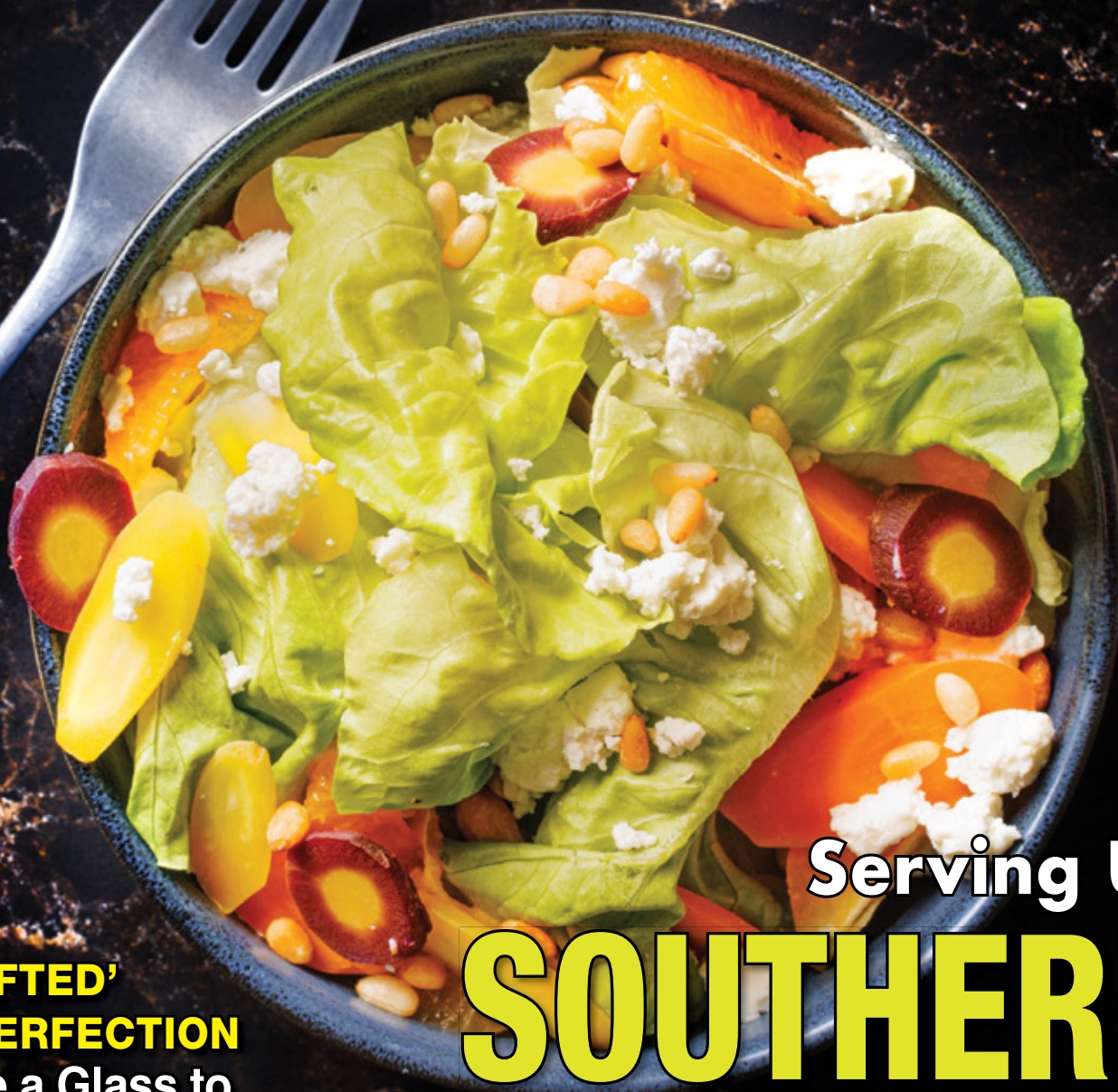


JUNE 2026
VOLUME 43 • NUMBER 6

Convention South

The national planners' resource for Southern destinations



