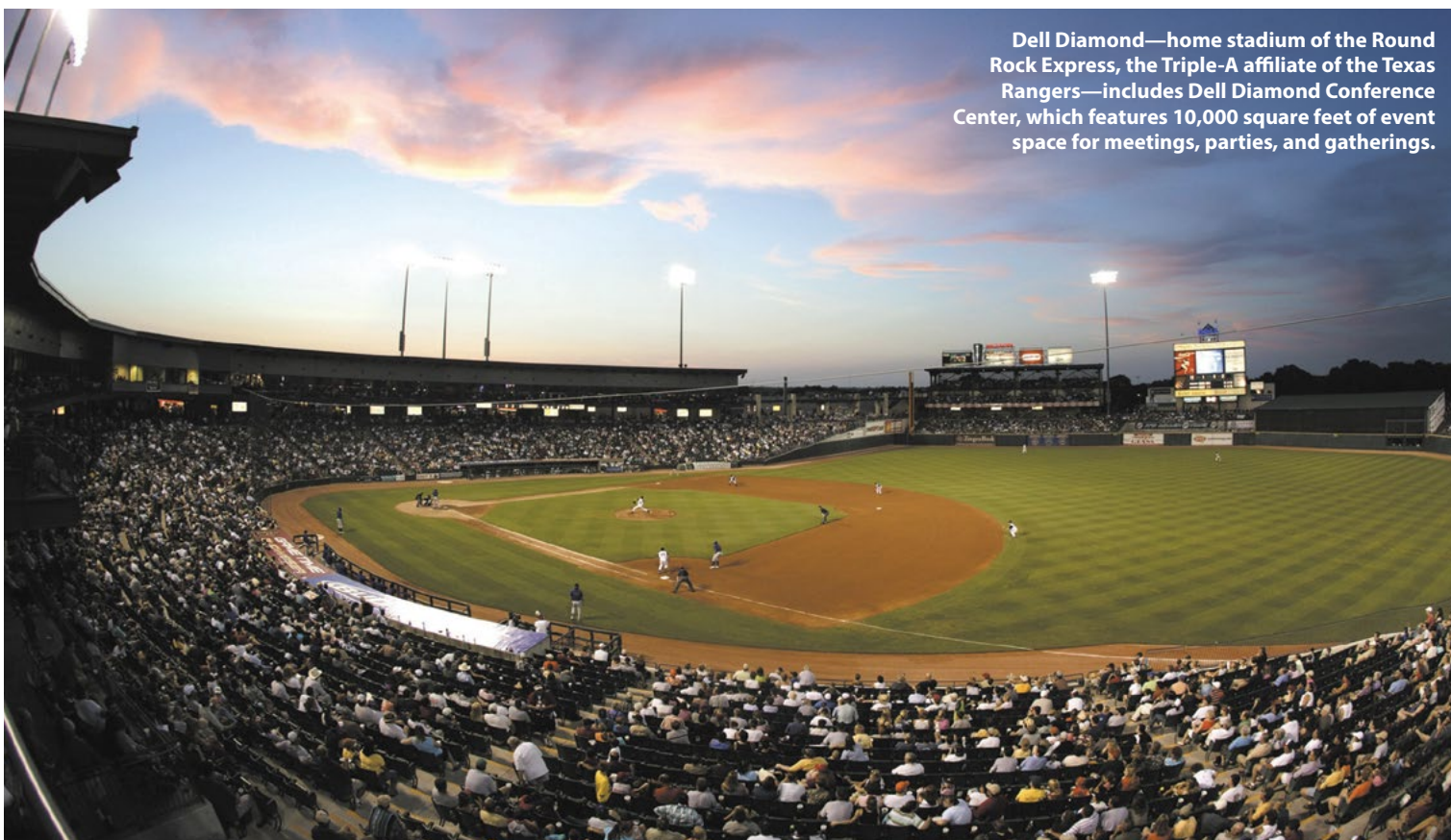
Georgetown

**Visit.Georgetown.org;
@VisitGeorgetownTX**

Just 30 minutes from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and an easy drive from many major Texas cities, Georgetown is a convenient yet distinctive choice for gatherings of all sizes, according to Marcy Renneberg, tourism coordinator for Visit Georgetown. “We’re known as having the ‘most beautiful town square in Texas,’ and we captivate visitors with our historic architecture and welcoming energy,” she says. “Georgetown has the character of a small town but with first-class venues, acclaimed dining, and a thriving arts and entertainment scene.”

The new Light and Waterworks event space, scheduled to open early this year, will include a stage, an event lawn, and food truck areas, Renneberg notes. Downtown also has a new parking garage.

Offsite event facilities include City Post Chophouse, an award-winning steakhouse, with the newly opened Brass Peacock speakeasy downstairs for smaller groups and



Dell Diamond—home stadium of the Round Rock Express, the Triple-A affiliate of the Texas Rangers—includes Dell Diamond Conference Center, which features 10,000 square feet of event space for meetings, parties, and gatherings.

Courtesy Go Round Rock

a private 100-person-capacity dining space upstairs; and Wish Well House, a renovated historic home near the town square, which can accommodate 260 event guests. “Georgetown is a real foodie destination, and downtown’s open-container-friendly streets make it easy to stroll with a craft beer or glass of wine before dinner,” Renneberg says.

The 222-room Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel & Conference Center has an event capacity of 1,500 across 26,672 square feet of function space. The hotel is in a park setting and is convenient to shops, restaurants, and walking trails. There are approximately 1,222 guest rooms in Georgetown.

Kerrville

KerrvilleCrafted.com; @KerrvilleCrafted

Set at the headwaters of the Guadalupe River, Kerrville embodies the strength and resilience of Texas hospitality, according to Leslie Jones, publicity/communications manager for Kerrville CVB. “Our community faced unprecedented challenges in July 2025, when catastrophic flooding impacted our region, but we have emerged stronger, more united, and more committed than ever to welcoming visitors and groups to our beautiful Hill

Country destination, where you can craft your own adventure,” she says. “Kerrville is open for business and actively welcoming meetings, events, and conferences. Our major hotels, conference facilities, restaurants, and attractions are operational and ready to serve groups with the same exceptional service that has always defined our destination. What makes us truly special is not only our recovery but also how our community came together, demonstrating authentic Texas spirit and our genuine hospitality.”

There are approximately 1,000 guest rooms in Kerrville. The 165-room Inn of the Hills Hotel & Conference Center has 22,000 square feet of meeting and event space, and a full-service restaurant. Y.O. Ranch Hotel & Conference Center has 191 guest rooms, an 8,025-square-foot ballroom, and an additional 2,578 square feet of convention facilities. Hill Country Youth Event Center offers 25,000 square feet of meeting and event space, plus outdoor recreational opportunities, while Schreiner University has meeting space for smaller conferences and retreats. The Museum of Western Art features indoor space to accommodate 160 guests and outdoor venues for 220 guests.

Segments of the Kerrville River Trails have reopened, though restoration continues. Louis Hays Park is completing restoration, including improvements to accessibility. Many downtown businesses have reopened after completing repairs and renovations, including The Arcadia Theater’s state-of-the-art concert space.

New Braunfels

VisitNBTX.com; @VisitNBTX

With a mix of old-world heritage, modern charm, and scenic Texas Hill Country beauty, New Braunfels offers a warm welcome to groups, with distinctive lodging options, including hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, and short-term rentals, and unique dining choices, according to VisitNBTX.com, the website for the Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce. The chamber’s *Meeting Planning Guide* notes more than 3,000 guest rooms in the city. These include Courtyard by Marriott New Braunfels River Village, which offers 125 guest rooms and 6,676 square feet of function space for up to 250 people.

