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ConventionSouth

The national planners' resource for southern destinations

FAMILY TIES

WHERE FAMILY FUN
IS ALWAYS ON THE AGENDA



**HOLE-IN-ONE:
Golf & Meetings**

**CONVENTION CENTERS
OF THE FUTURE**

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Creating Family Ties that Bind

In my early career as a journalist, business travel provided one of my most memorable family experiences. I was excited to invite my younger brother along to experience the local history, culture, attractions, activities, and entertainment with me—a trip I couldn't afford otherwise, being barely out of college and living on my own. It was the first time we traveled together, just the two of us, and it strengthened our special bond and created sweet memories. Since then, I've been fortunate to bring along other family members for business travel, and those combined bleisure experiences always stand out for their unique opportunities to get away together and give my family a peek behind the scenes of my work life.

Special moments like these are the focus of our cover story, which highlights family-friendly destinations for meetings and events. Destinations like Virginia Beach, Va., and Pensacola, Fla., check all the right boxes for planners seeking both function and fun, offering ample meeting space and entertaining attractions and activities for all ages. "I think our large variety of attractions and experiences has played a large role in site selection and has put us ahead of other destinations," says Anissa Ladd, vice president of sales and services for Visit Virginia Beach. "People are trying to provide an experience with their families, either before or after a meeting. It gives them two bangs for their buck." Adds Kaya Man, director of sales and services for Visit Pensacola, "We're seeing a lot of interest from planners looking for a family-friendly destination because they will get greater attendance at the conference and a stronger commitment to attend from registrants if their family is coming with them and staying the whole time." Explore how these and our other featured destinations are combining meetings with family fun in "Family Ties," beginning on page 6.

While it's fun to incorporate new trends and experiences into the event agenda, golf remains a favorite choice of many planners. Destinations and resorts are scoring a hole-in-one in golf and meetings, with iconic courses, distinctive clubhouses, access to professional instructors, and exclusive experiences. In "Teeing Up Success," on page 14, discover the fun teambuilding and networking options for making golf enjoyable and approachable for all attendees, from avid golfers to those who are picking up a club or putter for the first time.

We also examine what is driving convention center design and innovation in "Building for the Future," on page 22. To remain competitive, new and newly renovated or expanded convention centers, as well as those under construction, prioritize flexibility, personalization, connectivity, sustainability, and dedicated lounge and work spaces, where attendees can gather casually for conversations or work quietly alone. These trends not only reflect the preferences of planners and attendees nationwide but also will likely shape future meeting facilities. As Michael Heckman, president and CEO of the Houston First Corp., explains of the renovations and upgrades to Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center, "If you're not moving forward, you're losing ground."

For even more event planning options, don't miss our Event Planners' Guides to Maryland (page 29) and Oklahoma (page 38).

We're also in the final planning stages of our own Rendezvous South boutique conference, March 2-5, in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Limited planner spots are still available. Visit RendezvousSouth.com for registration information. We hope to see you there!



Making Meetings Matter More.

Michelle

Michelle Martin
Editor-in-Chief



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Courtesy Visit Virginia Beach

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Where family fun is
always on the agenda



Courtesy ARTJGT

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Teeing Up Success

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hole-in-one for meetings



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On the cover: Family fun is always on the agenda in Virginia Beach. Courtesy Visit Virginia Beach

'Golf Capital of the World' is a Hole-in-One for Groups

A conversation with Cyndi Mohr of Visit Myrtle Beach



As senior sales manager for Visit Myrtle Beach (S.C.), Cyndi Mohr frequently collaborates with event planners to create custom golf-and-meetings experiences in the “Golf Capital of the World.” Her relationships with local hotel and golf partners ensure groups have productive meetings while also taking advantage of the destination’s renowned golf facilities. Here, Mohr shares how Visit Myrtle Beach offers a one-of-a-kind golf experience for groups, fun for both avid and inexperienced golfers.

resort-style amenities. A few highlights include Myrtle Beach National and Legends Golf & Resort, which are well-suited for groups balancing tee times and meetings. Unique courses like Grand Dunes Resort Club offer shuttle service from the Marina Inn at Grand Dunes to further enhance the experience for golf-focused group trips.

How do you work with area golf courses and resorts to ensure a seamless golf-and-meetings experience?

Our meetings and conventions properties collaborate with area golf courses and resorts on such details as coordinating preferred tee times, arranging group transportation, and aligning golf schedules with key meeting sessions. Additional support may include handling tournament setup at courses, securing group rates or packages, and arranging onsite amenities like boxed lunches, awards ceremonies, or post-round receptions. These established partnerships allow golf activities to be seamlessly integrated into meeting agendas while offering planners a streamlined, efficient planning process with a single point of coordination.

How does Visit Myrtle Beach draw upon its reputation as the “Golf Capital of the World” in creating a unique experience for attendees?

We incorporate Myrtle Beach’s reputation as the “Golf Capital of the World” by seamlessly blending golf into the overall meeting experience. With more than 90 courses designed by renowned architects, we can match courses to all skill levels while using golf as a tool for networking, teambuilding, and relaxation. We have many reasons to celebrate Myrtle Beach golf. May 7-10, Dunes Golf and Beach Club will host the ONEflight Myrtle Beach Classic, a PGA tournament, for the third consecutive year. In 2027, Pine Lakes golf course (Myrtle Beach’s first golf course) will celebrate its 100th anniversary.

How do you tailor packages or itineraries to suit both business professionals and golf enthusiasts?

We design flexible itineraries that balance meetings and leisure. Options include hosted tournaments, casual rounds, or premium tee times for avid golfers, while newer or non-golfers can participate in lessons, clinics, or fun group challenges. Alternative activities, such as Topgolf, Pop Stroke, and miniature golf (Myrtle Beach is also the “Miniature Golf Capital of the World,” with more than 30 courses), ensure everyone feels included.

Which properties are particularly well-suited for groups that also want to enjoy golf?

With the abundance of courses, all of our meeting and convention properties offer convenient access to top-tier courses, scenic views, and

What special golf opportunities could attendees find only in Myrtle Beach that would provide an unforgettable experience for even those who are not avid golfers?

Myrtle Beach offers historic courses, architect-designed layouts, distinctive clubhouses, and scenic coastal and marshland settings. Meeting attendees can experience the area’s deep golf heritage at such historic courses as Pine Lakes Country Club, the area’s first course, dubbed “The Granddaddy,” which opened in 1927. Dunes Golf & Beach Club, Surf Club, Whispering Pines, and Myrtlewood’s PineHills all opened in the late 1940s through 1960s, shaping the “Grand Strand’s” golf experience.

Beyond historical significance, several iconic courses offer stunning landscapes by renowned designers. For example, Caledonia Golf & Fish Club’s greens are surrounded by towering oak trees, and King’s North at Myrtle Beach National was designed by Arnold Palmer. Tidewater Golf Club, featuring nine holes along the Cherry Grove Inlet or the Intercoastal Waterway, is ranked as one of the country’s Top 100 public courses. Additionally, it is architect Ken Tomlinson’s only design credit.

With more than 90 courses throughout Myrtle Beach, this only scratches the surface of special golf opportunities for golfers and attendees who simply want to enjoy the atmosphere and hospitality that make Myrtle Beach unique.

Together, Myrtle Beach’s blend of history, design pedigree, welcoming clubhouses, and scenic Lowcountry settings offer meeting groups exclusive golf-adjacent experiences that feel authentically local, effortlessly social, and truly unforgettable. 🍷

FAMILY TIES

Where family fun is always on the agenda

By Sara Karnish



Courtesy Visit Virginia Beach

To make the most of their precious hours, many busy business travelers are blending work with family time by bringing along their spouses and children. This ongoing trend is causing more planners to consider family-friendly destinations for conferences, trade shows, meetings, and other events. Choosing a family-friendly location extends beyond boardrooms and beds; planners also seek destinations offering fun attractions and activities for all ages, a diverse selection of shops and restaurants, and a walkable or easily accessible hub. Here, we explore some of the South's top spots for mixing meetings with family fun.

Frisco, Texas

Frisco, "The City That Plays," offers attractions for all ages, including sports entertainment, educational and interactive museums, and a diverse culinary scene featuring everything from kid-friendly fare to private dining for group gatherings. "We're seeing more planners who want destinations that blend business and family time. Frisco fits that perfectly," says Christina Decker, director of sales for Visit Frisco. "It's easy to get to, there is plenty of meeting space, and there are lots of things to do. Planners love that we really make it effortless. We are approximately 25 minutes from both Dallas airports, offer approximately 4,500 hotel rooms, and feature a walkable entertainment district full of restaurants, shops, and attractions. Plus, our warm Texas hospitality makes everyone feel at home. Frisco has something for everyone."

KidZania, an indoor city for and by kids, combines fun and learning. Kids can try out more than 50 different jobs and learn about the various skills required for each one. Frisco is also home to the National Videogame Museum, the country's first venue established to document, preserve, and exhibit the gaming industry's rich and varied history; the Frisco Roughriders Minor League Baseball team; Kaleidoscope Park, a vibrant arts district offering free year-round programming and recreational activities; and Frisco Water Park, an affiliate of Frisco Athletic Center. In addition, Universal Kids resort is scheduled to open in summer 2027. "We're excited to welcome Shrek, Gabby's Dollhouse, and Jurassic World, to name a few, which will add even more excitement to our city," Decker says. "We have a lot of fun."



Margaritaville Hotels & Resorts' wide-ranging properties, each with its own style and amenities, are a great choice for meetings and attendees traveling with families.

Courtesy Margaritaville Hotels & Resorts



In addition to the Naval Aviation Museum, families visiting Pensacola, Fla., often enjoy thrilling demonstrations by the Blue Angels.

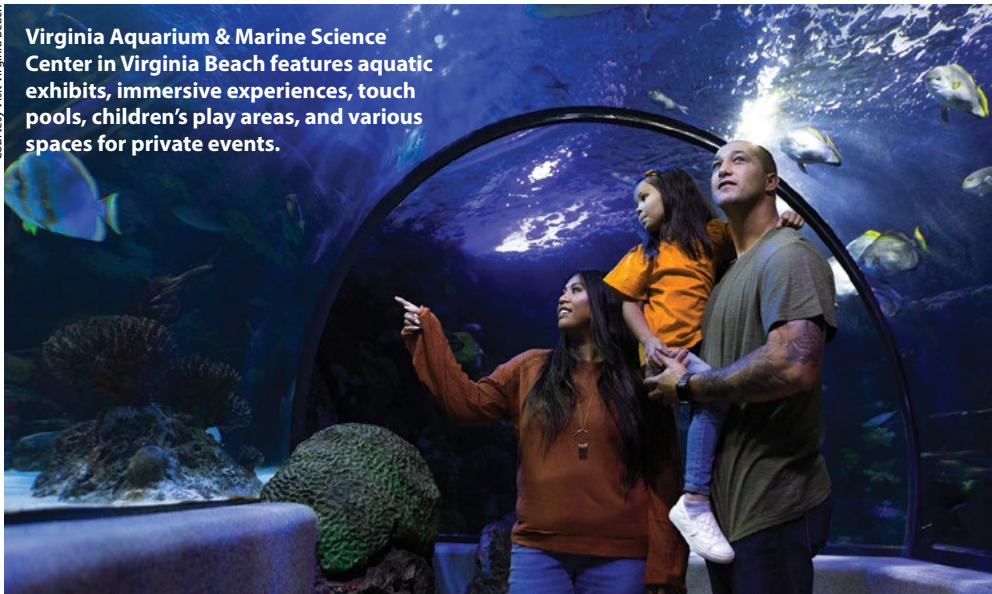
Courtesy Visit Pensacola

Frisco is also home to the PGA headquarters and boasts two championship golf courses—PGA Frisco and Omni Frisco Resort. "We're a real sports city and great for all families," Decker says. She advises planners to build in a little extra time for attendees to stay, play, and explore the city. The Visit Frisco team is available to assist planners at any step of the way. "Our motto is, 'It's where business meets to play.' We make it easy for meeting planners to create experiences that go beyond the meeting room," Decker says.

Huntsville, Ala.

Huntsville/Madison County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) in Huntsville, Ala., welcomes inquiries from meeting and event planners, according to Charles Winters, executive vice president of the CVB. "My biggest suggestion for planners is just to reach out to us. We're here to help," he says. "We've been here 50 years—we have a group of dedicated professionals whose job it is to help meeting planners. We love what we do, and we love our community. Put us to

Courtesy Visit Virginia Beach



Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center in Virginia Beach features aquatic exhibits, immersive experiences, touch pools, children's play areas, and various spaces for private events.

Courtesy Visit Frisco



The skiing simulator and other sports-themed attractions at Active Arena in Frisco, Texas, make for a fun teambuilding activity or family outing.

PACKAGES & BUNDLES

When researching activities and attractions to add to the event itinerary, convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) can be a planner's best partner. Some CVBs offer bundled packages or discounts to help meeting attendees and visitors make the most of their visit, such as:

Visit Frisco has teamed up with the Frisco Chamber of Commerce to offer the "Show Your Badge" program, which provides meeting and event attendees with discounts to city attractions. VisitFrisco.com/Meetings/Show-Your-Badge

Huntsville/Madison County CVB offers the digital Huntsville Attractions Pass, which includes free and discounted family-friendly events and activities. Visitors can choose from several types of passes, including the

Explore Downtown Conference Attendees Pass and Rocket City Kids Pass. All of these passes are free and easily downloadable—no app is required. Huntsville.org/Visitor-Info/Passport-Coupons

In Virginia Beach, visitors can take advantage of the Savings Pass year-round, though the particular offers change by season. Visitors can sign up for the Savings Pass or scan the QR code; no app is required. VisitVirginiaBeach.com/Virginia-Beach-Savings-Pass

Pensacola's discount program is called "The Way to the Beach." Two passports are available—one runs year-round; the other runs only during the summer. VisitPensacola.com/Passports/Experiences

work and let us be an extension of your event planning team."

Home of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center and called "Rocket City," Huntsville boasts many unique attractions. Visitors will be awed by the full-size space shuttle located at the entrance to the U.S. Space and Rocket Center—the largest space museum in the world, which includes a stealth plane, a park filled with rockets, and an exclusive collection of space exploration exhibits and artifacts not available anywhere else. "The U.S. Space & Rocket Center museum is a favorite for anyone visiting Huntsville, especially meeting and event attendees here in town with their families," Winters says.

Another family favorite, Huntsville Botanical Garden has activities and events year-round. Among its unique offerings is Wicks Family Garden, a two-acre greenspace featuring a dinosaur-themed area, a real Space Station node (another nod to the city's connection to the U.S. space program), and interactive installations like a sunflower maze and pollywog bog; this area provides a fun, educational experience for families. The garden also includes Purdy Butterfly House, one of the nation's premier open-air butterfly habitats, and last year debuted the whimsical Mother Earth Troll Garden. At its center sits "Mama Zelda," the guardian of the garden, a 20-foot-tall troll sculpture crafted out of recycled materials by world-renowned Danish artist Thomas Dambo.

Winters also recommends the Early Works Children's Museum and Lucky Duck Scavenger Hunt as fun family activities. The scavenger hunt sends participants searching for 15 bronze ducks hidden throughout downtown Huntsville; those who find all 15 can come to the visitor's center and receive a prize from the CVB. "It's a very family-friendly activity that gets people out and helps show them different points of interest and how close everything is in our downtown," Winters says, noting the CVB team regularly works with meeting planners to develop itineraries and build in activities at these attractions and many others. "We can integrate these attractions into itineraries, whether it's by securing group ticket sales or utilizing one of the venues for a special after-hours location for special events," he says.

Music lovers can check out the venues contributing to the city's rising music scene. "It's a growing part of our community,"

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Boating and water activities are easy to incorporate into the event agenda or family plans when meeting in Pensacola.