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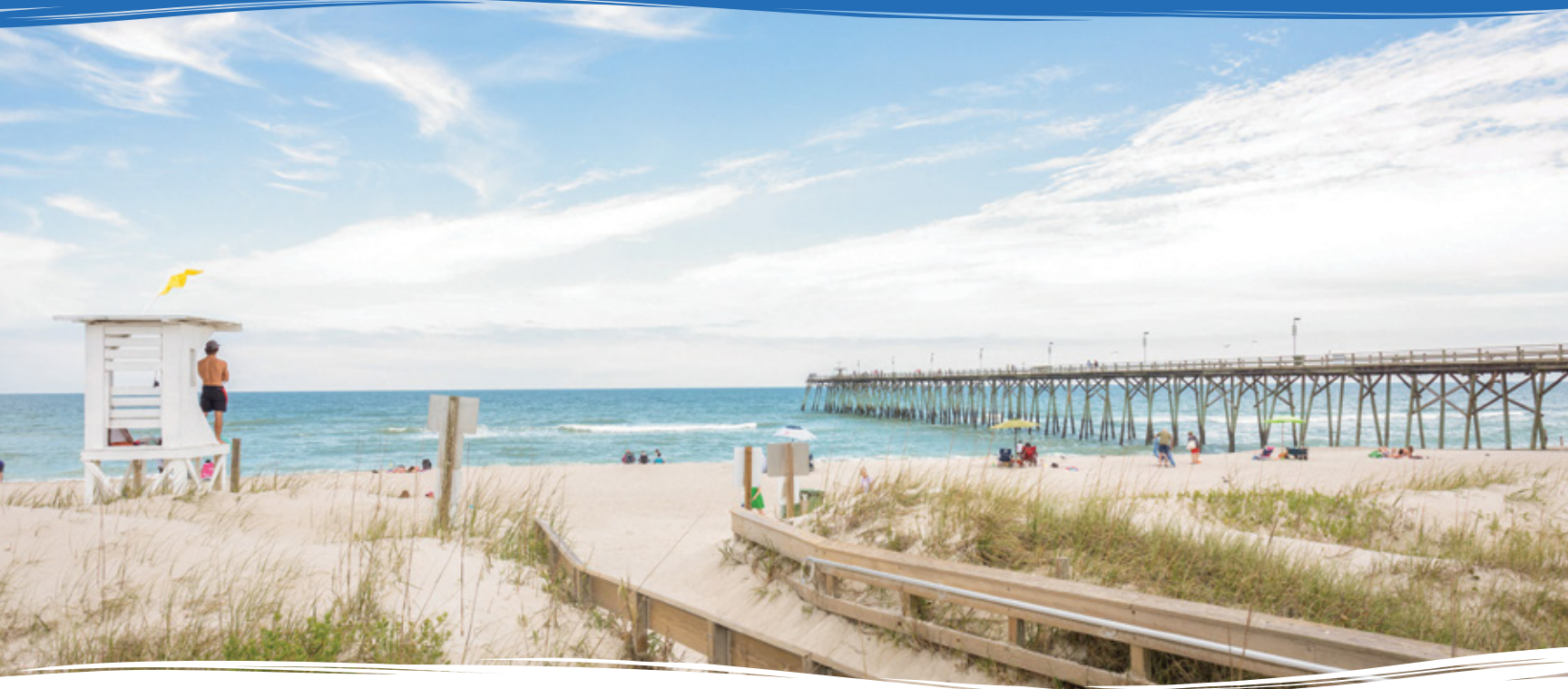
What's on Today's Meeting Menus