New Braunfels Civic and Convention Center features more than 50,000 square feet of meeting and event space to host up to 1,000 guests, including a column-free exhibit hall, a

Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos Hotel and Conference Center offers 283 suites and a 78,800-square-foot conference center.



9,288-square-foot ballroom, and five additional breakout rooms.

The reception hall at Chandelier of Gruene, a luxury event space, can accommodate 500 guests, while The Venue features a 5,200-square-foot ballroom and an outdoor courtyard.

Unique spaces include the historic 586-seat Brauntex Theatre; the city's famous Wurstfest grounds, with three venues to host up to 300 guests; Gruene Hall, the oldest operating dance hall in Texas, which accommodates 500 guests; and Natural Bridge Caverns, which includes an underground ballroom that can seat 250 banquet guests, plus an above-ground pavilion and event room.

Round Rock

GoRoundRock.com; @GoRoundRock

"Round Rock stands out as a destination that blends convenience with authentic Texas character," says Nancy Yawn, director of Go Round Rock. "We offer international cuisine, a vibrant arts scene, world-famous Round Rock Donuts, specialty shopping, and unique attractions that create lasting memories. Southern hospitality is at the heart of our city, ensuring visitors feel welcome from the moment they arrive."

Located north of Austin, Round Rock offers a diverse range of options, from boutique hotels to large conference facilities. "Kalahari Resorts and Conventions offers extensive meeting space and family-friendly

entertainment, including 350,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor waterparks," Yawn says. The 975-room resort features a 200,000-square-foot convention center, including a ballroom seating 5,470 theater style, plus 50,000 square feet of outdoor venues. Other major event hotels include the 295-room Austin Marriott North, with 16,405 square feet of function space; and 180-room Embassy Suites, with 17,291 square feet of banquet and meeting space to host 700 guests.

Known as the "Sports Capital of Texas," Round Rock is raising the bar with a major expansion of the Round Rock Sports Center, according to Yawn. "The upgraded 118,720-square-foot facility, which opened in November 2025, features eight basketball courts (or 16 volleyball courts), nine multipurpose rooms, seating for 2,288 spectators, and a total capacity of 6,560."

Round Rock offers visitors a historic downtown with lively nightlife, local shops, and diverse dining, plus fun options for excursions or teambuilding, including Uncle Buck's Fishbowl & Grill, located at Bass Pro Shops; escape rooms Escapology and Virtropolis VR; and Top Notch axe throwing.

San Marcos

**VisitSanMarcos.com; @VisitSMTX;
@TourSanMarcos**

Positioned between Austin and San Antonio, San Marcos blends small-town charm with a

big personality, according to Denise Pardo, destination services manager for Visit San Marcos. "Our city's vibrant mix of culture, creativity, and Hill Country hospitality makes it a standout destination for meetings and events, and San Marcos' energy shines through its live-music scene, flavorful local restaurants, and thriving arts community. Around every corner, there are murals both mini and massive, markets filled with local makers, and a playful spirit that celebrates our creative soul."

The city's largest event space, Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos Hotel Conference Center, has completed a major renovation. "This includes reimagined guest suites, elevated public spaces, and a conference center designed to impress," Pardo says. "The design was inspired by the natural flow of the San Marcos River and features soothing organic tones, warm copper accents, and a polished, welcoming atmosphere." The hotel offers 283 suites and a 78,800-square-foot conference center with a maximum theater-seating capacity of 3,000 guests. There are approximately 2,400 guest rooms in the city.

Just north of downtown is Texas State University. "The campus is beautiful—and very hilly," Pardo says. "The Old Main Building, the original building on campus—still used for classes—is a prominent feature on a hill overlooking downtown." Overlooking the 10,000-seat Strahan Arena, the University Events Center can accommodate 100 guests.

THE conference room got an upgrade ISLAND



Why settle for four walls when you could collaborate at sea? On The Island, catamaran sails replace conference tables and networking feels like a night out. From large-scale meetings to small incentive groups, South Padre Island makes work feel less like work — and a whole lot more like discovery.

Scan to plan





Originally a grain mill built in 1920, The Mill in Abilene now serves as a picturesque backdrop for indoor and outdoor events.

Also on campus is the Wittliff Collection, a renowned research center, archive, and museum focusing on the cultural heritage of Texas, the Southwest, and Mexico. Taylor Sheridan, the multi-award-winning creator, writer, and producer of *Yellowstone* and other TV projects, has designated the Wittliff Collection as the home of his creative archive.

Panhandle Plains

Abilene

AbileneVisitors.com; Facebook.com/AbileneTX; @AbileneCVB

According to Visit Abilene vice president Robert Lopez, Abilene represents the frontier spirit of Texas. “Our niche lies in combining heritage-rich experiences with modern meeting convenience,” he says. “Our storied past gives rise to a flourishing Downtown Cultural District, filled with museums and inspiring public art, including the world’s largest collection of storybook sculptures. Meeting attendees experience an authentic, welcoming community with enriching moments they can’t find anywhere else. In Abilene, meetings go beyond the agenda to create lifelong memories.”

Abilene’s newest property, the 200-room DoubleTree by Hilton Abilene Downtown Convention Center has 11,000 square feet of function space. It is directly across the street from Abilene Convention Center, which recently completed exterior renovations and offers more than 80,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit space, including a 2,000-person-capacity ballroom and multiple breakout rooms. Downtown’s revitalization is expected to be completed early this year, bringing new lighting, public art, and pedestrian-friendly amenities.

Frontier Texas, an interactive museum and visitors center in downtown, recently expanded to include new indoor space for after-hours receptions and parties, in addition to 75,000 square feet of outdoor event space.

The 175-room MCM Eleganté Suites Abilene has 12,000 square feet of recently renovated meeting and event space. Taylor County Expo Center, adjacent to Abilene Zoo and Dodge Jones Youth Sports Center, includes an 8,000-square-foot hall and a coliseum with 30,000 square feet of exhibit space, plus a stage, a covered pavilion, and additional function space.

Amarillo

VisitAmarillo.com; @Visit_Amarillo

According to Visit Amarillo, the destination is a prime location for meetings and events due to its cost-effectiveness, ample function space with unique venues, numerous accommodations, air travel options, and central location in the Texas panhandle, where the southern plains meet the desert.

Opportunities for group excursions or teambuilding include Hodgetown Stadium, which includes suites and patio areas to accommodate up to 200 guests; Big Texan Steak Ranch & Brewery, with a 7,000-square-foot beer garden; Merus Adventure Park, located in Palo Duro Canyon, with off-roading, overlanding, hiking, caving, and more; and Mack Dick Pavilion, also in the canyon, with space to host 169 people.

Downtown’s Amarillo Civic Center Complex has more than 410,000 square feet of versatile space for conventions, meetings, trade shows, concerts, and other events. The complex includes a 2,300-seat theater, a 4,870-seat coliseum, a 24,565-square-foot exhibit hall, and additional event rooms. Adjacent to the complex, the 226-

room Embassy Suites Amarillo Downtown offers 18,000 square feet of function space, including a 10,000-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 800 guests. The complex and hotel, along with the 1,300-seat Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts, are just minutes from Rick Husband Amarillo International Airport (AMA) and have easy access to the interstate, historic Route 66, and more than 2,000 hotel rooms.

Other hotels with function space include the 151-room Holiday Inn Amarillo West Medical Center, with 8,000 square feet of meeting space; The Barfield, Autograph Collection, with 112 guest rooms and event space to seat 130 theater style; and the 128-room Four Points by Sheraton, with 2,400 square feet of event space. The city has approximately 7,400 guest rooms, according to Visit Amarillo.