Courtesy Visit Pensacola

Winters says. “The Orion Amphitheater is open-air and has all kinds of concerts and events. The great thing about the facility is it’s a world-class venue, open all year. It’s a great venue for the community. The same is true for the Rocket City Trash Pandas field, the home stadium for Huntsville’s Minor League Baseball team. We’ve got music, sports, and history. We encourage planners to see what we have to offer—when they do, most make the choice to come here for their event.”

Virginia Beach, Va.

According to Anissa Ladd, vice president of sales and services for Visit Virginia Beach, the area’s wide selection of family attractions has helped boost the city’s profile among meeting planners seeking family-friendly destinations. A destination has to check a lot of boxes for planners, and Ladd feels Virginia Beach checks its share of them. “I think our large variety of attractions and experiences has played a large role in site selection and has put us ahead of other destinations,” Ladd says. “People are trying to provide an experience with their families, either before or after a meeting. It gives them two bangs for their buck.”

Virginia Beach’s natural resources—including 38 miles of sandy beaches and colorful coastline—are a strong draw for families. For the more adventurous visitors,

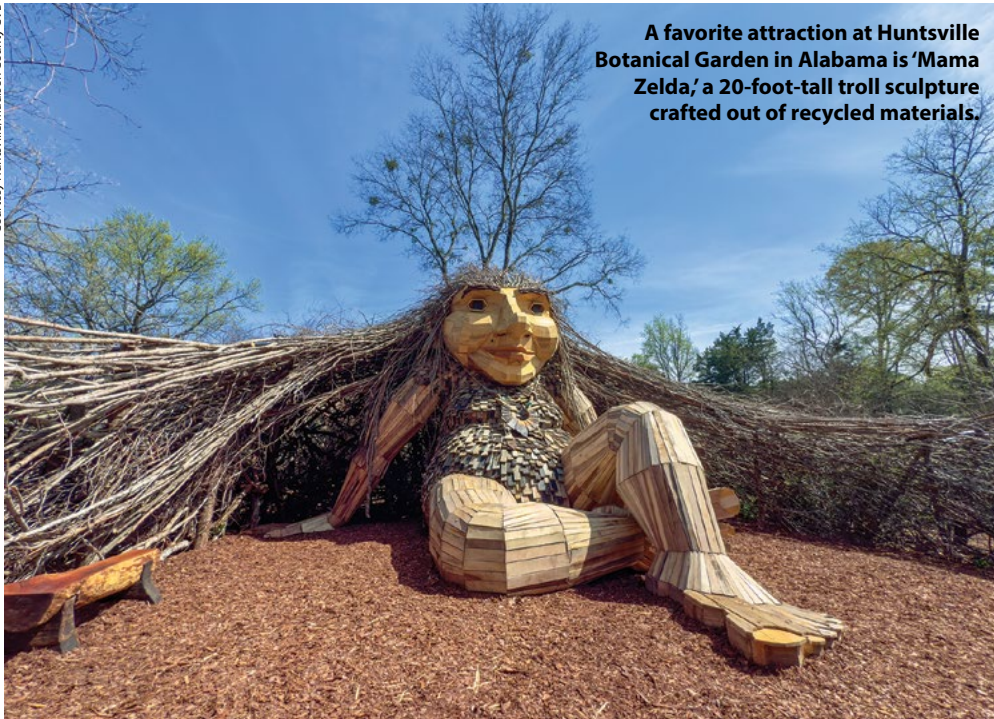
area attractions include a surfing simulator at Atlantic Park and treetop obstacle courses and ziplines at Adventure Park at Virginia Beach in Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center. Ladd also recommends Mount Trashmore Park, the nation’s first landfill park. Converted from a 640,000-ton landfill, the park includes the Kids Cove Playground, a volleyball court, a water-wise garden, two lakes, and other amenities for visitors of all ages to enjoy.

Ladd encourages planners to use the Virginia Beach CVB as their planning partner, utilizing the team’s extensive knowledge of the area. “Virginia Beach is bigger than most think, and we are a year-round destination,” Ladd says. “Groups meet in our venues and hotels even during the off-season. There really is something for everyone and for groups of all sizes. Whether you’re bringing a group of 10 or 10,000, our team will work with you to create an experience tailored to your needs.” She adds, “Travelers are blending business with travel—not only as a destination for a meeting but also as a destination to experience.”

Margaritaville Hotels & Resorts

With 30 hotels and resorts across the country—including properties in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas—Margaritaville Hotels & Resorts can accommodate meetings

Courtesy Huntsville/Madison County CVB



A favorite attraction at Huntsville Botanical Garden in Alabama is 'Mama Zelda,' a 20-foot-tall troll sculpture crafted out of recycled materials.

and events of various types and sizes. The properties' wide-ranging offerings make them a great choice for meeting attendees traveling with families as well.

Inspired by and named after the song by the late Jimmy Buffett, Margaritaville Hotels & Resorts combines Buffett's laid-back attitude with distinctly Margaritaville hospitality. "There is a perception that we're a party hotel or brand, but we're casual luxury," says Fernando Nunez, director of national and leisure sales for Margaritaville Hotels & Resorts. "When they're looking for a family-friendly resort, planners turn to us—especially for incentive groups, whose attendees tend to bring their families," he says. "Planners are definitely interested in destinations and resorts with lots of activities and attractions, including family options. We can say with confidence that we have activities and amenities for attendees and their families."

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Courtesy Margaritaville Hotels & Resorts



Located in Henderson, La., Camp Margaritaville RV Resort Breaux Bridge includes a pool, water playground, and splash pad, a fishing pond, pickleball and basketball courts, arts and crafts, and the Barkaritaville Dog Park.

Courtesy Visit Frisco



Gamers of all ages will enjoy the National Videogame Museum in Frisco, with walls of games spanning decades of gaming history and innovation.

Courtesy Huntsville/Madison County CVB



As the largest space museum in the world, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville is a popular attraction and venue for meeting groups and their families.

In addition to the brand's hotels and resorts, Camp Margaritaville RV Resorts blend the fun of the great outdoors with the casual luxury of the Margaritaville properties. "There are a handful of these locations in our portfolio," Nunez says. "Some have small houses or cottages, and each has great onsite amenities." Camp Margaritaville RV Resorts can be found in Buford, Ga.; Auburndale and Citra, Fla.; Henderson, La.; Pigeon Forge, Tenn.; and Crystal Beach, Texas.

The hotels and resorts' amenities are as diverse as the cities in which they are located, Nunez says. "There's something different at every single one of our locations—at our 30 resorts and hotels across the nation. We have such variety, and no two Margaritavilles are the same. Margaritaville in Missouri might sound the same as the one in Lake Conroe, Texas, but they are very different."

Nunez invites planners to visit any of the brand's hotels and resorts to experience them firsthand. "If you're near one of our hotels, let's schedule a site visit so you can meet our team, so the next time you're looking for a venue for an event, you'll have that experience."

Pensacola, Fla.

Planners considering Pensacola, Fla., will find a wide range of venue spaces and attractions within the city limits and in nearby Pensacola

Beach. Kaya Man, director of sales and services for Visit Pensacola, says the family-friendly aspect of the city makes it a desirable location for events. “We’re seeing a lot of interest from planners looking for a family-friendly destination because they will get greater attendance at the conference and a stronger commitment to attend from registrants if their family is coming with them and staying the whole time,” Man says. “That’s why our destination is so desirable—it’s easily accessible and safe.”

Most of the area’s meeting space is located in Pensacola Beach, where venues are situated a few blocks apart, making it easy for planners, vendors, and attendees to navigate the area. “Everything is so vibrant, walkable, and close,” Man says. “Visitors can walk across the street from the venues, be on the beach, and try the water activities that they want to do.”

The Hilton Pensacola Beach, Holiday Inn Resort Pensacola Beach, Fairfield Inn Pensacola

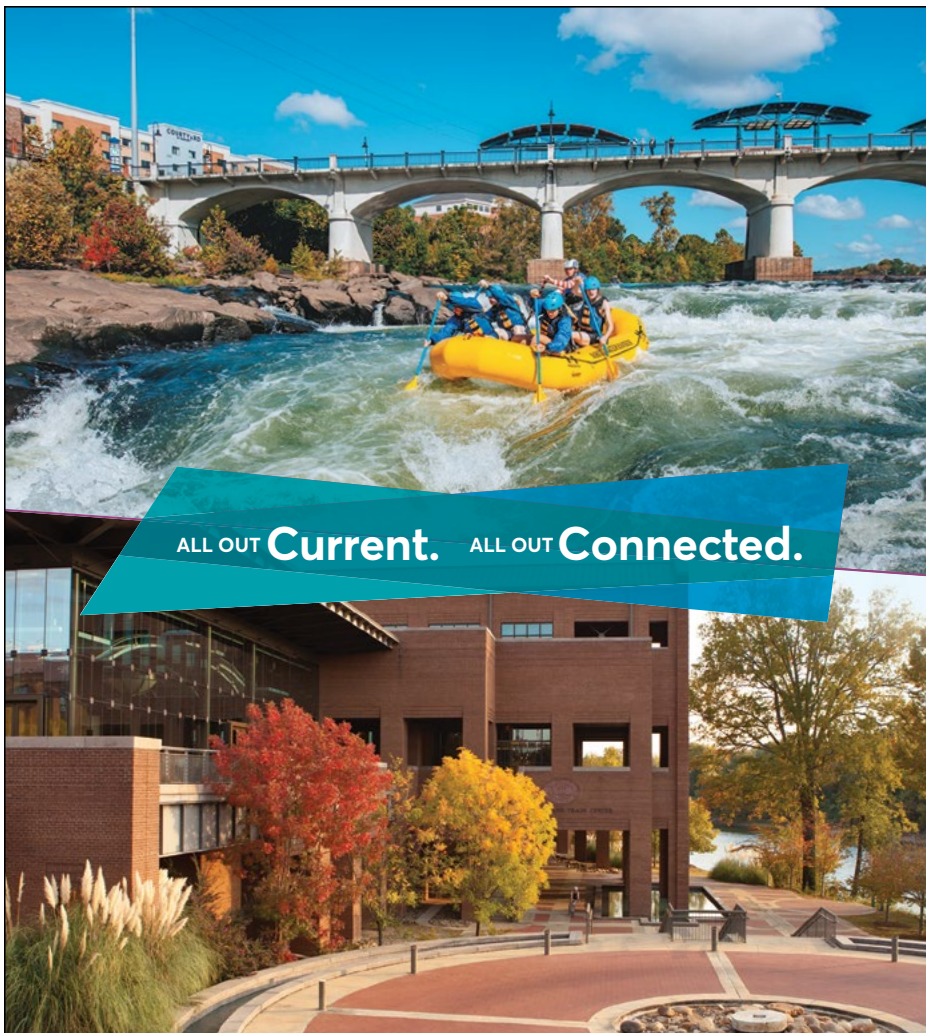
Beach, and Hampton Inn Pensacola Beach are all connected by a small boardwalk. Guests at any of the resorts can utilize the amenities of the other resorts, according to Man. Visitors can take advantage of the free trolley service, which runs in Pensacola Beach from Memorial Day through Labor Day and year-round in downtown Pensacola. “It’s a big help for families. They can hop on and off at their leisure,” Man says, adding that a number of restaurants in the beach area have adjacent playgrounds.

Pensacola is home to the Naval Aviation Museum, the country’s largest aviation museum. “It’s completely free and has a restaurant, 10 different simulators, and an IMAX theater, and everything is available in one location,” Man says. “It is a full-day outing, very educational, and can be a good attraction to visit if it’s raining.”

Other family attractions include Pensacola Children’s Museum, Pensacola MESS

Hall, and Fast Eddies Fun Center, which includes go-karts, mini-golf, batting cages, and an indoor arcade. Pensacola Children’s Museum uses play-based learning, while the Pensacola MESS Hall gives young visitors hands-on experiences to broaden their science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) knowledge. Also, First City Art Center offers children’s art classes, or visitors can simply watch artists while they work. For outdoor exploration, Man suggests Fort Pickens, located right on Pensacola Beach; kids can run and play around the fort, learn about the site in its small museum, or take a nature walk.

“If you’re looking for a family-friendly destination, I highly recommend Pensacola, especially April through September,” Man says. “The weather is perfect. There is an abundance of outdoor activities. That makes it really easy for planners.” 🍷



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Courtesy ARTJGT

TEEING UP SUCCESS

Why Planners Keep Choosing Golf

By Paige Townley

In today's meeting landscape, planners are constantly chasing fresh trends and unexpected experiences. Yet some classics continue to hold their ground, and few activities prove their staying power quite like golf. Even as many corporate meetings and conferences seek out the latest innovative agenda add-ons, the fairway remains attendees' trusted favorite. Whether attendees are seasoned players ready for endless rounds or a mixed-interest group seeking fun, approachable ways to engage with the game, golf offers a versatile, universally appealing option to effortlessly elevate any agenda.

"On a whole, golf has experienced a surge in popularity since the pandemic," says Tommy Parkinson, director of business development for TPC San Antonio (Texas) at JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa. "We feel it's our personal responsibility to take that popularity and not only help sustain it but also grow it. That's why we're so passionate about continuing the tradition of golf here and providing new and unique ways to experience the game."

World-class rounds

For most groups coming to TPC San Antonio, playing actual rounds is the main draw—and with two highly sought-after courses located right on property at the JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa, it couldn't be easier. "A lot of resorts have golf courses affiliated with the resort, but it often requires a transfer to get there," Parkinson says. "Here, everything is located on site, just steps from the meeting room or guest room."

The Oaks Course, host of the PGA TOUR's Valero Texas Open, is the marquee choice, with the majority of groups selecting it to give attendees the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of their favorite professional golfers. "They love being able to say they birdied the same hole they watched on TV," Parkinson

Though it has hosted the 1991 Ryder Cup and the 2012 and 2021 PGA Championship tournaments, the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Golf Resort in South Carolina is an approachable course for golfers of all skill levels.



Dana Cabbage/Courtesy Kiawah Island Golf Resort

adds. The Canyons Course offers picturesque Hill Country scenery and dynamic play, and thanks to the benefit of having a total of 36 holes, Parkinson can guide planners toward whichever course is in peak condition at the time. "The result is a walkable, planner-friendly golf experience tailored to the group, whether they're chasing championship-level bragging rights or simply a stunning setting for a memorable round," Parkinson says.