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putting it in perspective

A Sense of Taste & Place

Nothing impresses or connects event attendees to a destination quite like food and beverage. More and more, meeting menus are carefully curated to deliver unforgettable event experiences distinctive to the host destinations. Immersive culinary programming, chef-driven culinary innovations, regional flavors and influences, locally sourced ingredients, and craft beverages create defining dining experiences for attendees, providing a savory sense of taste and place. “What makes Charleston (S.C.) stand out is how naturally F&B is woven into the experience of being here. It’s not something that feels added on for meetings; it’s already part of the city’s identity,” says Matt Owen, vice president of communications for Hotel Bennett. “We have an incredible network of chefs, farmers, fishermen, and purveyors who are deeply connected to the region, and that shows up on every menu.” He adds, “Guests are looking for more than just a meal—they want interaction, storytelling, and a real sense of connection. For us, it’s about creating those standout moments that guests carry with them long after the event ends.” Discover how chefs all across Southern destinations are elevating today’s meeting menus in our cover story, beginning on page 6.

We extend our F&B coverage with a look at wineries, breweries, and distilleries throughout the South. As planners seek distinctive venues beyond the ballroom and boardroom, wineries, breweries, and distilleries offer fresh experiences and a relaxed atmosphere for groups. Richard Patrick, co-owner of Cathead Distillery in Jackson, Miss., says, “When the preparation is thoughtful and the environment easy, people relax, conversations happen naturally, and the event takes on a life of its own.” Explore the spirited venues on tap for your next event in our special feature on page 15.

Don’t miss our Event Planners’ Guides in this issue, with the latest updates in Arkansas (page 19) and North Carolina (page 29).

We’ve got even more news and resources about meetings and events in the South on our website. Be sure to visit ConventionSouth.com and connect with us on our social media channels.



Making Meetings Matter More,

Michelle

Michelle Martin
Editor-in-Chief



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

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THE NEW SOUTHERN TABLE 6

Meetings serve up meaningful menus

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On the cover: Fresh flavors are always on today's meeting menus. Courtesy Renaissance Ross Bridge Resort & Spa

World Cup Showcases Seamless Experience Across GWCC Campus

A conversation with Joe Bocherer of Georgia World Congress Center Authority



As Atlanta prepares to take the global stage as one of the selected host destinations for FIFA World Cup 2026, the Georgia World Congress Center Authority (GWCCA) is entering the home stretch of extensive planning for a variety of associated events taking place across its campus, which includes the award-winning 3.9 million-square-foot Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC)—the

world’s largest LEED Gold-certified convention center—along with Mercedes-Benz Stadium, where the soccer matches will be played, as well as the 976-room Signia by Hilton, and Centennial Olympic Park, site of the 1996 Olympic Games. The connected campus puts teams, delegates, fans, and media within walking distance of 13,000 additional hotel rooms and downtown dining, entertainment, and cultural attractions—uniquely positioning Atlanta as a top destination for hosting simultaneous, large-scale experiences across indoor and outdoor spaces.

Joe Bocherer, CCO of GWCCA, is helping lead the coordination of this multi-venue approach. Here, Bocherer shares a behind-the-scenes look at GWCCA’s World Cup 2026 preparations.

How will the GWCCA campus be used for different types of event programming associated with the World Cup, and how are you creating a seamless experience across multiple venues?

The GWCCA campus positions Atlanta as the only FIFA World Cup 2026 host city to offer a fully walkable, multi-venue footprint where each space serves a distinct role. Mercedes-Benz Stadium will host matches, while the GWCC will serve as the primary media hub and credentialing center, as well as host an experience produced by the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

Outdoor areas adjacent to Mercedes-Benz Stadium will be activated for elevated, ticketed experiences that extend the stadium atmosphere beyond its walls. Centennial Olympic Park will anchor the official Fan Festival with public viewing and sponsor activations, while Signia by Hilton Atlanta will provide premium hospitality for fans and sponsors throughout the tournament within steps of the stadium. Additionally, State Farm Arena, adjacent to the campus, will host a series of concerts throughout the month.

What role will Centennial Olympic Park and green spaces play in expanding capacity and engagement?