Lubbock

VisitLubbock.org; @Visit_Lubbock

Lubbock's blend of rich cultural heritage with a thriving arts and music scene, cutting-edge venues, and a welcoming community spirit makes every event feel personal, according to Cerissa Olson, director of sales and services for Visit Lubbock. "Planners appreciate Lubbock's accessibility, affordability, and the way it captures the essence of Texas: big skies, bold flavors, and genuine hospitality. We're big enough to host major conferences, yet intimate enough to ensure attendees feel like part of the community."

According to Visit Lubbock, the city has approximately 7,000 guest rooms. The 303-room Overton Hotel & Conference Center features 20,000 square feet of recently refreshed function space and can accommodate up to 1,200 conference guests. MCM Eleganté Hotel & Suites offers 293 guest rooms and 14,000 square feet of event space; Cotton Court Hotel has 165 guest rooms and 7,298 square feet of function space; the 107-room Holiday Inn South can seat 230 banquet guests; and the 140-room DoubleTree by Hilton and 156-room Embassy Suites each can seat approximately 200 guests theater style.

Larger venues include the 2,200-seat Buddy Holly Hall of Performing Arts & Sciences and the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center, which includes a 14,000-square-foot banquet hall, a 1,395-seat theater, space for 185 exhibit booths, outdoor venues, and an amphitheater.

San Angelo

DiscoverSanAngelo.com; @VisitSanAngelo

According to DiscoverSanAngelo.com, the city is an ideal destination for small- to mid-sized meetings, conferences, and events due to both its west Texas ranching heritage and new frontier featuring live music, visual arts, nightlife, and an impressive culinary scene.

Venues reflecting the city's heritage include the Cactus Hotel—one of the original Conrad Hilton hotels and now an event venue with a variety of spaces, including an elegant lobby, a mezzanine, and a ballroom seating 350 banquet style; and Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, which offers a frontier museum, a variety of event spaces, and regularly scheduled activities.

The 171-room La Quinta Inn by Wyndham and Conference Center San Angelo features 6,500 square feet of event space, accommodating up to 300 people. There are approximately 2,880 guest rooms in the city.

The McNease Convention Center has four divisible event spaces to accommodate up to 1,200 guests theater style or 700 banquet style. Foster Communications Coliseum includes a 20,000-square-foot exhibit floor and 5,000 permanent seats. CJ Davidson Conference Center at Angelo State University offers full conference facilities, featuring more than 110,000 square feet of meeting and event space.

Wichita Falls

DiscoverWichitaFalls.com; @DiscoverWFTX

According to Wichita Falls CVB director Lindsay Lewis, Wichita Falls offers an authentic Texas experience with the convenience and hospitality of a mid-sized city. "That makes us both memorable and easy to love. We have a genuine sense of community and collaboration, a revitalized historic district, and a walkable downtown anchored by the Multi-Purpose Events Center (MPEC) and the connected Delta Hotels by Marriott Convention Center."

The six-block Depot Square Historic District is a landmark from the boom days of oil discovery and turn-of-the-century railroad development, Lewis adds. "Venturing onto the red brick road of Depot Square, visitors can walk to family-owned and independent restaurants, urban wineries, a brewery, retail shops, entertainment, museums, and more. For those who prefer driving, there's free parking located throughout downtown."

MPEC, the largest event space in town, features 57,141 square feet of exhibit space, 10 breakout rooms, and a 216-seat seminar room. Part of the MPEC campus, the Kay Yeager Coliseum features 6,500 permanent seats. The campus also includes five acres of green space for concerts and other events. In addition, the attached Delta Hotels by Marriott offers 200 guest rooms and 29,400 square feet of function space.

Additional hotels with event space include the newly opened Hampton Inn by Hilton Wichita Falls North, with 92 guest rooms and a small meeting room; 93-room Courtyard by Marriott—Wichita Falls, with 4,160 square feet of meeting space; and 80-room Holiday Inn Express & Suites—Wichita Falls, with 4,848 square feet of function space. There are more than 2,200 guest rooms throughout the city.

Gulf Coast

Bay Area Houston

VisitBayAreaHouston.com;

@VisitBayAreaHouston;

VisitLeagueCity.Com/Plan-An-Event;

@VisitLeagueCity

Bay Area Houston, between Houston and Galveston Bay, comprises Clear Lake Shores, League City, Nassau Bay, Seabrook, and Texas City. The area offers water recreation and bird-watching activities, fresh seafood, quaint downtowns, a fun-filled boardwalk, and other attractions.

"Attendees can experience sailing on Clear Lake, dining among local eateries, or strolling League Park's historic oak-lined streets," says Stephanie Polk, manager of League City CVB. "Meetings here are conducted in a relaxed, scenic setting with easy access to major airports, attractions, and the Gulf Coast."

League City is home to the recently renovated South Shore Harbour Resort & Conference Center, which has 230 guest rooms and 25,000 square feet of event space. Hilton Houston NASA Clear Lake has 15,000 square feet of event space, and the Doyle Convention Center in Texas City offers 14,000 square feet of event space.

The 500-room Great Wolf Lodge, less than two miles from Space Center Houston, features 13,351 square feet of function space; its largest space can accommodate up to 930 people. The Ball Park at League City has a 20,000-square-foot indoor pavilion and accommodates up to 800.



Classic cars and classic cowboys are part of Amarillo's annual Texas Route 66 Festival.

Additional Bay Area venue options include Butler's Courtyard in League City—ideal for receptions and weddings—and Johnnie Arolfo Civic Center for mid-sized meetings.

Beaumont

BeaumontCVB.com; @MeetBeaumont, @VisitBeaumontTX

Beaumont offers a “Texas Twist” unlike any other, according to Shannon Mires, director of sales for Beaumont CVB. “Our location in the southeastern corner of the state gives us a cultural vibe that’s both Texan and Cajun,” Mires says. “Groups gathering here get a taste of everything from Tex-Mex to Zydeco and many wonderful venues, amenities, and attractions.”

Beaumont features 200,000 square feet of event space and 3,700 guest rooms. Doggett Ford Park, just off Interstate 10, offers 83,000 square feet of space, with a capacity of 1,000 guests. The downtown Beaumont Civic Center offers 41,000 square feet of space, with a seating capacity of 2,192 theater style. The Downtown Event Centre features 16,000 square feet and can accommodate up to 350 for seated dinners.

Hotels with meeting space include the 252-room Holiday Inn & Suites Beaumont-Plaza, which features 22,000 square feet of meeting space, and MCM Eleganté Hotel and

Conference Center, now under new ownership, which can accommodate up to 1,200 people. New hotels opening this year include a 96-room TownePlace Suites by Marriott and LivSmart Studios by Hilton.

Brownsville, Port Isabel & Harlingen/Cameron County

VisitBTX.com; @VisitBrownsvilleTX VisitHarlingenTexas.com; @CVBHarlingen

Brownsville, the seat of Cameron County, is a culturally rich, historic city. “The city prides itself on being the perfect blend of Mexican American culture, giving planners a one-of-a-kind experience they won’t find anywhere else,” says Malinalli Montesam, assistant director of Brownsville CVB.

Brownsville Events Center offers 13,000 square feet, with a capacity of 1,200 guests. The Mitte Cultural District features numerous attractions available for events, including the nationally accredited Gladys Porter Zoo. The Brownsville Historical Association manages sites for private events, including Laureles Ranch House Museum, which can accommodate up to 200 people. Brownsville offers 2,200 guest rooms across 30 hotels. The 96-room Staybridge Suites Brownsville has meeting space for small groups.