Meeting attendees are also naturally drawn to Kiawah Island (S.C.) Golf Resort's legendary Ocean Course—one of the most celebrated layouts in the world. "It's definitely on a worldwide stage," says Bryan Hunter, director of public relations, noting its storied history as host of the 1991 Ryder Cup, the 2012 and

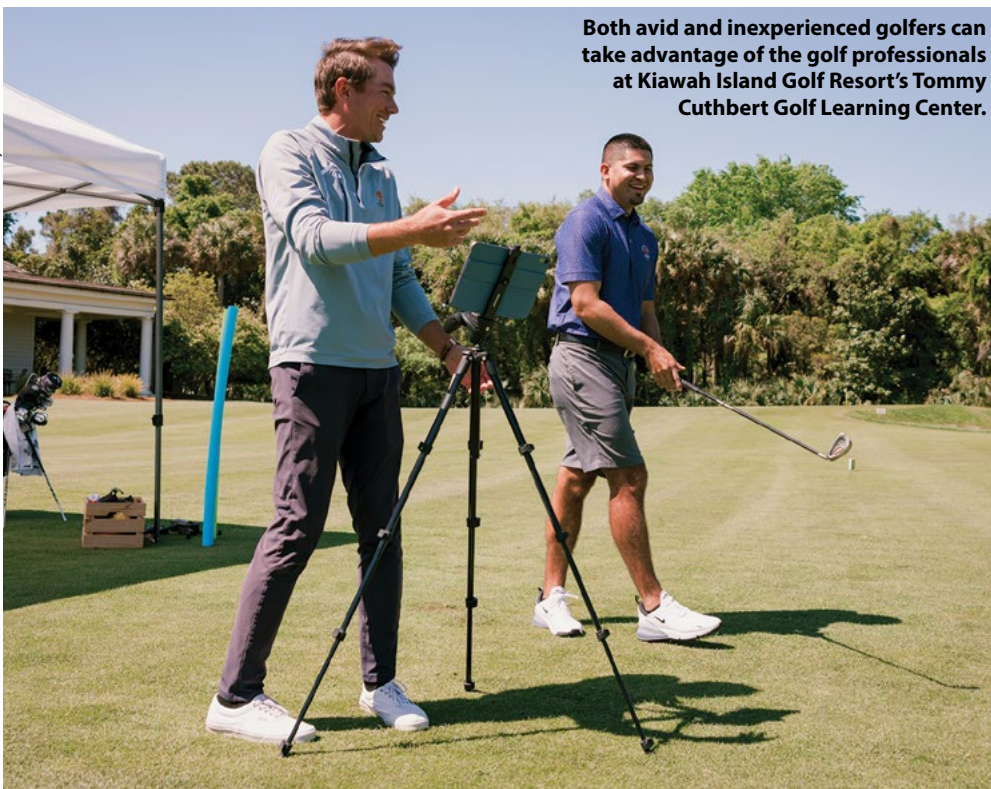
2021 PGA Championships, and its confirmed return in 2031. Consistently ranked among the top 100 courses globally by *Golf Digest* and *GOLF Magazine*, the Ocean Course boasts more oceanside holes than any course in North America, giving players sweeping Atlantic views from nearly every fairway. For avid golfers, attending a meeting on property is a rare chance to play where their favorite pros have battled. Despite its championship pedigree, the course remains approachable for all skill levels. "With seasoned caddies and Pete Dye's thoughtful tee-box design, it challenges the world's best while staying enjoyable and manageable for the average recreational player—one more reason attendees love teeing it up at Kiawah," Hunter says.

Courtesy JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa



Groups meeting at JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa in Texas can choose from the Canyons Course and the Oaks Course, site of the PGA TOUR's Valero Texas Open.

Courtesy Kiawah Island Golf Resort



Both avid and inexperienced golfers can take advantage of the golf professionals at Kiawah Island Golf Resort's Tommy Cuthbert Golf Learning Center.

Lighthearted tee time

For groups with mixed skill levels or guests who have never picked up a club, planners can easily incorporate low-pressure, high-fun activities that keep everyone engaged. From friendly putting competitions to relaxed mini-golf challenges, many resort courses have golf options that encourage camaraderie without the intimidation factor of a full round.

TPC San Antonio has created the Drive, Chip & Putt competition, modeled after the national initiative launched by the Masters Tournament, PGA of America, and USGA. What began as a junior-golf phenomenon is now a fun, fast-paced way to get clubs into everyone's hands—no experience required. "It's a nontraditional activation but really approachable, really player-friendly," Parkinson says. PGA professionals set up digital scoreboards and three skill stations where attendees rotate through long-drive shots measured with onsite technology, accuracy-based chipping, and a final putting challenge. "Scores accumulate along the way,

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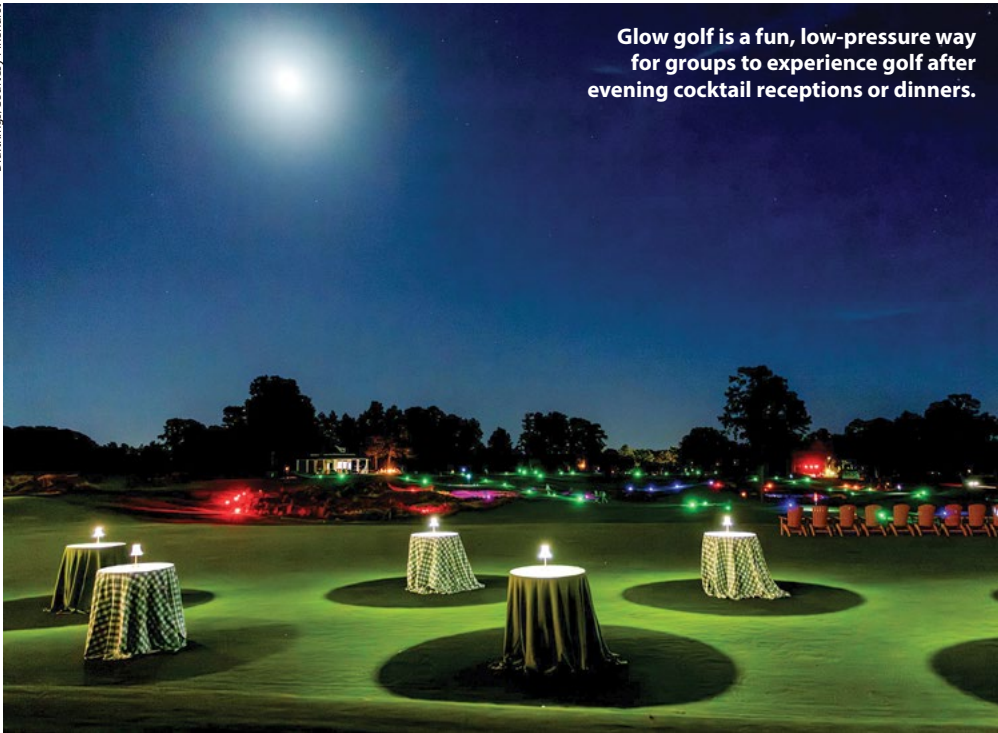
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Glow golf is a fun, low-pressure way for groups to experience golf after evening cocktail receptions or dinners.

keeping the energy high without the pressure of an 18-hole outing,” Parkinson says. “Best of all, the entire experience can be completed in approximately 90 minutes, making it an easy, memorable addition to any meeting agenda.”

Kiawah Island Golf Resort brings its own flair to fun, accessible golf competitions, offering numerous ways for groups to get creative on the greens. Many groups host a cocktail reception on the picturesque Ryder Cup Lawn, followed by a mini putting competition on the expansive practice green—fully designed and led by the resort’s golf professionals. “Even attendees who’ve only held a putter a time or two can jump in with ease, making it a lighthearted, inclusive activity,” Hunter says. “Overlooking the Atlantic and the dramatic 18th finishing hole, the setting is as memorable as the competition itself, and groups frequently bring in photographers to capture the moment against one of the resort’s most iconic backdrops.”



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Short-game socializing

Pinehurst (N.C.) makes it easy for groups of all skill levels—especially those intimidated by a traditional 18-hole round—to jump into the game through fun, low-pressure experiences. In addition to its extensive collection of courses—technically, 10.5—Pinehurst is beloved by meeting groups for its accessible offerings. According to Karen DiCarlo, vice president of sales, Pinehurst features 10 championship layouts, plus The Cradle nine-hole short course; an 11th course, also named The Cradle, is scheduled to open in 2027. The Cradle short course is a music-filled, par-3 course, located conveniently near the clubhouse. “It’s wonderful because it’s only nine holes and is not intimidating,” DiCarlo says. Groups can enjoy firepits, Adirondack chairs, and the Cradle Crossing snack bar, making it just as fun for spectators as players. For an even more relaxed option, the nearby Thistle

Dhu Putting Course can coordinate mini-golf-style contests before dinner or at sunset. “Most people have experience at mini-golf, so they’re often more comfortable joining in,” DiCarlo says.

Glow on the greens

Glow golf has quickly become one of the most buzzworthy after-hours add-ons for meeting groups, offering a fun, low-pressure way to get attendees on the green once the sun goes down. It blends socializing with friendly competition, transforming the course into an illuminated playground—and because it happens at night, planners can maximize daylight hours for meetings while still delivering a memorable, high-energy golf experience. “The balls light up, so you can actually watch them streak through the night air,” DiCarlo says. “With the greens illuminated and everything glowing, it creates this really fun, energetic atmosphere that groups absolutely love.”

At Pinehurst, planners can easily build glow golf into the evening agenda by pairing a clubhouse dinner with a fun, illuminated activity afterward. Groups can choose between Glow Cradle or glow putting. Larger groups often choose both glow options to allow everyone to play at once, DiCarlo says. “It’s an effortless way to extend the night with a memorable, light-filled experience that keeps attendees engaged long after the sessions wrap.”

Alabama’s Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail offers opportunities to mix fun, approachable golf with a little nighttime flair. At Ross Bridge in Hoover, planners can take advantage of a phenomenal putting and chipping green just outside the hotel (Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa), as well as the full practice facility, to host glow-ball night golf or putting contests. “It really takes the person who’s not a golfer and gets them out,” says Jonathan Romeo, vice president of marketing



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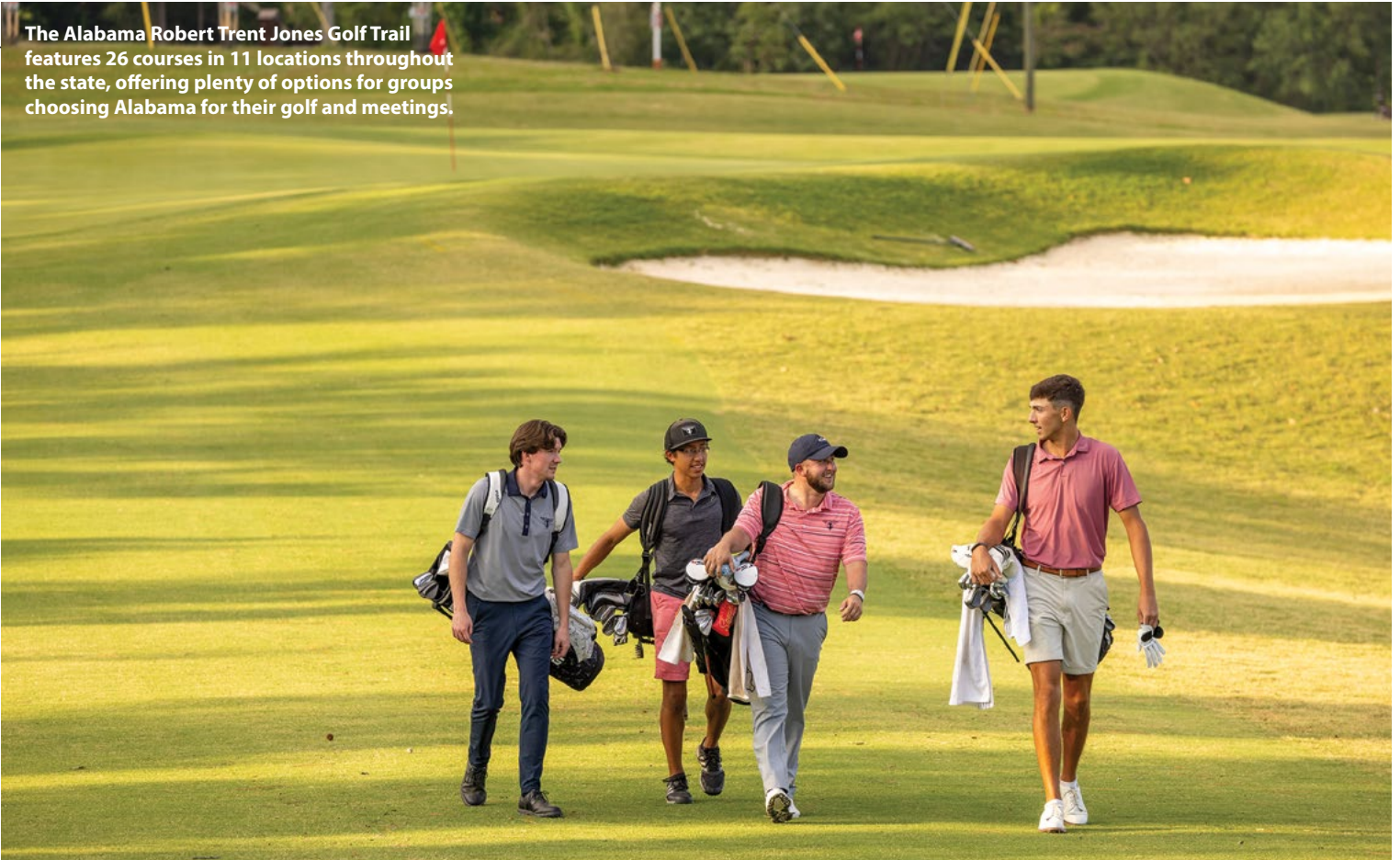
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The Alabama Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail features 26 courses in 11 locations throughout the state, offering plenty of options for groups choosing Alabama for their golf and meetings.



Courtesy Finchurst



Planners can bring a little excitement to their golf-and-meetings events by adding friendly competitions, like putting contests.

and advertising. Over at Oxmoor Valley in Birmingham, groups can enjoy night golf tournaments right on the course, playing nine holes at dusk and the final nine under the glow of neon pins, flags, and balls—a unique way to extend the day while keeping attendees engaged and having fun.

Glow golf has also become a favorite after-hours activity for corporate groups at TPC San Antonio, particularly over the last couple of years, Parkinson says. The experience starts with a nine-hole glow putting course on the Canyons putting green, enhanced with lights and music. Groups can also take on the Glow Tower Challenge, hitting wedges toward 12-foot strobing towers that react with sound and light when struck. With satellite bars or simple food and beverage activations nearby, the setup creates a fun, social environment that is approachable for everyone—like mini-golf on a grand, glowing scale. “Positioned directly next to the Riverbend Pavilion event lawn, the putting green becomes a seamless extension of the evening’s festivities, letting attendees mix, mingle, and play well into the night,” Parkinson says.

Tee off creatively

At Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort in Miramar Beach, Fla., groups have creative freedom of the resort's four distinct golf courses, allowing them to turn traditional rounds into memorable, engaging experiences tailored to their group's interests and goals. "We've seen groups incorporate fundraising with vendors set up at every hole, or at the beginning and end, allowing them to showcase what's most important in their messaging," says Linda Dragt, executive director of sales.

Beyond traditional play, options abound—from scramble formats pairing experienced golfers with non-golfers to interactive challenges like putt-putt, pitch, or themed "designer holes" created specifically for the group. Planners can also incorporate contests, like longest putt, trick-shot challenges into buckets, or cocktail-and-chipping evenings to engage all participants. Some groups design scavenger hunts throughout the course or even Bingo-style games, where each hole corresponds to a number, while others decorate their golf carts before heading out to play.

The Dunes Putting Course at Sandestin, which features 18 holes right on the beach, allows exclusive group rentals and has a dedicated staff to manage contests, serve barbecue lunches and snacks, and create branded activations. Other fun options include costume-themed play, blindfolded putts, one-handed swings, and spinning three times before hitting. "Sometimes, just riding in the golf cart becomes a highlight, proving that at Sandestin, the greens are as flexible and imaginative as planners want them to be," Dragt adds.

Golf, reimagined

Golf can go far beyond the greens. At Sandestin, it can be incorporated into wellness, dining, networking, and creative teambuilding; some groups plan morning yoga on the fairway, so attendees can enjoy the course even if they're not playing, Dragt says. Some planners have arranged cooking demonstrations and golf trivia stations on the course. Groups can also create a "19th hole" on the course, in a banquet space, or on the beach, providing networking opportunities and a branded finish to the day. "One group staged their 19th hole at Hotel Effie's ARA rooftop bar, offering 360-degree views of the golf courses, bay, beach, and resort, complete with cocktails and socializing under the stars," Dragt says.

Confidence on the course

If planners worry their attendees may not feel confident or experienced enough with golf, starting the program with a skills clinic is an easy way to make everyone feel more comfortable. Any of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail facilities can accommodate a group clinic, Romeo says, and PGA professionals are available at every property to work with players of all levels. A group can request a women-only clinic, he adds. "It can sometimes be a little intimidating when you have both genders in a clinic, so a women-only clinic is a little less intimidating for some."