Nearby, the Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center features more than 8,000 square feet and can accommodate up to 1,000 guests. Thirty miles north, Harlingen Convention Center boasts 44,000 square feet; its largest space has a seating capacity of 1,800 guests. The adjacent 149-room Hilton Garden Inn Harlingen Convention Center includes a ballroom, which can accommodate up to 130 people, as well as a boardroom for smaller gatherings. Courtyard by Marriott Harlingen has approximately 950 square feet to accommodate up to 100 people in theater-style seating.

Corpus Christi/Padre Island

VisitCorpusChristi.com; @VisitCorpusChristi

Overlooking Corpus Christi Bay, Hilliard Center (formerly the American Bank Center) includes a 138,000-square-foot convention center, a 10,000-seat arena with 11 luxury suites, and a 2,600-seat auditorium. It also offers in-house catering.

Hotels with event space include the 475-room Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, with 24,000 square feet of event space; its largest space can accommodate up to 1,100 people. Holiday Inn Corpus Christi Downtown Marina features

345 rooms and more than 12,000 square feet of event space. The 236-room Holiday Inn Airport accommodates up to 500 people in its largest space.

Corpus Christi's downtown seawall stretches 1.5 miles and offers outstanding bay views and dining options. Don't miss the "Journey Through the Solar System" scale-model exhibit along a walking path to the Art Museum of South Texas.

For beach excursions, nearby Padre Island offers miles of sandy shores between the Gulf of Mexico and the Bay.

Galveston Island/ Galveston County

VisitGalveston.com; @GalvestonIsland
Galveston Island offers 32 miles of coastal beaches, more than 5,000 hotel rooms, and AAA Four Diamond resorts, all within a 45-minute drive of Houston Hobby International Airport (HOU).

"Galveston's rich history, world-class attractions, thriving arts and cultural scene, and Southern hospitality make this one of the South's premier meetings destinations," says Bryan Kunz, STS, CTA, director of sales and services for Visit Galveston.

The Galveston Island Convention Center, located at the 243-room San Luis Resort, features 140,000 square feet of event space. The convention center is within close proximity to approximately 500 additional guest rooms. San Luis Resort offers more than 40,000 square feet of space. The renovated 239-room Hilton Galveston Island Resort has 5,128 square feet of event space, while Holiday Inn Resort on the Beach has meeting and event space to accommodate up to 200 people. The 97-room DoubleTree by Hilton Galveston offers 1,600 square feet of meeting space.

Unique settings include the 418-room Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa & Convention Center, which boasts more than 100,000 square

feet of event space. The 119-room Tremont House has 15,000 square feet of event space, and the 224-room Grand Galvez has more than 13,000 square feet of event space.

Greater Houston

VisitHouston.com; @VisitHouston

According to John Solis, senior vice president of convention growth and development for Visit Houston, the city is a dynamic destination for meetings and events. "When meeting and event planners select Houston as their destination, they return because they get the warmth, welcoming, and willingness of the team to do whatever it takes to make each meeting an extraordinary experience," he says.

George R. Brown Convention Center features more than one million square feet of space and connects to Hilton Americas-Houston and the Marriott Marquis, which together offer more than 2,200 guest rooms.

El Paso
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 **El Paso Convention Center**

Connect with our Director of Sales:
Valerie A. Garcia | 915.637.6032
vgarcia@destinationelpaso.com

The Walk of Fame in Lubbock celebrates Buddy Holly and other local legendary musicians, including Waylon Jennings and Mac Davis.



Other hotel options include Thompson Houston by Hyatt, which can accommodate up to 500 people in its largest space. The 250-room Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston features a 16,000-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 1,685 for receptions.

New event venues include the eclectic 20,000-square-foot Warehouse at Turkey Bend on Buffalo Bayou.

Houston's two international airports, George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) and William P. Hobby Airport (HOU), have undergone major renovations. A new express shuttle service links IAH directly to the Convention District, enhancing accessibility for delegates.

Rockport-Fulton

VisitRockportFulton.com;
ExploreRockportFulton

Located in Aransas County, Rockport and Fulton offer scenic Gulf Coast beauty and charming, walkable communities. "We don't have crowded beach cities. This is a stress-free, relaxing setting perfect for meetings, retreats, and conferences," says Nannette

Eiland, Rockport-Fulton tourism manager. "Visitors experience calm bayfront views, pretty marinas, and the gentle rhythm of small-town life, all while having access to excellent event venues."

Rockport Conference Center has 8,000 square feet of space, including a 4,400-square-foot ballroom, which can accommodate up to 350 guests in theater-style seating. The new 10,113-square-foot waterfront Fulton Convention Center has a capacity of 575 people.

The 87-room Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites Rockport includes 1,200 square feet of event space for up to 75 people, and the 78-room Lighthouse Inn at Aransas Bay offers two flexible meeting spaces for small groups. The 44-room Inn at Fulton Harbor features a meeting room and access to unique activities, such as cocktail cruises and fishing trips.

Local activities include exploring local art galleries, kayaking, and visiting several of the area's wildlife sanctuaries.

South Padre Island

VisitSouthPadreIsland.com
@VisitSouthPadreIsland

South Padre Island is located between Laguna

Madre Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. "We have 300 days of sunshine and all the outdoor activities that conventioners want: the beach, water sports, surfing, kiteboarding, fishing, horseback riding, entertainment, and excellent local cuisine," says April Romero, director of communications and destination development for Visit South Padre Island.

South Padre Island Convention Center features 45,000 square feet of meeting space; its largest space can accommodate up to 2,500 people. Hotels with event space include the 256-room Margaritaville Beach Resort South Padre Island, which has 8,500 square feet of event space. Isla Grand Beach Resort features more than 10,000 square feet of indoor space, with a capacity of 860 people, and a 13,000-square-foot outdoor courtyard for large receptions of up to 1,600 people. The 216-room Holiday Inn Resort has 14,266 square feet of meeting space; Courtyard by Marriott has 12,000 square feet of meeting space; and the 156-room Hilton Garden Inn offers 8,965 square feet of event space.

Teambuilding opportunities range from ziplining to helping local wildlife at Sea Turtle Inc. The area also offers diverse dining.

Victoria

ExploreVictoriaTexas.com;

@ExploreVictoriaTexas

Victoria is located two hours from four major Texas cities: Austin, Corpus Christi, Houston, and San Antonio. Meeting venues include Victoria College's Conference & Education Center, which can accommodate up to 300 people. Victoria Community Center complex features a 12,305-square-foot dome, a 7,279-square-foot annex, and a 46,641-square-foot open-air arena.

Victoria's 118-room Hilton Garden Inn offers more than 7,000 square feet of event space, and a 109-room Courtyard by Marriott can accommodate up to 130 people for receptions.

Nearby attractions include the historic Mission Espiritu Santo and the award-winning Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum.

Piney Woods

Conroe

VisitConroe.com; @VisitConroe

Conroe, north of Houston, is a top destination for outdoor enthusiasts, with natural attractions nearby, including Lake Conroe and Sam Houston National Forest. George Bush Intercontinental Airport is approximately 45 minutes away.

The 303-room Margaritaville Lake Resort Lake Conroe | Houston offers more than 72,000 square feet of event space; its largest space can accommodate up to 921 people. The 56,000-square-foot Lone Star Convention Center features three ballrooms, with a capacity of 2,200 in its largest space. The 230-room Hyatt Regency Conroe has approximately 30,000 square feet of event space across 26 rooms.

Nacogdoches

VisitNacogdoches.org; @VisitNac

Recognized as Texas' oldest town and

home to Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU), Nacogdoches offers historic charm and modern venues set against a wooded east Texas landscape. "Around just about every corner in Nacogdoches, there is something for planners to love," says Lauryn Pennington, group sales and services coordinator for Visit Nacogdoches.

Nacogdoches County Exposition & Civic Center has more than 19,000 square feet of exhibit space and a large arena; its largest space can seat up to 1,000 guests. SFASU's Baker Pattillo Student Center has more than 11,000 square feet of meeting space, with a seating capacity of 900 people theater style in its largest space.

The historic Fredonia Hotel & Convention Center downtown includes a 10,000-square-foot convention center. A Super 8 motel became a new 60-room Spark by Hilton property, and a new 90-room Holiday Inn Express Southwest opened late last year. Downtown Nacogdoches has historic brick

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TEXAS

Courtesy/Discover Wichita Falls



Downtown Wichita Falls offers convenient access to venues, accommodations, and attractions.

streets, local boutiques, and a vibrant culinary and beverage scene. Fredonia Brewery offers craft beers, includes a fully equipped pizza kitchen, provides access to local food trucks, and features live music, brewery tours, and other amenities for groups to enjoy.

The Woodlands

VisitTheWoodlands.com;
@VisitTheWoodlands

The 402-room Woodlands® Resort, Curio Collection by Hilton offers 75,000 square feet of event space, including a ballroom with a capacity of 1,200 for receptions. The resort also has six dining experiences and two championship golf courses. Other major hotels with event space include Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, with 66,532 square feet of event space, and the Westin at The Woodlands, which can accommodate up to 609 people in its largest space.

Tyler

VisitTyler.com; **@VisitTyler**

“Tyler offers a small-town ambiance that meeting planners and attendees love,” says Susan Travis, vice president of sales for Visit Tyler. “We also have many of the ‘big-city’ amenities groups want, such as excellent venues, competitive hotel rates, and outstanding attractions.”

W.T. Brookshire Conference Center, overlooking the 14-acre Tyler Municipal Rose Garden, has nearly 24,000 square feet of meeting space, while the adjacent Garden Center offers 7,500 square feet of event space. Green Acres Church Crosswalk Center boasts 24,000 square feet and accommodates 2,100 in theater-style seating.

The 182-room Holiday Inn Tyler – Conference Center by IHG offers 13,000 square feet of meeting space. Hilton Garden Inn Tyler has 125 guest rooms and event space with a capacity of 210 guests for receptions. The 121-room Courtyard by Marriott Tyler features 4,016 square feet and can accommodate up to 250 people in theater-style seating.

Group activities include animal encounters at the Caldwell Zoo and tastings at Kiepersol Winery. Downtown Tyler features local craft breweries and vibrant dining spots, such as The Grove. Tyler has ongoing revitalization projects, including a new courthouse and a full-service downtown hotel, scheduled to open in 2028.

Prairies and Lakes

Dallas

VisitDallas.com; **@Visit_Dallas**

The \$3 billion renovation of Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center Dallas continues, with a projected completion date of 2029. “The new center will drastically improve

Dallas’ urban landscape, offering 750,000 square feet of exhibit space, 181,000 square feet of meeting space, a 105,000-square-foot ballroom, and a (walkable) entertainment district,” says D. Bradley Kent, senior vice president/chief sales officer for Dallas CVB.

The facility currently boasts one million square feet of exhibit space, three ballrooms, 88 meeting rooms, a 9,816-seat arena, and a 1,750-seat theater. “The plan prioritizes connectivity and aims to bridge downtown Dallas with nearby neighborhoods through improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure,” Kent adds.

Dallas has more than 35,500 hotel rooms across various hotel properties, including the 1,841-room Sheraton Dallas, which features 231,311 square feet of event space and can accommodate up to 5,000 people; 1,606-room Hotel Anatole, which features 600,000 square feet of meeting space; 1,001-room Omni Dallas, which offers 110,000 square feet; and 545-room Fairmont Dallas, with more than 70,000 square feet of event space. New hotels include the 267-room JW Marriott Dallas and the 134-room Hôtel Swexan.

Group activities range from mechanical wave riding at GoodSurf Beach Club to exploring the Margarita Mile and Dallas Museum of Illusions.

Fort Worth

FortWorth.com/Meetings;
@VisitFortWorth

Approximately 30 minutes from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport (DFW), Fort Worth Convention Center offers more than 230,000 square feet of flexible event space, including an exhibit hall with a theater-style seating capacity of 18,260 people. The venue is finishing the first phase of a significant expansion, scheduled for completion in 2029.

Amy Brown, senior vice president of convention sales and services for Visit Fort Worth, says meeting space discounts, room rebates, hotel concessions, and other perks are available to groups booking two or more hotels and at least 2,000 total room nights during the expansion period.

Will Rogers Memorial Center, a nine-minute drive from downtown Fort Worth, features a 125,000-square-foot hall and a 94,460-square-foot event space. The adjacent Dickies Arena seats 14,000 and includes 90,000 square feet of exhibit space.

Hotels with meeting space include the 641-room Omni Fort Worth Hotel, with 68,000 square feet of event space, and the Worthington Renaissance Hotel Downtown, with 53,000 square feet of event space. New hotels include AC Hotel by Marriott, The Sinclair, The Kimpton Harper, Le Méridien, Crescent Hotel, and Bowie House, which was recently honored with two MICHELIN stars.

Arlington/Tarrant County

Arlington.org; Visit_Arlington

Opened in 2024, Arlington Convention Center Complex includes the 888-room Loews Arlington Hotel and the 300-room Live! by Loews Arlington. The complex offers more than 266,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor event space, which includes a 51,224-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 5,692 people in theater-style seating.

AT&T Stadium, the official home of the Dallas Cowboys, temporarily will be renamed Dallas Stadium while hosting nine games of the FIFA World Cup this summer.

Frisco

VisitFrisco.com; @VisitFriscoTX

Considered “Sports City USA,” Frisco is home to world-class athletic facilities and extensive event assets, including more than 430,000 square feet of meeting space and 4,635 hotel rooms.

“Along with our athletic amenities, planners love our vibrant cultural scene, with art, music, and murals throughout the city, plus a unique museum district,” says Marla Roe, executive director for Visit Frisco.

The 500-room Omni PGA Frisco Resort & Spa offers 127,000 square feet of meeting space; its largest space can accommodate 1,511 people for receptions. Omni Frisco Hotel at The Star, located in the 91-acre Star entertainment district, features 300 guest rooms, along with function space for up to 1,440 people in its largest space. The 330-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Dallas Frisco Hotel & Convention Center features more than 90,000 square feet of meeting space, including a 41,760-square-foot pillarless ballroom with a capacity of 4,000 guests. The 303-room Hyatt

Regency Frisco-Dallas has 27,500 square feet of event space, while the new HALL Park Hotel, Autograph Collection has 24,714 square feet of event space.

Teambuilding activities include The Game Show Experience in the downtown Rail District and The Swing at PGA Frisco. Universal Kids Resort is scheduled to open in May 2026.

McKinney

VisitMcKinney.com; @VisitMcKinneyTX

“McKinney has the perfect balance of accessibility, charm, and character that keeps planners and groups coming back,” says Sarah Nolting, communications and media specialist for Visit McKinney.