TPC San Antonio offers the same approachable structure, with multiple PGA professionals on site who can host clinics for up to 200 participants. The format typically includes three rotating stations—full swing, chipping and pitching, and putting—allowing attendees to explore every facet of the game at their own pace. "Attendees rotate

through every 30 to 40 minutes; that way, everyone gets to touch and feel each facet of the game," Parkinson says. "Some get really into it, even getting instructional tips from professionals, while others are just out there to have a club in their hands and experience something new and network with their colleagues."

Off-course adventures

Planners can incorporate golf-themed fun and networking in other memorable—and weatherproof—ways. The new Tree House activity center at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, scheduled to open by spring, will feature two golf simulators, eight bowling lanes, an arcade, and a pub—all encompassed under one roof. According to Mary Reiger, director of sales, it is an ideal option for group buyouts and fostering off-course camaraderie.

At Pinehurst, planners can add a round of heritage by hosting receptions or programs inside the newly returned World Golf Hall of Fame, which features items from iconic professionals, such as the lockers of Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus, along with rotating exhibits. "It's a great facility for [planners] wanting to incorporate more history into their program in a relaxed atmosphere, perhaps for a reception, or dinner," DiCarlo explains. "It's a unique space that groups—especially those with a golf background—love to visit. We can even arrange for someone from Pinehurst to speak to the group. After all, it's the tradition and history of Pinehurst that compels people to come here. Pinehurst is truly a bucket-list destination for golfers; guests who have the opportunity to learn about our history as part of their meeting are in for a special experience." 🏌️



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Building for the Future

Convention center development focuses on creating an experience inside and outside of the meeting facilities

By Matt Swenson

In 2022, when the City of Fort Worth, Texas, announced the architectural and design firms selected to lead the expansion project of its convention center, it wasn't long before other cities in the Lone Star State followed suit with their own convention center improvements. Now, its neighbors to the east and south are experiencing their own transformative era for Texas meetings and events. Once completed, the new, newly renovated, and newly expanded convention centers will mirror national trends in attendee and planner preferences, and are likely to impact meetings—and future meeting facilities—across the South.

While they say everything is bigger in Texas, size is not necessarily the driving factor in the

reimagining of Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, and Austin Convention Center in the state capital. By essentially starting over with their largest event facilities, these tier-one destinations are constructing an environment uniquely tailored to the needs of today's meeting planners—delivering more flexibility, personalization, and utilitarianism.

Not an inch of space will go to waste inside or outside Texas' premier convention centers. While attendees will spend plenty of time within the behemoth buildings, the convention experience extends far beyond the convention center walls. This trend is evident not only in Texas but also all throughout the South.

Close encounters

In most major metropolitan regions, the convention center increasingly serves as a hub for restaurant and retail development, putting attendees within walking distance of multiple hotels, dining options, local shops, and area attractions. The proximity to everything dramatically cuts transportation costs, facilitates group outings, and enhances attendees' overall event experience. This includes ensuring bathrooms, hallways, entrances, and other touchpoints accommodate attendees with mobility and other sensory challenges.

“Event planners today are focused on creating environments that foster connection, comfort, and inclusivity,” says Kim Allison,

vice president of convention sales for Atlanta’s Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC).

An Atlanta landmark in its own right, GWCC is steps from Mercedes-Benz Stadium and State Farm Arena professional sports venues, which also host concerts and other special events. Recent improvements at GWCC include the addition of a walkable path connecting outdoor spaces with the new Signia by Hilton Atlanta hotel.

According to Allison, GWCC is seeing strong demand for dedicated networking and gathering areas—spaces like lounge pods and “couches and conversations” zones, which encourage meaningful interaction. “There’s growing emphasis on variety and convenience—from expanded food and beverage options to easy navigation through clear signage and efficient vertical movement,” she says.

Likewise, upgrades to New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center have dramatically improved the surrounding area. A former boulevard was converted in 2020 into a 7.5-acre pedestrian park, which serves as a gathering area and a transportation hub, according to Elaine Williams, chief commercial officer for the convention center.

Keeping up

Complete teardowns are not an option, or necessary, in Atlanta and New Orleans. Yet officials in both destinations feel the pressure from renovations and rebuilding elsewhere.

“It’s not easy when you’re competing with the shiny new penny,” Williams says.

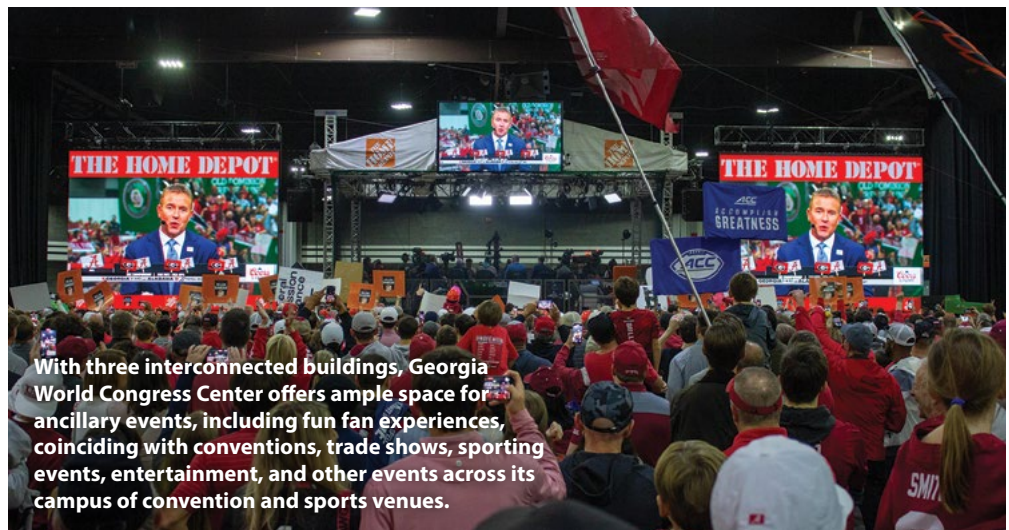
New convention centers are attractive options for meeting planners. Since completing renovations in 2018, Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville has hosted several large industry events, including MPI’s World Education Congress in 2024. The facility is one of a handful of convention centers in the country equipped to comfortably host groups of more than 10,000 attendees.

In Fort Lauderdale, Fla., the \$1.2 billion Broward County Convention Center expansion project celebrated the grand opening of the 29-story, 801-room Omni Fort Lauderdale in December 2025, which serves as the convention center’s headquarters hotel. In October 2025, the convention center debuted its new east wing, adding more meeting space and an exhibit hall; the convention campus also includes a six-acre outdoor plaza with



Attendees at Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta can enjoy easy access to outdoor spaces via a walkable path connecting to the new Signia by Hilton Atlanta hotel.

Photos courtesy GWCCA



With three interconnected buildings, Georgia World Congress Center offers ample space for ancillary events, including fun fan experiences, coinciding with conventions, trade shows, sporting events, entertainment, and other events across its campus of convention and sports venues.

restaurants and features landscaping to create a park-like atmosphere.

“The expansion of Broward County Convention Center, along with the opening of the adjacent Omni Fort Lauderdale, marks a new era for meetings in Greater Fort Lauderdale,” says Stacy Ritter, president and CEO of Visit Lauderdale. “With unbeatable access to the airport, cruise port, downtown, and beaches, we’re delivering exceptional value for planners looking to create seamless, high-impact events with waterfront views.”

Common goals

Costly convention center renovations are a necessity for staying competitive, according to officials. “Investing in convention center upgrades is ultimately an investment in the city itself,” Allison says. “We must continually invest not only in the building

but also in the people who bring it to life—recruiting, developing, and retaining talented staff who ensure every event runs seamlessly. These costs translate directly into positive impressions, repeat business, and a stronger reputation for the city as a premier destination for meetings and events.”

Rather than continuing to fight an uphill battle, Austin took the extraordinary step of demolishing its convention center, leaving the capital city without its top meetings facility until the new center opens before festival season in 2029. Until then, associations and other large-scale events must make use of meeting space in the city’s array of hotels, or relocate to other destinations.

Steve Genovesi, executive vice president of Visit Austin, says the CVB had to turn away nearly 50% of business inquiries due to the size constraints of the former convention

Courtesy City of Fort Worth



Fort Worth Convention Center in Texas completed Phase 1 of its expansion project in December 2025.

CONVENTION CENTER DEVELOPMENTS

Major convention center projects in the works or recently completed include:

- **Broward County Convention Center:** Added an east wing and an exhibit hall in October 2025 and an adjacent Omni headquarters hotel in December 2025.
- **Fort Worth Convention Center:** Completed Phase 1 in December 2025, which included new F&B facilities, demolition of the annex, the addition of a lightbox atrium southeast entrance and terrace, additional loading docks, and realignment of Commerce Street to make way for a future convention hotel.
- **Austin Convention Center:** Demolition occurred in April 2025; it will reopen in 2028.
- **Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Dallas:** Work is ongoing while the facility remains open in a limited capacity. Large events are relocating to other destinations until 2029.
- **George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston:** Adding a south building (opening 2028), with plans to renovate the existing facility at a later date.
- **Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla.:** Groundbreaking in December 2025 for the facility's Grand Concourse Expansion; the \$560 million project will enhance the North-South Building with new meeting space, a grand ballroom, improved connectivity between concourses, and will add 44,000 square feet of meeting space and a 100,000-square-foot ballroom. Construction is expected to be completed in 2029.

center. The new convention center will significantly increase its rentable space to 620,000 square feet.

“Austin’s initiative is unique in that the new convention center is designed to be a larger, more efficient facility on the same size footprint as the original facility, transforming the surrounding Palm District into a community-centric destination,” Genovesi says. “We are positioning Austin to compete for the next tier of convention business and attract events that previously couldn’t consider our city due to the convention center’s space limitations.”

The Savannah Convention Center (SCC) in coastal Georgia recently completed a major expansion, doubling in size to more than 630,000 square feet. “The Savannah Convention Center expansion strengthens our ability to attract national associations, major trade shows, and citywide conventions that drive hotel stays, restaurant business, and retail activity throughout the region,” says Freida Brady, vice president of sales and marketing for SCC. “These events sustain and grow the roughly 28,000 hospitality-related jobs in the Savannah area. Every event we host fuels a network of economic activity that

extends well beyond our walls, benefiting the entire community.”

In Dallas, the expansion of Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center will improve not only the attendee experience but also the local community, through additional development, according to Craig Davis, president and CEO of Visit Dallas. “We’ll finally reconnect downtown with the other part of Dallas, which will unlock the opportunity to bring a lot more development into that area, which we desperately need,” he says.

Maintaining sustainability

The same principles driving investments in creating convention campuses—including sustainability, connectivity, and eco-centric spaces—are spurring improvements within convention centers.

In New Orleans, new upgrades like LED lighting, water-bottle refill stations, and repurposed phone-bank charging lounges themed after New Orleans neighborhoods helped Ernest N. Morial Convention Center earn LEED Gold certification in 2022 and again in 2025, according to Williams. “It’s protecting our future,” she says. Additional interior renovations included new carpet, modernized walls, updated lighting, and replacing incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient LED bulbs.

Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C., was awarded LEED Platinum certification in 2024. Eco-friendly initiatives included upgrading lighting, heating, and cooling systems, which resulted in reducing energy use by 25,306,767 kBtu—equivalent to removing approximately 440 cars from the road for a year—and integrating new water efficiencies throughout the facility, which reduced water consumption by 3,790,000 gallons—enough to fill approximately six Olympic-size swimming pools.

According to Genovesi, the new Austin Convention Center is designed with the goal of becoming the world’s first zero-carbon-certified convention center. According to Visit Austin’s website, details include a solar-ready roof design, advanced building systems, and high-performance materials designed to cut emissions and operating costs. The facility will run on 100% renewable energy with a vision to achieve ILFI Zero Carbon certification and align with the Austin Climate Equity Plan.



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Courtesy Louisville Tourism/GoToLouisville.com



After completing a \$207 million renovation and expansion project, Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville can host events with more than 10,000 attendees.

Taste of the city

Convention centers are also emphasizing improvements in food and beverage offerings.

Savannah Convention Center uses fresh, seasonal ingredients in creating health-conscious menus, which further adds to the destination’s foodie reputation, according to Brady.

New Orleans is also known for its cuisine. Sodexo LIVE!, the onsite caterer at Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, makes local favorites like po’boys, black-eyed pea chili, and beignets a priority.

According to Allison, alcohol consumption is declining, especially among younger attendees, and functional, unique nonalcoholic offerings are gaining popularity. “Overall, the focus has moved toward creating memorable, guest-centric dining experiences that reflect modern preferences and values,” she says.

Venues like GWCC have the versatility to reimagine existing spaces into the meeting’s

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desired atmosphere. For a recent trade show, the built-in registration hall at GWCC was converted into a centrally located beer garden for a fun happy hour, Allison says. Also at GWCC, a concessions area outside an exhibit hall was transformed into an Apple-inspired Genius Bar for a tech-based association's product demos.

Creative outlets

Few elements of meetings showcase an organization's innovative side like audiovisual. Multi-sensory tools, including display walls, digital signage, and presentation stages with large video screens, are designed to create immersive experiences, ease traffic flow, and highlight branding.

Such signature audiovisual pieces are no longer nice-to-haves but expected, from planners trying to accomplish their organizations' goals and from attendees aiming to make the most of their conference experience.

AUSTIN'S WORKAROUNDS

Without its convention center, the Austin Tourism Public Improvement District (TPID) will do the heavy lifting to attract businesses and associations, according to Visit Austin's website. The Austin TPID is a 10-year service plan, beginning in 2025 and running through 2035, designed to provide supplemental funding for tourism sales and marketing with the aim of increasing hotel activity and supporting the Austin tourism ecosystem during and after the closure and redevelopment of the Austin Convention Center. Incentive plans are in place for planners when hosting events in Austin's hotels.

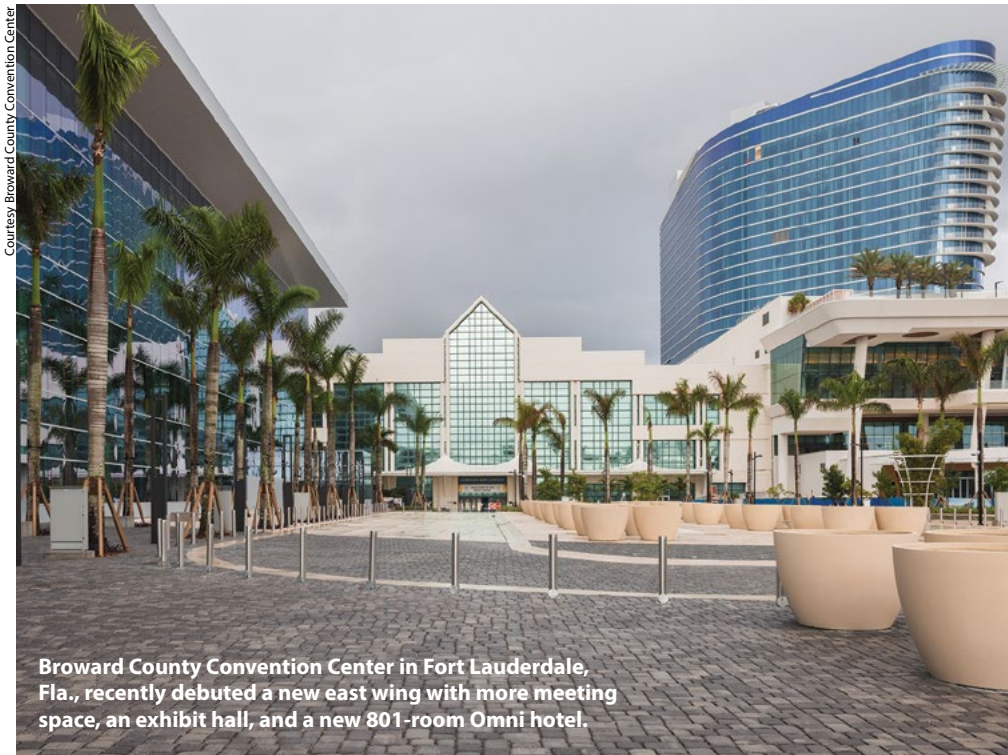
Visit Austin's website includes many properties to consider for meetings, from

budget-friendly options to boutique properties to upscale hotels, including: J.W. Marriott Austin, with 1,012 guest rooms and more than 120,000 square feet of flexible meeting space; Four Seasons Hotel Austin, with 286 rooms and 23,724 square feet of event space; and The AT&T Hotel and Conference Center, with 297 guest rooms and 85,000 square feet of meeting space. In addition, Austin's Red River Collection offers three options: Fairmont Austin, with 1,048 guest rooms and more than 140,000 square feet of event space; Hilton Austin, with 801 guest rooms and more than 95,000 square feet of event space; and Hotel Van Zandt, with 397 guest rooms and more than 13,000 square feet of event space.