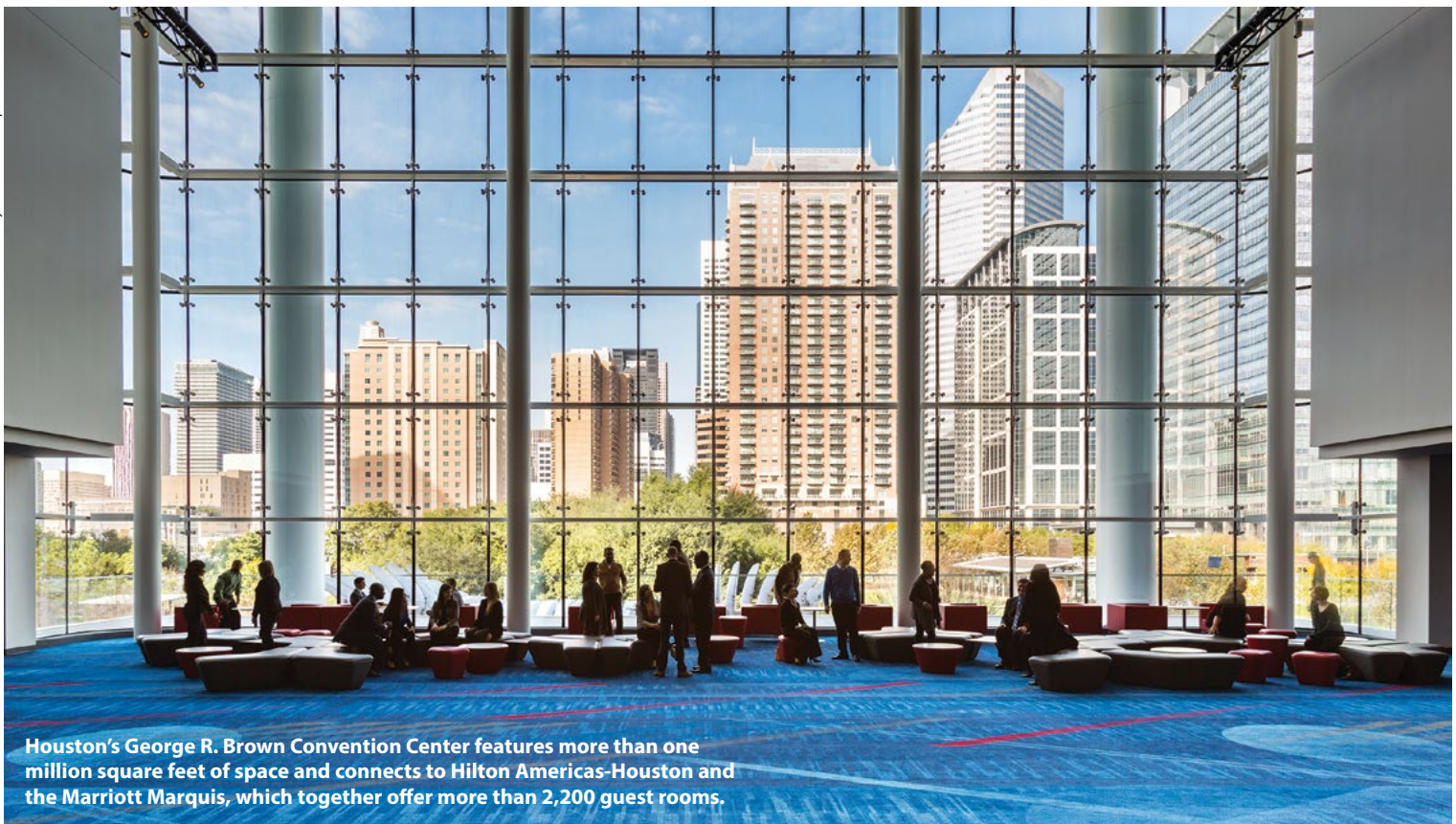
The Sheraton McKinney Hotel features 11,451 square feet of indoor event space, accommodating up to 824 guests, and a 63,000-square-foot event lawn for larger gatherings. Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites McKinney-N. Allen can accommodate up to 250 people in its largest space, while the 105-room Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites Dallas McKinney has meeting space for smaller groups.



Corpus Christi's Hilliard Center includes a 138,000-square-foot convention center, a 10,000-seat arena with 11 luxury suites, and a 2,600-seat auditorium.

Courtesy Oak View Group

Courtesy Houston First Corp./VisitHouston.com



Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center features more than one million square feet of space and connects to Hilton Americas-Houston and the Marriott Marquis, which together offer more than 2,200 guest rooms.

Courtesy Pullox Castor Creative



Located in the heart of the Rio Grande Valley, McAllen offers modern venues, convenient air access through McAllen International Airport, and a vibrant cultural scene reflecting the city's rich borderland heritage.

A new 84-room Tru by Hilton McKinney opened in spring 2025 off Interstate 75. Properties scheduled to open in 2026 include avid hotel Dallas North – McKinney by IHG, AC Marriott Hotel, La Quinta Inn & Suites, and Hawthorn Suites.

McKinney's unique venues include the historic Cotton Mill, with a capacity of 400 guests, and Sanctuary Music & Events, which can accommodate up to 230 people for receptions. McKinney's Community Event Center can accommodate 800 for lectures. Heard Natural Science Museum has indoor space for 100 and an outdoor amphitheater for 525.

Denton/Denton County

DiscoverDenton.com; @DiscoverDenton

"Home to the University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University, Denton offers groups excellent venues, more than 2,400 guest rooms, and outstanding amenities," says Kristi Franz, executive director of Visit Denton.

LEED Gold-certified AAA Four Diamond Embassy Suites by Hilton Denton Convention Center—located off Interstate 35 in the Rayzor Ranch dining, shopping, and entertainment district—offers 318 guest rooms and more than 70,000 square feet of flexible indoor/outdoor meeting space.

Downtown Denton features a pedestrian-friendly square, locally owned shops, restaurants, galleries, and other attractions. Groups can book an artistic workshop at Wildflower Art Studio, admire public art installations as they stroll through the historic downtown, or enjoy live music at Dan's Silverleaf, Harvest House, Rubber Gloves Rehearsal Studio, and other venues.

Mesquite/Dallas County

VisitMesquiteTX.com; @VisitMesquiteTX

Mesquite is just 20 minutes east of Dallas and features the 160-room Hampton Inn & Suites Dallas-Mesquite, which includes 65,664 square feet of flexible

space. The hotel's largest space is the exhibit hall, which can accommodate up to 4,000 people in theater-style seating or 3,000 banquet style. It also features an 18,000-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 2,000 for receptions.

The famous Mesquite Championship Rodeo takes place every Saturday from June through August, attracting thousands of visitors. Saturdays, spring through fall, the Downtown Mesquite Farmers Market features food vendors, music, artisanal products, and locally grown produce.

Waco/McLennan County

DestinationWaco.org; @VisitWacoTexas

Home to Baylor University, Waco offers excellent amenities along the Brazos River and Interstate 35, according to Kaitlyn Skinner, destination marketing and tourism specialist for Destination Waco. "With downtown hotels just minutes from local shops and restaurants, Waco is a welcoming city and easy for visitors and attendees to navigate and explore," Skinner says. "Pair that with our authentic Texas hospitality and a dynamic culinary scene, and you have a recipe for a truly successful event."

Waco Convention Center features more than 114,000 square feet of event space; its largest space—a 33,000-square-foot exhibit hall—can accommodate up to 2,600 people. Extraco Events Center includes a coliseum for up to 6,000 spectators, or 9,000 when the arena floor is used for seating, and a new BASE (Business, Arts, Sports and Entertainment) facility with a capacity of 3,000+ guests. Baylor University's McLane Stadium can accommodate up to 500 guests throughout its private suites.

Hotels with meeting space include AC Hotel Waco Downtown, offering 21,533 square feet of event space; Cambria Hotel Waco University Riverfront, featuring five spacious meeting rooms with a banquet capacity of 350 guests; Hilton Waco, with 8,000 square feet of event space for 300 people; and Hilton Garden Inn Waco, with 3,600 square feet for up to 368 people. In addition, the ballroom at Hotel Herringbone can accommodate more than 200 people, while Hotel 1928 has meeting and event space for up to 400 people. New hotels include Holiday Inn Express & Suites Waco Downtown, Everhome Suites Waco, and WoodSpring Suites Waco.

For activities, groups can visit Cameron Park Zoo, Balcones Distilling, or the Dr Pepper Museum.

Plano

VisitPlano.com; @VisitPlano

Located 20 minutes from Dallas, Plano has more than 60 hotels and more than 1,000 restaurants across four shopping, dining, and entertainment districts—all conveniently situated near convention hotels.

"Plano is truly the land of plenty," says Mark W. Thompson, executive director of Visit Plano. "It's a perfect blend of historic charm with modern luxury; the city brims with attractions and amenities."

Plano Event Center has 86,400 square feet of flexible event space, accommodating up to 5,000 people in its largest space. Anchoring The Boardwalk at Granite Park, a vibrant dining and entertainment district, the renovated Hilton Dallas/Plano Granite Park Hotel features 229 rooms and 30,000 square feet of meeting space. Its largest space can accommodate up to 1,300 people. Dallas/Plano Marriott at Legacy Town Center features 417 rooms and 32,000 square feet of event space. The 303-room Renaissance Dallas at Plano

Legacy West has more than 25,000 square feet of event space and is near Legacy Hall, a popular artisanal food hall with more than 20 stalls, an onsite brewery, and an outdoor stage ideal for private events.

Last fall, service began for the new 26-mile DART Silver Line, connecting Dallas, Plano, and several other cities to Dallas Fort Worth International Airport.

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

Laredo

VisitLaredo.com; @VisitLaredoTX

Located on the U.S.-Mexico border, Laredo offers planners the energy and diversity of two nations and two cultures, all in one vibrant city, according to Sofia Soto, sales account coordinator for Visit Laredo. "Meeting planners love Laredo's authentic cultural experience, where attendees can enjoy traditional Mexican heritage alongside modern American amenities."

The 178,000-square-foot Sames Auto Arena has a maximum seating capacity of 10,000



South Padre Island offers numerous teambuilding opportunities and group outings, including fishing charters.

Parkin/Courtesy Visit South Padre Island

for concerts. The venue also has six meeting rooms and 32,000 square feet of column-free floor space, making it south Texas' largest indoor convention space. The facility is undergoing a multi-phase renovation, with an estimated completion date of 2030.

Laredo's historic Four Diamond La Posada Hotel features 206 guest rooms and 15,000 square feet of event space. Off Interstate 35, the new DoubleTree by Hilton Laredo has 199 guest rooms and 6,880 square feet of event space, while the 154-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Laredo has 5,796 square feet of event space.

Laredo offers a diverse range of recreational activities, including kayaking on Lake Casa Blanca and golfing and bird-watching along the Rio Grande. Groups can take tours of the historic downtown and enjoy Spanish architecture, charming plazas, and such landmarks as San Agustín Cathedral.

McAllen

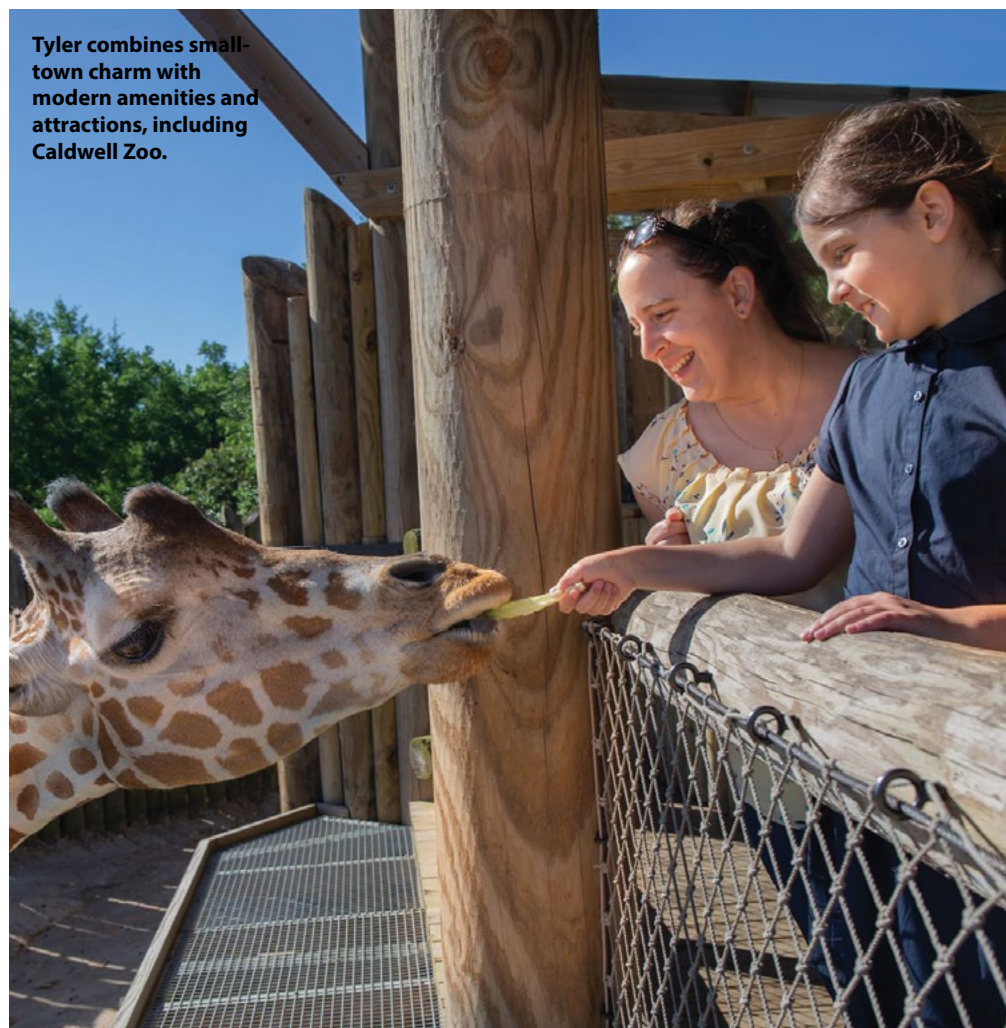
VisitMcAllen.com; @VisitMcAllen

McAllen Convention Center features 174,000 square feet of multifunctional space, including a 60,000-square-foot exhibition hall. The adjacent 1,800-seat Performing Arts Center is ideal for large sessions. The surrounding convention center district offers an array of accommodations, dining, entertainment, and shopping.

Embassy Suites by Hilton McAllen Convention Center has 150 guest rooms and 10,440 square feet of event space, accommodating up to 800 people in theater-style seating. The 121-room Cambria Hotel McAllen Convention Center can accommodate up to 235 people. Event space is available for smaller groups at the 144-room Aloft Hotel McAllen, which opened in 2024 on the convention center campus, as well as at Trademark Collection by Wyndham, Casa De Palmas, Wyndham Garden McAllen at La Plaza Mall, and DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Hotel McAllen.

Later this year, Verta Hotel will become a 150-room Delta by Marriott – McAllen Airport at Quinta Mazatlan.

According to Leigh Wooldridge, vice president of Visit McAllen, many attendees at meetings and conferences in McAllen bring their families. "The city blends convenience with unique family-friendly experiences," she says. "With the International Museum of Art & Science and



Tyler combines small-town charm with modern amenities and attractions, including Caldwell Zoo.