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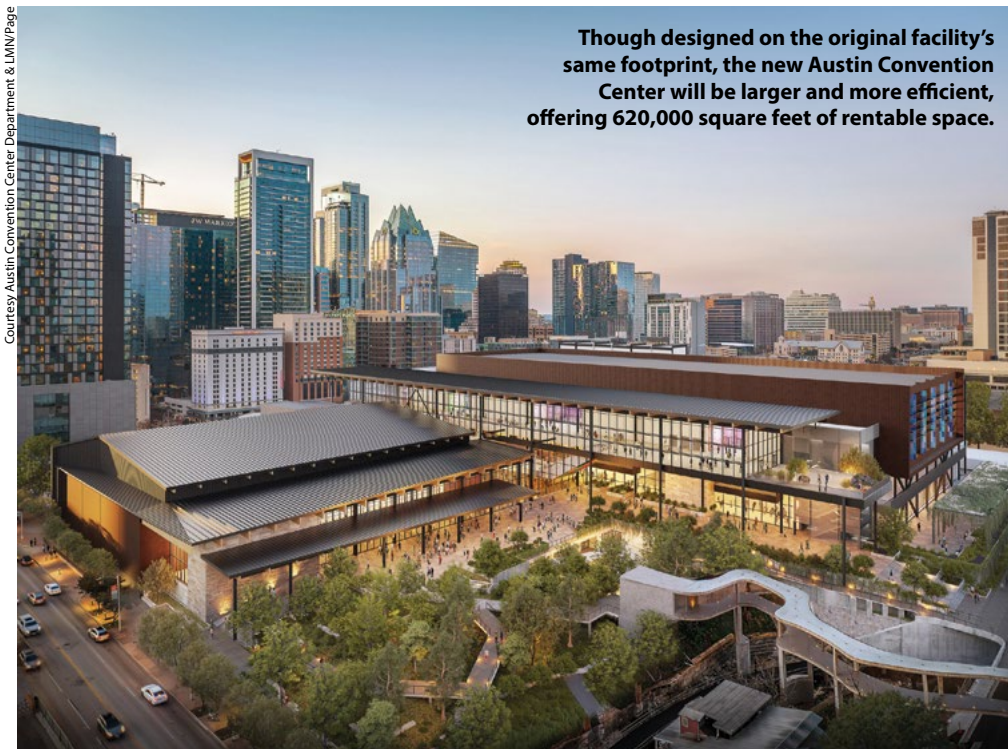
Courtesy Broward County Convention Center

Broward County Convention Center in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., recently debuted a new east wing with more meeting space, an exhibit hall, and a new 801-room Omni hotel.

with their own audiovisual partners to reduce costs. However, not all meeting venues allow outside vendors.

For those meetings investing heavily in audiovisual production, the results are obvious. “Now we’re seeing people take their sessions that would normally be in meeting rooms and having those sessions on the show floor,” Williams says. As Williams recalls, the American Heart Association’s fall 2025 trade show in New Orleans involved installing interactive venues on the trade-show floor and breakout session spaces. Advanced production elements included noise control, wireless audio, and attendee headsets, which helped prevent disruptions to concurrent aspects of the meeting.

According to Allison, smart organizations are ensuring functionality with striking visuals. “Larger groups have leveraged branding and wayfinding, integrating their logos or themed graphics throughout the GWCC venue,” she says.



Courtesy Austin Convention Center Department & LMNP/Page

Though designed on the original facility’s same footprint, the new Austin Convention Center will be larger and more efficient, offering 620,000 square feet of rentable space.

No standing still

One thing is clear from the boom in convention center development: Destinations won’t and can’t stand by and watch competing cities attract new business.

Not long after Fort Worth began its project, Dallas and Austin launched their own developments. Not to be outdone, Houston took advantage of a change in Texas legislature, which allows local communities to receive incremental hotel occupancy tax revenue within an area around their respective convention center—revenue that otherwise would have gone to the State. Previously, the law only applied to Fort Worth and Dallas.

Houston’s new George R. Brown Convention Center will have a state-of-the-art ballroom (the largest in Texas), more flexible meeting spaces, and an indoor-outdoor flex hall opening onto an event plaza, according to Michael Heckman, president and CEO of the Houston First Corp. The work, scheduled for completion in 2028, is being done in phases to ensure the center remains operational. Likewise, the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas remains open and will serve as the media center for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Heckman says it’s essential to maintain momentum, even if upgrades are necessary. “If you’re not moving forward, you’re losing ground,” he says. 🌱

Audiovisual is arguably the highest line item in a planner’s budget. Among the biggest sticking points between planners and venues is whether Wi-Fi is part of the baseline convention package or carries an additional charge to cover the extra bandwidth required for attendees’ many devices. Industry insiders have noticed the shift. “Wi-Fi is evolving from

an add-on to a standard service expectation,” Brady says.

At Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, Williams says the team works diligently to help alleviate audiovisual costs. The convention center’s in-house audiovisual production team gives planners flexibility: full-service production or hybrid support in coordination

From state-of-the-art convention centers, beachfront resorts, and mountain retreats to boutique experiences, Maryland offers planners an unmistakable blend of historic charm and modern amenities. Accessibility is another factor. Maryland is easily accessible by three major international airports, six major interstate highways, and Amtrak. Also, this year, as America celebrates its 250th birthday, planners hosting events in *The Star-Spangled Banner* state will have a chance to enhance attendee experiences with unique cultural and historical programming.

EVENT PLANNERS' GUIDE TO

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Maryland

BY NICOLE DUFOUR

Considered Prince George's crown jewel, National Harbor offers 3,500 guest rooms, more than one million square feet of meeting space, and family-friendly attractions and entertainment.



Paul Nelson/Courtesy National Harbor

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“The Mountain Side of Maryland,” Allegany County offers groups stunning scenery, historic landmarks, and diverse amenities, easily accessible via Interstate 68. Key venues include Rocky Gap Casino Resort & Golf in Flintstone, 10 minutes from the county seat, Cumberland. The resort features a 5,000-square-foot event center accommodating up to 400 people, multiple dining options, a Jack Nicklaus golf course, and other amenities. In Frostburg, Lane University Center at Frostburg State University seats 700 theater style. Ramada by Wyndham Cumberland Downtown offers 4,100 square feet of space and can host a capacity of 400 for conferences and 350 for banquets. For smaller events, Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites

Cumberland and Comfort Inn & Suites LaVale – Cumberland both have space. The Wills Hotel, a new 20-room boutique property in downtown Cumberland, features an all-purpose space for small corporate meetings and private events. The hotel’s restaurant, 1867: A Modern Chophouse, features a chef-driven menu of Modern American cuisine.

Other options include the Allegany Museum in Cumberland (capacity of 400 people), the historic Hotel Gunter in Frostburg, (capacity of 312) and Cumberland’s 1812 Brewery (capacity of 150 people for receptions).

Annapolis & Anne Arundel County

VisitAnnapolis.org; @VisitAnnapolis

“One thing that sets Annapolis and Anne Arundel County apart from other places is

our ability to pair business with leisure,” says Rasheeda Martin, senior director of external relations for Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County. “Planners love how groups can walk from a conference to a crab feast, or take a sailing excursion, or stroll through centuries-old streets. We also make it easy to plan, promote, and elevate events of all sizes.”

In Annapolis’ Arts District, the 217-room Graduate by Hilton Annapolis features more than 21,000 square feet of event space across 16 meeting rooms. The hotel’s largest venue, a ballroom, can accommodate 450 people theater style. The 225-room Westin Annapolis has 15,418 square feet of event space and accommodates up to 760 people theater style. The 150-room Annapolis Waterfront Hotel, Autograph Collection has 13,378 square feet of event space with a capacity of 450 in its largest

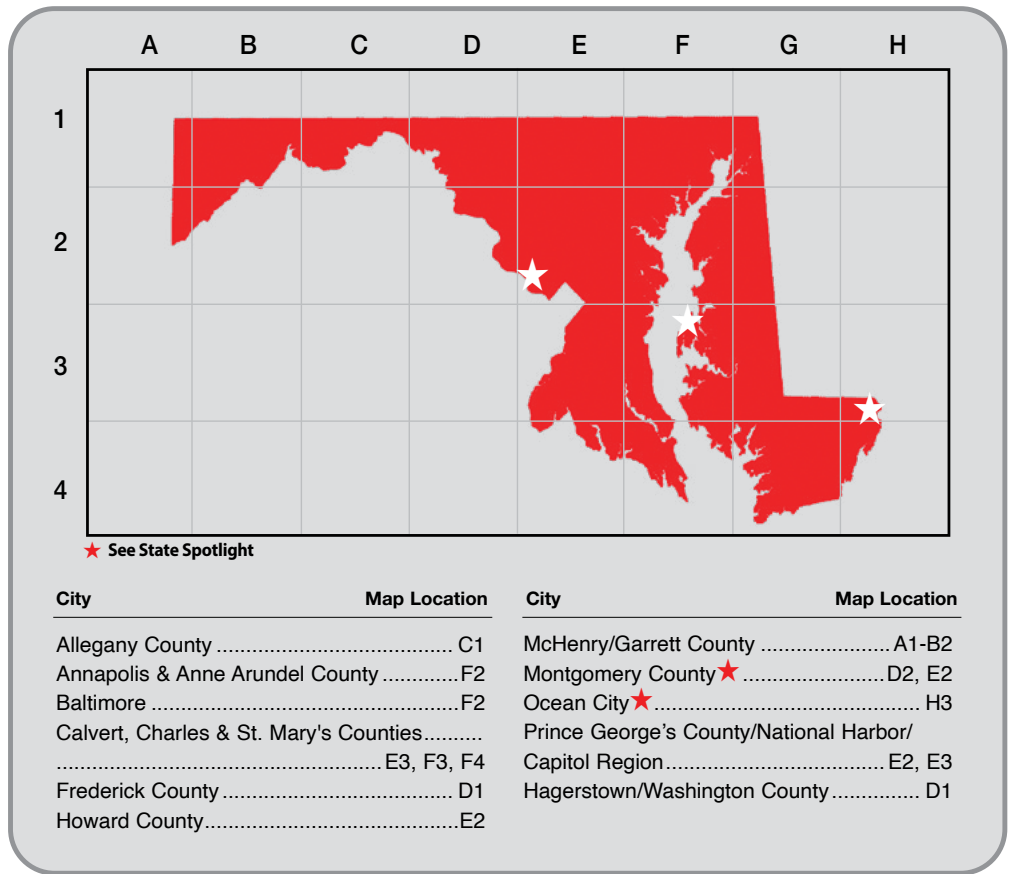
space, and Doubletree by Hilton Annapolis has 219 rooms and more than 12,000 square feet of event space. Historic Inns of Annapolis offers a combined 124 guest rooms and more than 10,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor event space across three properties in the historic downtown; the hotel group’s largest space can accommodate up to 400 people.

Ten minutes from Baltimore Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport (BWI), the Maritime Conference Center has 232 guest rooms, a 350-seat auditorium, outdoor event space, and dining options, and offers complimentary airport shuttle. The 315-room BWI Airport Marriott has space to host events of up to 1,500, and the 310-room Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland in Hanover accommodates up to 900 people in its largest space.

Event space is also available at the recently renovated Hilton Baltimore BWI Airport Hotel (16,347 square feet); the 225-room Westin Baltimore Washington – BWI (13,226 square feet); and Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Baltimore – BWI Airport (9,912 square feet). The 150-room Hotel at Arundel Preserve can seat up to 600 people banquet style and 540 theater style in its largest space.

In spring of 2025, Annapolis welcomed the new 86 State Circle Luxury Boutique Hotel. Last year, part of the former Sleep Inn Suites property near BWI Airport was rebranded and opened as a 76-room Holiday Inn Express Baltimore BWI Airport NE. Earlier this year, the remaining portion of the property reopened as a new 54-room Candlewood Suites Baltimore BWI Airport NE. In 2025, Baywood Hotels bought an Extended Stay America and converted it into the 97-room TownePlace Suites Annapolis. Baywood also purchased the 131-room Residence Inn Arundel Mills, which has meeting space for up to 80 people. The hotel is currently undergoing a total renovation, scheduled for completion in April.

Anne Arundel County is also making strategic infrastructure investments, including improvements to major roadways near Baltimore Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport and Arundel Mills. A new 24/7 Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County BWI Information Center is scheduled to open this year near the airport’s baggage claim area. In Annapolis, Martin says the revitalization of City Dock will also include a new visitors center and will offer a “more welcoming, resilient waterfront experience.”



Baltimore

Baltimore.org; @VisitBmore

Baltimore offers event planners a mix of conventional spaces, stunning historic venues, and a vibrant, accessible downtown. Baltimore Convention Center (BCC) boasts 300,000 square feet of contiguous expo space and 50 meeting rooms; its largest space can accommodate up to 1,600 people, and a separate 36,672-square-foot ballroom can be configured into four spaces.

Baltimore has 8,000 downtown hotel rooms, 2,300 of which are within one block of the convention center. Directly connected to the convention center, Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor offers 757 guest rooms and can accommodate more than 3,000 people theater style in its largest space. The 754-room Baltimore Marriott Waterfront has 50,527 square feet of event space, with a capacity of 2,800 for receptions. The 488-room Hyatt Regency Baltimore Inner Harbor features more than 35,000 square feet of event space across 22 areas; its largest space can accommodate up to 1,800 people.

The B&O Railroad Museum includes a stunning 53,000-square-foot roundhouse with a capacity of 2,800 guests for receptions and a

15,000-square-foot covered outdoor pavilion with a capacity of 6,000 guests. Indoor and outdoor private event space is also available at Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture. The Alonso G. Decker Gallery at the Baltimore Museum of Industry can accommodate up to 300 seated guests or 500 for a cocktail receptions.

Developments underway in Baltimore include the \$450 million renovation of M&T Bank Stadium, featuring new VIP clubs and hospitality spaces, private lounges, and enhanced F&B experiences. The iconic Pimlico Racecourse is undergoing a \$400 million transformation from a seasonal to a year-round destination. Scheduled for completion in 2027, the project includes a new state-of-the-art clubhouse and multi-use event space. Oriole Park at Camden Yards, home of Major League Baseball’s Baltimore Orioles, is also being renovated this year; the project will add new premium clubs and upgrade facility technology.

Construction will begin soon for Inner Harbor’s new Harborplace waterfront mixed-use development. An easy walk from the convention center, the area is already abuzz

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with activity as a temporary home to several small food vendors and pop-up businesses, including Crust by Mack—known for its Maryland Crab Pie—and Made in Baltimore, which sells locally made, handcrafted goods.

“Baltimore has been a catalyst for American innovation—home to groundbreaking industries, defining moments in our democracy, and generations of people whose contributions helped build the country we know today,” says Kireem Swinton, interim president and CEO of Visit Baltimore. “As our nation gears up to celebrate its 250th birthday, visitors can explore various attractions and museums to learn about how Baltimore shaped American history.”

Key attractions during the celebrations will include Fort McHenry, whose successful defense during the Battle of Baltimore event inspired Francis Scott Key to write *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Visitors can explore the fort, see exhibits, and attend daily ranger programs.