Courtesy Visit Tyler

other attractions, children stay entertained while parents attend sessions."

Local attractions include Quinta Mazatlán, which features gardens, bird watching, and event space for up to 350 in its largest space. Other attractions include McAllen Nature Center and the new Camp McAllen, which offers hiking, fishing, and kayaking.

San Antonio

VisitSanAntonio.com/Meeting-Professionals; @VisitSanAntonio

"San Antonio delivers the perfect balance of authenticity and inspiration," according to Tyler Orwig, senior vice president of sales for Visit San Antonio. "After meeting in one of our state-of-the-art venues, groups can stroll to The Alamo, visit the Historic Market Square, or take a boat tour on the river."

Henry B. González Convention Center features 514,000 square feet of contiguous exhibit space, a 54,000-square-foot ballroom, and 70 meeting rooms. Nearby hotels include

the 1,000-room San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter, with 70,136 square feet of event space, and Grand Hyatt San Antonio River Walk, boasting 115,000 square feet. Other hotels with significant event space include the Hilton Palacio del Rio, Omni La Mansion del Rio, InterContinental San Antonio, and Kimpton Santo San Antonio – Riverwalk.

Forty minutes from downtown, the 1,002-room JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa offers 267,973 square feet of event space. Also farther outside of downtown, the 500-room Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Villas features 100,000 square feet of meeting space. In addition, a new 5,600-square-foot Rancher Hall event space is scheduled to open early this year.

Gunter Hotel completed a \$57 million renovation last year. New hotels scheduled to open this year include Monarch San Antonio and Morgan's Hotel™.

San Antonio International Airport (SAT) is undergoing a \$2.5 billion expansion. 🌱



Courtesy Visit Plano

Visit Plano



Plano blends historic charm with modern amenities, offering more than 60 hotels and 380,000 square feet of flexible meeting space across a variety of venues designed to suit events of all sizes and budgets. Attendees can enjoy world-class shopping, abundant natural beauty, top-tier golf courses, unique attractions, and four vibrant, walkable entertainment districts. Access is easy via nearby Dallas Fort Worth International (DFW) and Dallas Love Field (DAL) airports.

VisitPlano.com

Visit El Paso



El Paso's accessible downtown area offers attendees convenient access to meeting venues, hotels, and restaurants, as well as sports, entertainment, and cultural attractions. El Paso Convention Center features 133,100 square feet of function space, including 80,000 square feet of column-free space and 17 breakout rooms. Known for its creativity, professionalism, and personal service, the Visit El Paso team provides dedicated planning support to create seamless, unforgettable event experiences.

VisitElPaso.com/Meeting-Planners

Courtesy Visit South Padre Island

Visit South Padre Island



With more than 34 miles of beach and 300 days of sunshine, South Padre Island offers an escape from typical meeting settings. The waterfront South Padre Island Convention Center features 45,000 square feet of flexible meeting space with full audiovisual capabilities and modern amenities, along with outdoor spaces delivering front-row sunset views of Laguna Madre Bay. Fun island activities include paddleboarding, jet skiing, catamaran sails, dolphin cruises, and beach games, along with waterfront dining and live music. A free island shuttle makes getting around a breeze.

VisitSouthPadreIsland.com/Meetings

Austin Convention Center



Set to re-open in spring 2029, the new Austin Convention Center will reimagine how people gather, celebrate, and connect. The \$1.6 billion redevelopment will offer 620,000 square feet of rentable space—nearly double its previous capacity—and aims to set a global standard for innovation in technology, creativity, and sustainability. In addition to featuring vertical design, flexible layouts, and 70,000 square feet of outdoor space, the new convention center will be infused with music, art, and cultural elements reflecting Austin's vibrant spirit.

AustinConventionCenter.com

Courtesy Visit El Paso

LMN Architects and Page/Courtesy Austin Convention Center

Closing Remarks

The Compton Brings a New Retreat-Style Option to Meetings in the Arkansas Ozarks

By Helen Jacob



Courtesy Angela Treimer, Treimer Creative

New at the historic square in Bentonville, Ark., The Compton lifestyle hotel invites guests to experience the Ozarks like an insider, with design elements rooted in the region's culture and natural environment. The six-story, 142-room hotel—named for Dr. Neil Compton, the conservationist who helped protect Buffalo River in northern Arkansas—opened in December.

Developed by local firm Blue Crane, The Compton is flanked by the A Street Promenade and Dave Peel Park, providing convenient access to Bentonville's world-class museums, extensive public trail systems, performing arts venues, and other attractions. The architecture team of Marvel Design and BRR Architecture drew inspiration from the textures and colors of northwest Arkansas. Interior spaces, designed by acclaimed interior studio Crème Design, feel both calm and adventurous. The lobby's dramatic skylight and inviting seating areas set the tone, creating an open and airy ambiance designed to blur the boundary between the indoors and outdoors. Two retail shops tucked off the lobby further anchor the hotel in the everyday activity of the Bentonville Square.

Guest rooms range from spacious deluxe and premium rooms to studio suites, one-bedroom suites designed for families, and a 745-square-foot presidential suite, complete with a soaking tub and panoramic views. Warm textures, including natural hickory, along with floating ledges, oversized mirrors, organic textiles, and waterfall-inspired bathrooms, give every room a quiet luxurious touch. All rooms feature thoughtful essentials, such as a Nespresso coffee machine, a mini refrigerator, an individually controlled climate system,

a 43-inch Samsung Frame TV, soundproofing, and more.

The Compton leans into Bentonville's reputation as a cycling destination, offering a dedicated cycling concierge to assist guests in planning trail routes, along with complimentary bicycle valet service and secure storage.

The Compton includes three dining spaces. Field Notes all-day café serves coffee and handmade pastries in the mornings, light bites at lunch, and small plates during relaxed happy hours in the evening. Field Notes features live music on the patio and includes a service window facing the promenade, making it an easy extension of the Bentonville Square. The Eddy, a sleek craft-cocktail lounge, brings an inviting, elevated tone to Bentonville's cocktail scene, with house-made tinctures, aromatics, and shrubs, and classic, approachable plates

ideal for social hours. Sestina is a refined yet relaxed classic steakhouse inspired by the rural steakhouses of Tuscany, Italy. The menu features bold flavors and seasonal ingredients, including steaks prepared over a wood-burning grill, handmade pastas, locally sourced vegetables, and shareable plates.

With approximately 14,735 square feet of meeting and event space, The Compton can host events ranging from intimate gatherings to signature celebrations. The second-floor Dogwood Ballroom features floor-to-ceiling windows and room for 240 guests. Located on the second-floor mezzanine, the Ozark Room provides a flexible pre-function or breakout space. The Gallery Room, with a dedicated entrance overlooking Dave Peel Park and featuring art curated by OZ Art NWA™, is ideal for receptions, board meetings, and a variety of gatherings. Also overlooking Dave Peel Park and featuring views of Bentonville Square, the covered Front Porch creates a breezy extension of the lobby, ideal for cocktail hours or casual breakout sessions. In addition, Field Notes, The Eddy, and Sestina can be reserved for private events.

"For planners seeking something beyond the expected, The Compton serves as a central hub for 'unconventional conventions'; an innovative approach to larger meetings that facilitates coordinated events across downtown venues," says Emily Reynolds, director of sales and marketing. "With Bentonville's great walkability, range of creative meeting spaces, group-friendly restaurants, and vibrant, culturally immersive setting, unconventional conventions enable planners to give larger groups an intimate and unforgettable experience." 🍷



DEFY CONVENTION

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