Calvert, Charles & St. Mary’s Counties

CalvertCountyMD.gov; @CalvertCounty
ExploreCharlesCounty.com;
@ExploreCharlesCounty
VisitStMarysMD; @VisitStMarysMD

Calvert County offers charming rural destinations only an hour’s drive from Baltimore and Washington, D.C. “We are located on a peninsula between the Patuxent River and Chesapeake Bay, so planners have their choice of venues in pastoral or waterfront settings,” says Hilary Dailey, Calvert County tourism program specialist.

Rod N’ Reel Resort in Chesapeake Beach recently completed renovations and additions, creating new banquet space for up to 500 people. It also offers several dining options, a marina, and other amenities. The 113-room Solomons Inn Resort and Marina Hotel features more than 20,000 square feet of function space; its largest space can accommodate up to 450 people for banquets and up to 600 theater

style. The resort offers easy access to historic downtown Solomons, which has several locally owned restaurants, pubs, and shops.

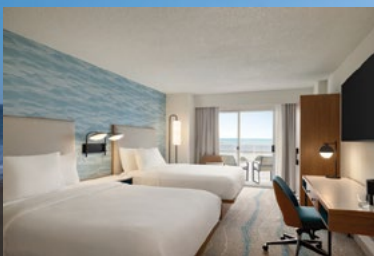
Other options include the 100-room Hilton Garden Inn Solomons, which has 3,352 square feet of event space with a capacity of 200 people for receptions, and the 87-room SpringHill Suites Prince Frederick, with 2,000 square feet of event space.

Unique venues include Anmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center, a 30-acre attraction with sculptures, native gardens, and an arts building; its largest space can accommodate up to 500 people for receptions. The Barn at Parkers Creek in Port Republic offers indoor and outdoor space for up to 80 people, and the Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons has indoor and outdoor venue options. In Prince Frederick, Running Hare Vineyard Tuscan Villa features flexible indoor and outdoor spaces amid picturesque vineyards. Guests also can enjoy premium wine tastings, catering options, and customizable arrangements. Overlooking the Patuxent River,

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the Pier Restaurant and River Bar in Solomons offers an extensive menu of fresh local seafood and banquet space for private events.

Historic St. Mary's City in St. Mary's County is an outdoor museum and archeological park on the site of Maryland's first European settlement, established in 1634. In addition to group tours, the attraction features indoor and outdoor event spaces, with a capacity of 200 people in its largest space.

For more history, groups can visit Historic Sotterley, a 300-year-old National Historic Landmark and a UNESCO "Site of Memory for the Routes of Enslaved Peoples." The attraction features exhibits detailing life on a 17th-century Tidewater tobacco plantation. In Charles County, adventurers can kayak through maritime history at Mollows Bay's Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary, featuring Civil War shipwrecks and 12,000-year-old artifacts. Charles County also has important landmarks associated with the Underground Railroad and African American History.

Frederick County

VisitFrederick.org; @VisitFrederickMD

Home to the famous U.S. presidential retreat, Camp David, Frederick County is less than an hour's drive from Baltimore Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport and Dulles International Airport (IAD).

"Besides our outstanding venues and guest accommodations, we offer groups many other bonuses: a thriving historic downtown, a vibrant culinary scene, and countless recreational activities," says Becky Bickerton, assistant director of Visit Frederick. "We also have more wineries, breweries, and distilleries than any other destination in the state."

Gardiner Hall at the Delaplaine Arts Center in downtown Frederick can accommodate up to 150 guests indoors; an adjacent outdoor deck can host up to 70 people. The Art Deco 1926 Weinberg Center for the Arts includes an auditorium seating up to 1,183 people. Union Mills Public House offers 3,200 square feet of event space and onsite catering for up to 200 guests. The

Claggett Center, a conference and retreat venue in Adamstown, can host up to 270 people in its largest space. The venue also offers 60 hotel-style guest rooms, a dormitory, and several cottages with overnight accommodations.

The 167-room Hampton Inn Frederick, located off Interstate 270, can accommodate up to 248 people for banquets in its largest space. The Hilton Garden Inn Frederick offers 143 guest rooms and function space for up to 180 people, seated theater style. The 65-room Visitation Hotel Frederick, A Tribute Portfolio Hotel features 12 elegant event spaces, ranging from intimate dining rooms to a 2,714-square-foot ballroom seating up to 280 people theater style. The hotel's Wye Oak Tavern is led by *Top Chef* contestant Bryan Voltaggio and offers a chef-driven, locally sourced menu featuring fresh seafood and local game. For other flavorful options in Frederick, McClintock's Back Bar, a full-service cocktail bar, is part of the award-winning McClintock Distillery.

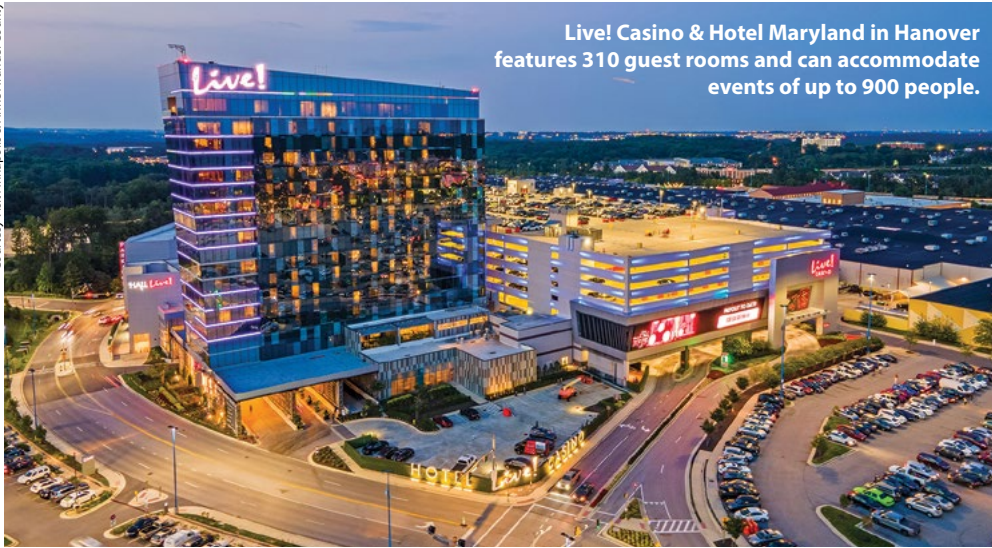


Meetings in Montgomery County, Maryland feel easy, welcoming, and connected. Collaboration is part of the culture here, with experiences that extend beyond the meeting room. From farm breweries and wineries, museums, international dining, and walkable town centers, Maryland's Cultural Capital makes meetings memorable - just minutes from Washington, DC.

VisitMontgomery.com/meet



Courtesy Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County



Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland in Hanover features 310 guest rooms and can accommodate events of up to 900 people.

Courtesy Calvert County Government



Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons includes indoor and outdoor venue options along with group tours of the museum and Drum Point Lighthouse.

drive from Baltimore Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport. For events, Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City features more than 40,000 square feet of event space, with a capacity of 800 people. Resort amenities include two 18-hole golf courses, a spa, and several onsite dining options. The LEED Silver-certified Hotel at Arundel Preserve has 13 event spaces, including a grand ballroom with a capacity of 600 banquet style and 540 theater style. Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center in Marriottsville offers overnight accommodations for 70 people, event space to host up to 150 people theater style, and onsite dining.

In Columbia, the 212-room Merriweather Lakehouse, Autograph Collection features more than 20,000 square feet of event space across 10 meeting rooms and 14 breakout rooms. The hotel's largest space can accommodate 400 for receptions. DoubleTree by Hilton Columbia boasts 152 guest rooms and more than 11,000 square feet of event space with a capacity of 300 people. The 175-room Holiday Inn Columbia East-Jessup, an IHG Hotel has multiple event spaces; its largest space can accommodate up to 275 guests.

For teambuilding, Terrapin Adventures offers high-ropes courses, ziplines, and giant swings. Columbia's Merriweather District, home to the world-famous Merriweather Post Pavilion, offers a wide range of shopping, dining, and nightlife options. Howard County also has more than 30,000 acres of parkland and more than 100 miles of trails in local state parks, including Patapsco Valley State Park.

Montgomery County

VisitMontgomery.com; @VisitMoCo

"Planners love Montgomery County's energy, proximity to Washington, D.C., and diversity," says Kelly Groff, CDME, president and CEO of Visit Montgomery. According to Groff, Germantown, Rockville, and Gaithersburg are some of the most diverse areas in the county. "We also offer a wealth of resources and venues to make successful events."

The 455-room Bethesda North Marriott Hotel & Conference Center boasts 61,923 square feet of event space across 26 meeting rooms and 15 breakout spaces; its largest space can accommodate up to 2,500 guests reception or theater style. Marriott Bethesda Downtown at Marriott HQ has six event rooms and five breakout rooms; its largest space has a capacity of 200 people.

McHenry/Garrett County

VisitDeepCreek.com;

@DeepCreekGarrettGroups

Home to Deep Creek Lake—Maryland's largest freshwater lake—Garrett County offers planners a blend of natural beauty, modern amenities, and year-round accessibility. "Planners appreciate the variety of venues, from state-of-the-art facilities and lakeside lodges to spacious resorts and unique cultural spaces—all surrounded by stunning scenery," says Holly Lane, project and groups manager for Garrett County Chamber of Commerce.

Garrett College Performing Arts Center in McHenry features a 382-seat theater and a 2,000-square-foot multipurpose, subdividable conference center. The year-round 169-room Wisp Resort boasts more than 30,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor event space; its largest space can accommodate up to 1,540 theater style and more than 780 for receptions. Guests of the resort can enjoy an array of group activities, including skiing and snowboarding,

whitewater rafting, canopy tours, and golfing on the 70-par golf course. Located on Deep Creek Lake, the Lodges at Sunset Village accommodates approximately 160 overnight guests and features outdoor, lakefront, and mountainside event areas for up to 500 people. The cozy bed-and-breakfast-style Lake Point Inn Hotel & Suites is an option for overflow guest accommodations. According to Lane, a new Home2 Suites by Hilton McHenry Deep Creek Lake is scheduled to open in early spring 2026.

For local flavor, Blackthorne Cellars farm winery in Oakland serves premium wines made from Maryland grapes. Blackthorne's friendly staff can also advise on tastings and food pairings. The winery also has cheese, meats, spreads, bread, and crackers available for purchase.

Howard County

VisitHowardCounty.com; @VisitHoCoMD

Howard County is anchored by its largest community, Columbia, and is a 10-minute

The 390-room Hyatt Regency Bethesda includes six event spaces; its largest space can accommodate up to 800 people. DoubleTree by Hilton Washington DC North/Gaithersburg features 298 newly renovated guest rooms and 16,356 square feet of event space; its largest space has a capacity of 600 people. Overlooking Rio Washingtonian Lake, the 284-room Gaithersburg Marriott Washingtonian Center has 9,288 square feet of event space, including a lakeside ballroom and an outdoor terrace; its largest space can accommodate up to 500 guests. The 315-room Hilton Washington DC/Rockville Hotel & Executive Meeting Center features more than 36,000 square feet of event space. It completed a multimillion-dollar renovation last fall.

Countywide hotel developments include the closure of Hotel Silver Spring and Kaylan Hospitality's acquisition of SpringHill Suites by Marriott Gaithersburg. Homewood Suites Gaithersburg Washington DC North is undergoing renovations.

For group outings, Montgomery County's "Tastemakers Trail" features more than 20 local producers of potable spirits, such as Song Dog Farm Distilling in Boyds and Fallen Oak Distilling in Olney, which offers a unique small-batch, "ground-to-glass" experience and a hidden speakeasy cocktail bar. Burnt Hill Farm in Clarksburg provides an elevated wine experience featuring tours, local wines, and cuisine (by reservation only).

Groups can also journey through history aboard the mule-drawn Charles F. Mercer paddleboat at the C&O Canal National Historical Park, which celebrates this vital waterway for Potomac River communities. Other attractions include the National Museum of Health and Medicine, featuring a display of the bullet that killed Abraham Lincoln. Notable Black history sites include the Josiah Henson Museum & Park and the Underground Railroad Experience Trail, which offers a two-mile guided hike along a portion of the perilous journey.

Ocean City

OCOcean.com; @OceanCityMaryland

Ocean City boasts 10 miles of free public beaches, a famous three-mile boardwalk, more than 10,000 hotel rooms, and a variety of convention and hotel ballrooms, waterfront decks, and unique local venues for groups of all sizes.

Roland E. Powell Convention Center features more than 75,000 square feet of contiguous exhibit space and offers multiple configurations, the largest of which can accommodate up to 4,540 for receptions and 4,078 seated theater style. The 19,000-square-foot Bayfront Ballroom can accommodate up to 2,700 attendees reception style and 1,664 theater style. The convention center also has a 1,200-seat state-of-the-art performing arts center.

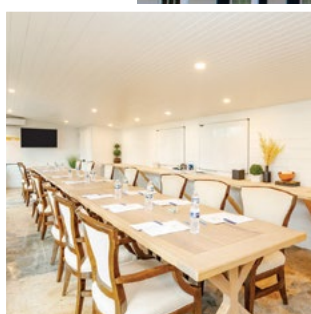
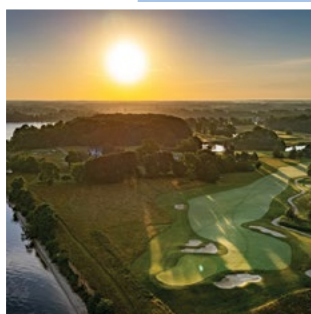
This spring, the 250-room Ashore Resort & Beach Club will unveil a complete renovation of its conference center, which has 40,000 square feet of event space across 16 venues. The 340-room Princess Royale Oceanfront

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Resort includes three meeting rooms and 30,000 square feet of event space, and the 111-room DoubleTree by Hilton Ocean City Oceanfront can accommodate up to 177 guests in its largest space. Other Ocean City options include Cambria Ocean City-Bayfront, with 1,200 square feet of event space, and the 216-room Holiday Inn Ocean City, which has event space for up to 500 people. For smaller gatherings, the 225-room Hilton Ocean City Oceanfront Suites can accommodate up to 99 people for receptions, 75 theater style, and 65 banquet style in its largest function area.

Island-themed Dead Freddie's Island Grill, a 600-seat full-service restaurant and bar, offers eight separate dining areas for large groups and private parties. Touch of Italy has a wine room for small events. Longboard Café features a menu of burgers, tacos, and salads, and can accommodate large dining groups and has space for private events.

Prince George's County/ National Harbor/ Capitol Region

ExperiencePrinceGeorges.com;

@ExperiencePGC

NationalHarbor.com;

#NationalHarbor; @NationalHarbor

Located in the heart of the D.C.-Baltimore metroplex, Prince George's County is easily accessible from three of the area's major international airports. The county also offers more than 12,000 guest rooms and more than 850,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit space.

National Harbor, the 350-acre urban resort destination on the Potomac River, is considered by many as the jewel in Prince George's "crown." According to Jamie Rice, National Harbor's director of sales and tourism, "National Harbor offers it all: approximately 3,500 guest rooms, more than one million square feet of meeting space, and family-friendly appeal for those interested in turning their stay into a vacation. We also have the most spectacular sunsets."

National Harbor's Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center features 546,889 square feet of event space across 94 event rooms and 101 breakout rooms. Its largest ballroom, at 50,000 square feet, accommodates up to 5,500 guests, while a 178,787-square-foot exhibition hall has a capacity of 10,000 people. Resort amenities include shopping, a Forbes Four-Star spa, and numerous dining options. The resort's new Whiskey Revolution: Tasting Room serves

more than 100 whiskey expressions, and new Capital Confectionery features bon bons, cakes, and gelato prepared by its own culinary staff.

The 308-room MGM National Harbor resort has 50,000 square feet of event space and a 3,000-seat theater; its largest space, the Grand Ballroom, can host a capacity of 1,800 for receptions.

AC Hotel National Harbor Washington, DC Area offers 192 guest rooms and 7,253 square feet of event space; updates to guest-room bathrooms are expected to be completed this month. Westin Washington National Harbor, which offers 195 guest rooms and 2,212 square feet of event space, is updating corridor lighting and flooring in corridors and pre-function space. The 154-room Hampton Inn & Suites National Harbor/Alexandria Area recently completed a full renovation of guest rooms, public areas, and meeting space.

Group deals in National Harbor include the complimentary "Show Your Badge" app, which offers discounts at participating businesses. National Harbor's 180-foot Capital Wheel also offers groups opportunities to customize the iconic landmark's lights with corporate colors.

In College Park, The Hotel at the University of Maryland features 43,000 square feet of event space, and the College Park Marriott & Conference Center has more than 40,000 square feet of event space with a capacity of 975 people. In Greenbelt, the 291-room Crowne Plaza College Park – Washington DC features 11,075 square feet of event space for small groups.

Hagerstown/ Washington County

VisitHagerstown.com;

@Meet & Play in Hagerstown/

Washington Co, MD

Nestled within western Maryland's Appalachian Mountains, Washington County is a 60- to 90-minute drive from three international airports in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C., area. The county's largest city is Hagerstown. "Groups love our scenic views, national parks, and rural settings; they also love the fact we are not too far from urban settings," says Tiffany Ahalt, director of sales and community engagement for Visit Hagerstown. "Groups meeting here also get a lot for their budgets, such as free planning assistance, incentives, and other perks."

The Hagerstown Aviation Museum features a beautifully restored 1943 flight-test hangar,

which is adaptable for meetings, trade shows, receptions, and other events; outdoor space also is available. Meritus Park, home of Minor League Baseball's Hagerstown Flying Boxcars, offers several indoor and outdoor event areas for private functions, including two bar/pub spaces with a capacity of 200 each, as well as a concourse area and turf ballfield available for events.

Live at Hub City Vinyl, a music venue in Hagerstown, features two performance spaces. The largest can accommodate up to 640 people (standing), while the second space holds up to 240 people (standing) and 180 for theater-style seating. The Washington County Agricultural Education Center, south of Hagerstown on Interstate 70, offers 68 acres of indoor and outdoor areas, including a 7,200-square-foot multipurpose building with a capacity of 400 people.

In Sharpsburg, Shepherd's Spring Retreat, Global Village & Camp Center has event space, 24 overnight "hotel-style" rooms, cabins for larger groups, and onsite dining. The venue also offers wellness retreats for groups, one-hour guided tours of the 220-acre site, and other activities.

A new Tru Hotel opens this month in Hagerstown, adding to Washington County's 2,000-plus guest accommodations. A new wedding and event venue in Boonsboro, The Vineyards of Mapleville Manor, is now open. Willowood Washington, a circa-1835 estate set on 66 acres in Boonsboro, offers elegant indoor/outdoor spaces for weddings, corporate retreats, and other events. Willowood's amenities include five double-occupancy overnight guest suites, premium culinary experiences, and curated outdoor excursions, including whitewater rafting and golfing.

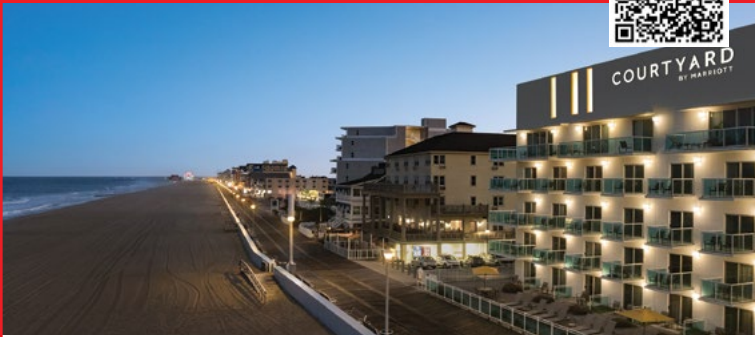
Washington County is also home to Antietam National Battlefield, the site of a pivotal moment in American history during the Civil War. Several battle-themed leadership and professional development programs, including the Antietam Institute, are available to groups.

Washington County also offers cycling and hiking opportunities along the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park and the Appalachian Trail. Several charming communities dot the area: Funkstown is known for its antique shops, while Boonsboro features quaint shops like Turn The Page bookstore and offers cozy boutique accommodations at the eight-room Inn Boonsboro. 🍷



Courtesy OC Marriott

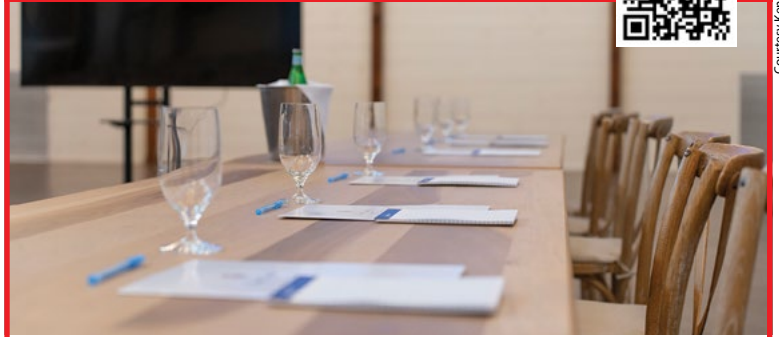
Courtyard by Marriott Ocean City



Located just steps from Ocean City's iconic boardwalk, the newly renovated Courtyard by Marriott Ocean City places guests at the center of the eclectic coastal community. Guests can enjoy the indoor pool, fitness center, and dining at Captain's Table restaurant, a beloved Ocean City institution for more than 50 years, known for its fresh seafood, expertly prepared steaks, and welcoming atmosphere. Ronald E. Powell Convention Center is just 1.5 miles away, making the Courtyard by Marriott Ocean City an ideal choice for meetings, conferences, and group stays.

OCMarriott.com

Kent Island Resort



Nestled along the Chesapeake Bay on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Kent Island Resort offers a refined yet relaxed, welcoming setting for corporate meetings, retreats, and executive gatherings. Waterfront views, historic architecture and charm, and expansive grounds blend with modern amenities, including thoughtfully appointed accommodations, onsite dining, curated culinary experiences, and proximity to championship golf at Queenstown Harbor Golf. The resort features more than 12,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting and event space, and offers curated teambuilding experiences.

KentIslandResort.com

Courtesy Kent Island Resort

Courtesy Visit Montgomery

Montgomery County MD



Located just outside Washington, D.C., Montgomery County offers meeting planners the perfect blend of accessibility, sophistication, authentic local character, and convenient access to three major airports. Planners will find modern conference hotels, walkable urban districts, globally inspired cuisine, and distinctive offsite venues, including art museums, historic estates, farm wineries, and breweries. Beyond the meeting room, attendees can recharge in three national parks, explore acclaimed cultural attractions, or enjoy shopping and entertainment in cities like Bethesda, Silver Spring, Rockville, and Gaithersburg.

VisitMontgomery.com

Ocean City



Ocean City is a picturesque coastal meeting destination, situated on a narrow barrier island stretching more than 10 miles along the Atlantic Ocean. It features a vibrant boardwalk lined with family-friendly activities, restaurants, and shops. The compact convention district is anchored by Roland E. Powell Convention Center and is surrounded by full-service meeting hotels, dining, and entertainment. Attendees can enjoy biking and birding at nearby state parks, along with coastal hiking trails, kayaking, pristine beaches, and iconic wild ponies at Assateague Island National Seashore.

OCOcean.com/Meetings

Courtesy Ocean City MD

The Sooner State offers planners a diverse range of options, including major metro areas with fast-growing suburbs, captivating college towns, historic small towns, casino resorts, scenic rivers and lakes, and a variety of facilities and venues to suit any budget. Unique museums showcase the histories and cultures of cowboys and Native Americans, and chronicle the Oklahoma land rush, the oil boom, and historic Route 66—which marks its centennial this year with a variety of fun celebrations.

EVENT PLANNERS' GUIDE TO

OK

Oklahoma

BY D. FRAN MORLEY



Courtesy Visit Tulsa

Downtown Tulsa offers more than 2,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of Arvest Convention Center, which features more than 275,000 square feet of flexible event space.

Central Corridor

Ardmore

ExploreArdmore.com;
Facebook.com/ExploreArdmore

Positioned between Oklahoma City and the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Ardmore is an easily accessible mid-point destination for regional meetings, conferences, and retreats, according to Bill Murphy, president/CEO of Ardmore Tourism Authority. “What makes Ardmore truly memorable is the welcoming character and warmth of our community,” he says. “In addition, our beautifully preserved Main Street, with many early 20th-century buildings with original architectural details, is home to local shops, restaurants, public art, and community events; downtown’s Depot Park is where you will find outdoor concerts, pop-up markets, and seasonal celebrations; and nearby Lake Murray is one of Oklahoma’s most popular outdoor destinations.”

Ardmore Convention Center has 55,000 square feet of function space, with 13 meeting rooms and a 25,272-square-foot exhibit hall, which can accommodate 170 exhibitors or seat 1,800 banquet guests. The attached Holiday Inn Ardmore I-35 has 127 guest rooms and 1,500 square feet of event space. The recently opened Murray Event Center, run by Murray State College, has indoor and outdoor space to host 320 event guests. There are 820 guest rooms in the immediate Ardmore area. Lake Murray State Park features a 32-room lodge with eight meeting rooms and a 4,168-square-foot reception hall, which can seat 360 for banquets. The park has hiking trails, riding stables, a marina, boat rentals, and a golf course.

South of Ardmore in Thackerville, WinStar World Casino and Resort offers nearly 1,700 guest rooms in four hotel towers and features a 65,000-square-foot convention center with two ballrooms, three boardrooms, and other customizable event space to accommodate

up to 2,000 event guests. WinStar World Casino boasts the world’s largest collection of electronic and table games, plus poker tournaments, live entertainment, and championship golf courses. East of Ardmore in Durant, the AAA Four Diamond Choctaw Casino & Resort offers more than 1,600 guest rooms in three towers and features more than 100,000 square feet of event space, including a 57,398-square-foot event center, a 3,000-seat theater, 16 meeting rooms, and a 14,000-square-foot ballroom. The resort also includes 20 restaurants, six movie theaters, and live entertainment.

Edmond

VisitEdmondOK.com; @VisitEdmond

Located 30 minutes from Oklahoma City’s Will Rogers International Airport (OKC), Edmond offers planners creative meeting spaces for up to 1,000 people, where attendees can enjoy the comforts of a small town and

the amenities of a larger city, according to VisitEdmondOK.com. Edmond Conference Center, connected to the 158-room Hilton Garden Inn, features more than 20,000 square feet of event space across 11 rooms, with a capacity of 1,000 for receptions.

Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites, Holiday Inn Express & Suites Edmond, and La Quinta Inn & Suites by Wyndham Edmond all have small meeting rooms.

Offsite event facilities include Edmond History Museum, with space for 100 guests; Inspirations Tea Room, with regularly scheduled theme teas and meals and rental space for 30 guests; The Old Icehouse, with 4,800 square feet of function space for up to 220 guests for receptions; and The Gin, with indoor and outdoor spaces to accommodate 500 people. Facilities at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) and Oklahoma Christian University include classrooms, ballrooms, and auditoriums.

The UCO Boathouse at Arcadia Lake offers teambuilding options, including paddleboards, kayaks, mountain bikes, and ropes course programs, according to VisitEdmondOK.com

Enid

VisitEnid.org; @VisitEnid

Enid offers a flexible mix of meeting facilities, unique venues, and award-winning attractions, according to VisitEnid.org. The Stride Bank Center in downtown features an 11,000-square-foot ballroom, a second smaller ballroom, 5,500 square feet of meeting space, plus a 5,000-seat arena with space to hold 192 10x10-foot booths. Located on this historic downtown square, near the center, the Glō Best Western Enid Downtown/Convention Center Hotel has 92 guest rooms and is also within walking distance of shopping, restaurants, breweries, and live entertainment venues. The 88-suite SpringHill Suites by Marriott Enid has 4,200 square feet of function space.

Family attractions include Adventure Quest, the world's largest community-built outdoor playground, and Leonardo's Children's Museum, which includes an annex conference space for 75 meeting or 64 banquet guests. The museum is also available for events and teambuilding excursions. Other unique offsite venues include Chisholm Trail Expo Center, located at Garfield County Fairgrounds, with a 100,000-square-foot pavilion and coliseum seating for 9,000; Simpson's Old Time Museum, featuring exhibits, Old West movie sets, and space for parties, socials, receptions,

and other events; and 81 Ranch, with a 300-person-capacity main hall.

The Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center features five interactive galleries, with eyewitness pioneer accounts, oral and video histories, and more than 9,000 original and reproduced photographs, many of which depict the drama of the historic Cherokee Strip Land Run. The center offers indoor and outdoor event spaces.

Norman

VisitNorman.com; @VisitNorman

Located just a short drive from Oklahoma City, Will Rogers International Airport, and the resort areas surrounding Lake Thunderbird, Oklahoma's largest urban lake, Norman is a charming college town and vibrant regional hub with major amenities and attractions, ample meeting and event spaces, and a variety of lodging options.

Set on a 72-acre campus, the 936-room NCED Conference Center and Hotel has 75,000 square feet of meeting and event space, with a capacity of 850 guests theater style. The 283-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Norman Hotel and Conference Center has more than 20 meeting and event rooms, including the 28,800-square-foot Oklahoma Ballroom, which can accommodate 3,160 people theater style. The 92-room NOUN Hotel Norman, A Tribute Portfolio Hotel has a ballroom with a capacity of 2,000 people, three smaller rooms, and a 1,000-square-foot courtyard.

Offsite venues include the Chesapeake Energy Courtside Club at Lloyd Noble Center, with space to host 300 banquet guests; and the National Weather Center, with a variety of event spaces, including a 9,000-square-foot atrium, a 230-seat tiered classroom, and smaller classrooms and boardrooms. Oklahoma Memorial Union on the University of Oklahoma campus has more than 25,000 square feet of function space, including an auditorium and two ballrooms. The Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History features permanent and traveling exhibits, and has event space for receptions, parties, and conferences; it can accommodate 775 guests for receptions or 304 for dinners.

Oklahoma City

VisitOKC.com; @VisitOKC

Oklahoma City is an emerging, collaborative, and welcoming destination that enjoys the benefits of a bustling modern city while maintaining approachability, according to

Shaun Yates, vice president of convention sales and services for Visit OKC. "As seen in the ever-changing skyline, there's an excitement in Oklahoma City, and we are not done yet," Yates says. "OKC is a young city blossoming before your eyes. If you choose OKC as your next meeting destination, you will be choosing a city on the rise."

Opened in 2021, the Oklahoma City Convention Center features 500,000 square feet of function space, including a 200,730-square-foot exhibit hall, a 29,874-square-foot ballroom with 5,000 square feet of pre-function space and a terrace overlooking Scissortail Park, and nearly 45,000 square feet of meeting space. The venue is served by the OKC Streetcar, which connects almost five miles of hotels, restaurants, and attractions downtown.

OKANA Resort and Indoor Waterpark opened last year with 404 guest rooms, a 100,000-square-foot indoor waterpark and 200,000-square-foot seasonal outdoor waterpark, and a 26,676-square-foot conference center, which includes two ballrooms, four breakout rooms, and 7,483 square feet of pre-function space. It also includes an event lawn and a 1,500-seat amphitheater. The resort is adjacent to First Americans Museum, which tells the collective history of the 39 distinct First Americans nations in Oklahoma today. The museum offers a variety of indoor and outdoor event spaces, including Hall of the People, which can accommodate 405 reception or banquet guests; two theaters seating 200 and 75 people; and additional suites, meeting rooms, and other spaces.

Other new venues include Innovation Hall, with three event spaces and a reception capacity of 350 guests; OG&E Coliseum, with a multipurpose event space and an arena seating up to 8,000 people; and Lively Hotel on Oak Oklahoma City, Tapestry by Hilton, with 132 guest rooms and indoor/outdoor meeting space for 300 guests.

Major event properties include Omni Oklahoma City, with 605 guest rooms and 76,000 square feet of event space, including a 20,500-square-foot ballroom seating 1,530 banquet style; the 396-room Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel, with 29,837 square feet of function space in 17 event rooms; and the 134-room Aloft Oklahoma City Downtown-Bricktown, with 7,510 square feet of meeting space. Three historic downtown properties offer meeting and event space: The Skirvin, a Hilton Hotel, with 225

guest rooms and more than 18,500 square feet of event space to host up to 677 guests; The National, Autograph Collection, with 17,774 square feet of function space to accommodate 487 people; and the 108-room Colcord Hotel Oklahoma City, Curio Collection by Hilton, with 4,955 square feet of event space. There are approximately 21,000 guest rooms in Oklahoma City, according to Visit OKC.

Located near Will Rogers International Airport, the 30,000-square-foot Champion Convention Center includes a ballroom seating 1,500 theater style, two smaller ballrooms, and a 4,500-square-foot great hall—all divisible into smaller rooms—plus 5,000 square feet of pre-function space. The adjacent 161-room Hilton Garden Inn Oklahoma City Airport features three meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 100 guests.

Additional venues in Oklahoma City include American Banjo Museum, with 16,000 square feet of galleries and an evening event capacity of 200; Oklahoma City Museum of Art, with a variety of spaces, including a 230-seat theater, exhibit halls, a dining room, and a rooftop terrace; and Camp Trivera, a 19-acre Girl Scouts of America facility with a 350-seat auditorium and indoor and outdoor event spaces for retreats, meetings, and events. Teambuilding options at the camp include an indoor rock-climbing wall, canoeing, nature trails, and a zipline.

Stillwater

VisitStillwater.org; @VisitStillwater

Stillwater offers planners ease of access, hometown hospitality, and the amenities of being “America’s Friendliest College Town,” according to Visit Stillwater. The city’s destination marketing team has more than 40 years of combined experience working with meeting and event planners, and the college-town charm and major-city amenities ensure events are memorable and successful.

Oklahoma State University (OSU) offers a variety of on-campus venues, including the recently opened O’Brate Stadium, home to Cowboys Baseball, with approximately 3,500 seats, suites, and dedicated club areas. Also on campus, McKnight Center for the Performing Arts features a 1,100-seat concert hall, 222-seat recital hall, and 1,000-seat outdoor amphitheater; and the Outdoor Adventure Challenge Course offers all ages a variety of physical and mental challenges, with games, obstacles, and problem-solving activities. Campus Corner, situated adjacent

to the campus, offers shopping, dining, and nightlife options.

According to VisitStillwater.org, The Atherton Hotel at OSU, located within the OSU Student Union building, has 69 guest rooms and space to host a 50-person reception. Holiday Inn Express & Suites Stillwater University West has 2,000 square feet of function space. There are approximately 1,400 guest rooms in the city.

Payne County Expo Center offers 85,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including two large halls and a community building seating 300 for dinners. Tumbleweed Dance Hall and Concert Arena can accommodate 2,500 people standing or 700 seated, while The Range can accommodate 300 event attendees.

Not to miss is the iconic Eskimo Joe’s, a cornerstone of Stillwater’s dining scene for more than five decades. According to VisitStillwater.com, “Eskimo Joe’s is the ultimate destination for OSU students, visiting fans, and anyone looking to experience the best of Stillwater.”

Eastern Corridor Bartlesville

VisitBartlesville.com; @VisitBville

With a history that includes Native American hunting sites, a frontier trading post, a developing town, and the discovery of the first commercial oil well in Oklahoma, Bartlesville has grown to more than 36,000 residents today. It is home to an extensive park and trail system, festivals, theater, live concerts, and other attractions, including the only skyscraper completed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright (currently closed) and Woolaroc Museum & Wildlife Preserve, a 3,700-acre ranch and home of oil baron Frank Phillips.

Woolaroc Museum & Wildlife Preserve offers private event rentals in several venues. Its welcome center can accommodate up to 150 people; the event center can seat 100 for banquets; the historic lodge can host smaller events; and the 50,000-square-foot museum of Western art and artifacts is available for after-hours events.

According to VisitBartlesville.com, hotels with event space include the 102-room Osage Casino & Hotel Bartlesville, with 3,600 square feet of event space, and the 100-room Hilton Garden Inn Bartlesville, with 9,330 square feet of meeting space. The Center for Arts,

Events & Community features an array of rental options, including a 1,700-seat concert hall, a 150-person capacity studio theater, a community hall seating 500 lecture style, and additional event spaces.

Offsite venues include Cooper and Mill Brewing Company, with casual indoor and outdoor gathering spots; and Grey Dog Listening Room, with space to seat 50 guests. The Refinery, a historic space in downtown, has 9,000 square feet of creative, flexible event space, including a rooftop venue. The adjacent Jewel Box Hotel offers five elegant apartment-style suites.

Broken Arrow

VisitBAOK.com; @VisitBAOK

Broken Arrow offers the feeling of a charming small town with the amenities of a major metro area, says Erin Hoefner, marketing and communications coordinator for the City of Broken Arrow. “Our walkable Rose District is a true arts and entertainment district with brick-lined sidewalks, local restaurants, boutiques, public art, and the 1,500-seat Broken Arrow Performing Arts Center, with a lobby suitable for receptions, anchoring downtown.”

Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center Broken Arrow has 177 guest rooms and 42,000 square feet of meeting space across 10 event rooms, including a ballroom seating 1,320 for dinners. Hilton Garden Inn Tulsa-Broken Arrow has 107 guest rooms and 4,100 square feet of function space, according to Visit Broken Arrow. There are approximately 1,143 guest rooms in the city.

“For planners, our niche is ‘one trip, many moods,’” Hoefner says. “Groups can hold a traditional conference at Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center, a reception in a downtown art gallery or loft, a keynote at the performing arts center, then finish with brewery time or a family-friendly festival, all within minutes of each other.”

Additional event venues include Arts @ 302, with flexible gallery space, classrooms, and event space for up to 150 guests; Museum Broken Arrow – Rose District, with space to accommodate 48 people seated or 80 for receptions; the 4,600-square-foot Broken Arrow Veterans Center; Main Street Loft – Rose District, with 2,000 square feet of space overlooking Main Street; Tulsa Technology Center, with seminar and meeting spaces for up to 900 guests; and space at Northeastern State University’s Broken Arrow campus, which

includes a 388-seat auditorium and a banquet room seating 350 theater style.

Broken Arrow is easy to work with, according to Hoefner. “Our tourism office and city departments collaborate closely to support permits, street closures, public safety, and creative event ideas. We pair that service mindset with new tools like a dedicated film incentive, an upcoming film festival, and a growing portfolio of festivals and districts. For planners, that means you get a single, responsive point of contact, flexible venues at multiple price points, and a destination that is actively investing in making events more successful every year.”

Muskogee

VisitMuskogee.com; @VisitMuskogee

Muskogee offers a timeless charm and inviting spirit with a rich history and natural beauty, with echoes of Native American heritage and pioneer courage, according to VisitMuskogee.com.

Attractions and possible venues in Muskogee include the Five Civilized Tribes Museum, featuring the art, history, and culture of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee, and Seminole tribes; the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, completing renovations and expansions in early 2026; and Three Rivers Museum, housed in a renovated 1916 railroad depot. In addition, the surrounding Depot District and Depot Green park feature gathering space for events, concerts, and other functions.

The Muskogee Civic Center is the largest venue in the city, with 8,500 square feet of meeting and event space spread across six rooms, including an arena seating up to 3,700 for concerts. The award-winning Muskogee Little Theatre, located in the downtown Depot District, has a 271-seat auditorium, a 2,000-square-foot lobby that can seat 160 for dinners, and additional small meeting rooms. The Roxy renovated movie theater can seat 300 for events.

The Castle of Muskogee is a unique entertainment and event complex with a 20-acre replica of a Renaissance village. It’s best known as the site of the long-running annual Oklahoma Renaissance Festival, held every spring, with additional seasonal events scheduled throughout the year. Venues include the 906-person-capacity Great Hall and 756-person-capacity Garden Room.

Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites Muskogee, Holiday Inn Express & Suites Muskogee, and La Quinta Inn & Suites by Wyndham Muskogee have small meeting rooms.

Quapaw

DownstreamCasino.com;

@DownstreamCasino

Downstream Casino Resort, operated by the Quapaw Nation of Oklahoma, has 374 guest rooms and features more than 25,000 square feet of multipurpose meeting and function space, including the Pavilion Event Center, which seats 2,000 guests theater style or 1,200 for banquets. Along with casino games, the resort features live entertainment in indoor and outdoor concert spaces, a full-service spa, and a nearby 18-hole golf course. The resort is in the northeast corner of Oklahoma, near the Missouri, Kansas, and Arkansas borders.

Tulsa

VisitTulsa.com; @VisitTulsa

Tulsa is the city of “and more!” says Jonathan Huskey, senior director of communications for Tulsa Regional Tourism. “As The Capital of Route 66®, Tulsa offers an unmatched view into the nostalgia and history of the ‘Mother Road’ throughout its 28 miles in the city limits. When paired with our world-class attractions, Tulsa’s stretch of Route 66 becomes an irresistible hook to drive visitors to come to the city and explore.”

According to Huskey, Tulsa’s vibrant patchwork of districts, neighborhoods, and communities is a big part of why planners love the city. “Visitors can explore Historic Greenwood District, home to the state-of-the-art history center, Greenwood Rising; the thriving Blue Dome District, or the cultured Tulsa Arts District. In addition, the food and brewery scene in town is nuanced and eclectic.”

Attractions like the adjacent Bob Dylan Center and the Woody Guthrie Center, Cain’s Ballroom, and Historic Big 10 Ballroom provide “a great mix of music history and present-day performances, with live music somewhere in the city 365 nights of the year,” Huskey says.

The Arvest Convention Center (renamed from Cox Business Convention Center) is part of downtown’s Arena District and offers more than 275,000 square feet of event space, including Oklahoma’s two largest ballrooms, with a theater-seating capacity of nearly 9,000 guests. The convention center is within walking distance of more than 2,000 hotel rooms, according to VisitTulsa.com. Connected to the convention center via skybridge, the 411-room DoubleTree by Hilton Tulsa Downtown has 23,957 square feet of event space. The 180-room Aloft Tulsa Downtown, with 7,430 square feet of function space, is adjacent to the center.

Major convention hotels in Tulsa include Renaissance Tulsa Hotel & Convention Center, with 300 guest rooms and 50,423 square feet of function space to accommodate 1,500 banquet guests; River Spirit Casino Resort, with 483 guest rooms, more than 30,000 square feet of indoor meeting space, and 36,000 square feet of outdoor function space; Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tulsa, with 454 guest rooms and 14 event rooms, including a 15,000-square-foot ballroom, a 2,600-seat amphitheater, and an 18th floor Sky Room; and the 444-room Hyatt Regency Tulsa Downtown, with five event rooms to accommodate 850 reception guests or seat 500 for banquets.

Additionally, Osage Casino Hotel Tulsa has 286 guest rooms, seven hospitality suites, and 26,000 square feet of banquet space; Marriott Tulsa Southern Hills has 378 guest rooms and 9,705 square feet of event space with a maximum event capacity of 1,441; and Doubletree by Hilton Tulsa – Warren Place has 367 guest rooms and 22,632 square feet of event space to seat 950 people theater style.

Historic hotels with function space include Mayo Hotel & Residences, with 102 guest rooms and 20,239 square feet of event space, including the 500-person-capacity Crystal Ballroom; Ambassador Hotel Tulsa, Autograph Collection, with 1,676 square feet of unique space, including a 36-person-capacity wine cellar; and Tulsa Club Hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton, with 96 guest rooms and more than 7,800 square feet of meeting and event space. There are approximately 12,500 guest rooms in Tulsa.

Downtown’s BOK Center features a 19,000-seat arena and a variety of event spaces, including a 1,500-person-capacity arena floor, the 400-person-capacity Grand Lobby, and River Spirit Lounge, which has a private entrance and can accommodate 300 event guests. The historic Mabee Center, located at Oral Roberts University, has a seating capacity of 11,300 and 105,000 square feet of floor space. Additional auditorium, boardroom, classroom, and event spaces are available at the university. Expo Square is a 240-acre exhibition and trade center complex with multiple event facilities, including the 448,000-square-foot SageNet Center, 43,000-square-foot Central Park Hall with a second-floor mezzanine overlooking the main exhibit floor, 58,500-square-foot Exchange Center, and 4,200-seat Pavilion, Tulsa’s historic Art Deco arena. 🍷

Closing Remarks

Omni Fort Lauderdale Hotel Makes a Splash in South Florida Hospitality & Meetings

By Helen Jacob

Sandra Duhamel/Courtesy Omni Fort Lauderdale Hotel



Omnifort Lauderdale Hotel (Fla.) marks a major expansion of Broward County’s meetings and convention infrastructure. The 29-story, newly constructed hotel is directly connected to the expanded Broward County Convention Center and is located adjacent to Port Everglades, creating a highly integrated headquarters hotel for conventions, trade shows, and citywide events.

The property is the first Omni Hotels & Resorts location in Fort Lauderdale and the brand’s third hotel in Florida. Designed to serve meeting planners, leisure travelers, and cruise passengers alike, the hotel combines large-scale convention capabilities with resort-style amenities and South Florida-inspired design.

With 801 guest rooms, including 82 suites, Omni Fort Lauderdale Hotel is one of the largest hotels in Broward County. Guest rooms are designed to showcase the property’s sweeping views of the Intracoastal Waterway, Port Everglades, and nearby beaches. The hotel also features a full-service Mokara Spa, an elevated pool deck, a fitness center, outdoor event lawns, and multiple public gathering spaces.

The hotel’s design was led by Nunzio Marc DeSantis Architects, with Stantec serving as architect of record and Balfour Beatty Construction as design builder. Interiors by EoA Group drew inspiration from South Florida’s waterways, tropical landscape, and historic “Gold Coast” glamour, blending contemporary luxury with a strong sense of place.

Dining is a defining element of the hotel experience, offering a range of options, from fine dining to casual fare, including: Barchetta, an Italian chophouse; Reef 76 Kitchen & Bar, focused on fresh seafood;

Fair Ketch, a sports and entertainment bar, featuring a Topgolf Swing Suite; Tide Coastal Kitchen, a poolside restaurant on the 10th floor; Ibis Sky Lounge, a rooftop indoor-outdoor bar with sunset views; and Hidden Key, a lobby-centered social hub. Leeward Market offers coffee, pastries, and grab-and-go options.

For planners, the hotel’s most significant features are its direct connection to Broward County Convention Center and its own extensive onsite meeting space. Omni Fort Lauderdale Hotel features 120,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting and event space, including the 30,000-square-foot Waterway Ballroom and 15,000-square-foot Port Everglades Ballroom. Designed with abundant natural light and indoor-outdoor functionality, the spaces are intended to support a range of events, from large conventions to executive meetings and social gatherings.

“Omni Fort Lauderdale Hotel offers a truly distinctive meetings experience by pairing its direct connectivity to the newly expanded Broward County Convention Center with an elevated design and resort-style amenities,” says Aaron Weegar, director of sales and marketing. “Planners gain efficiency when coordinating large-scale gatherings, while attendees enjoy an immersive experience in thoughtfully designed spaces inspired by the destination.”

Located less than five miles from Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) and minutes from Port Everglades, Omni Fort Lauderdale Hotel is a highly accessible destination for meetings, cruises, and leisure travel. 🍷

AUSTIN



CONVENTION CENTER



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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.

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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



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