As the host of Atlanta’s World Cup Fan Festival, Centennial Olympic Park is set to welcome the world, just as it did 30 years ago for the Olympics. We will be open for 18 days, and the experience

will be the next best thing to being inside the stadium. Fans can immerse themselves in live match viewing, participate in interactive experiences and sponsor activations, enjoy music, and explore Atlanta’s local communities, food, and culture that highlight true Southern hospitality. It will be the premier destination for fans to gather, celebrate, and connect.

How are you designing transit zones, plazas, and pathways as intentional parts of the attendee experience?

Through a partnership between the Atlanta World Cup Host Committee and Savannah College of Art and Design, our campus is benefiting from the “Last Mile” project, which introduces custom, student-designed signage and art installations to guide fans through the one-mile area surrounding Mercedes-Benz Stadium, with a focus on managing pedestrian flow between Centennial Olympic Park and the stadium, enhancing wayfinding, improving mobility, and reducing congestion in this critical corridor.

What operational structures are critical when multiple venues must function as one?

A unified command structure is essential to operating the GWCC campus as one connected system. Integrated security, centralized communications, and coordinated scheduling across Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Centennial Olympic Park, and surrounding areas ensure seamless movement and real-time alignment, allowing the entire campus to function as a single, cohesive event environment.

How are you approaching security operations across multiple indoor and outdoor venues with different access points and capacities?

GWCCA’s security approach is built on decades of unified planning and a deeply integrated public safety ecosystem, shaped by major global events, including the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, multiple Super Bowls, College Football Playoff National Championship games, Copa América 2024, and the inaugural FIFA Club World Cup 2025. Across the campus, security is managed as a single coordinated system supported by ongoing tabletop exercises, scenario planning, and cross-agency coordination—ensuring safe, seamless operations across all spaces.

What lasting infrastructure or operational changes will benefit meeting planners long after World Cup 2026?

The most lasting impact will be the enhanced operational expertise of the GWCC team. While the campus is already built for large-scale events, FIFA World Cup 2026 will further strengthen capabilities in security, crowd management, logistics, and multi-venue coordination—delivering refined best practices that will benefit meeting planners through greater efficiency, flexibility, and confidence long after the tournament. 🍷



The New Southern Table WHERE MEETINGS MEET MEANINGFUL MENUS

By Paige Townley

Beyond keynote sessions and carefully curated agendas, today's meetings and events are being defined by something far more immersive: the culinary experience. F&B is no longer viewed as just a supporting act—it's a centerpiece and, increasingly, a reflection of place. Across the South, planners are tapping into a dynamic, diverse dining landscape, where locally sourced ingredients, chef-driven concepts, and craft beverage programs come together to create moments that resonate long after the final course is served.

"F&B has shifted from being a line item to being a core part of the experience design," says Brian Ferrell, founder and CEO of factor 110. "Attendees no longer see meals as a break in the program; they see them as *part* of the program."

Today's culinary offerings are designed to engage. Attendees aren't just eating food—they're discovering the story behind a region, meeting the makers, and savoring authentic flavors and innovative creations. Destinations are embracing this evolution in distinct ways, bringing their own culinary identities to the table. From global influences in major meeting hubs to deeply rooted traditions and rising food scenes, planners have more opportunities than ever to infuse their events with a true sense of taste and place.

Atlanta: a culinary crossroads

Atlanta combines big-city scale with a culinary scene rooted in Southern tradition yet shaped by global influence, creating a powerful platform for innovative food and beverage experiences.

At the Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC), that versatility is on full display. The venue's ability to execute everything from intimate executive receptions to events serving tens of thousands, all while maintaining a high level of culinary creativity, sets the tone for what planners can expect in the city. Its in-house culinary team emphasizes fresh, locally sourced ingredients and elevated presentation, reflecting broader industry shifts toward personalization and experience-driven dining. "F&B at the GWCC is more than just a support function," says Billy Velasquez, executive chef of F&B services at GWCC. "It's a strategic partner in the success of every event. As guest expectations rise, we continue to innovate with intention, balancing creativity with consistency."

Those shifts are especially evident in today's most in-demand offerings, from health and wellness-focused menus to elevated grab-and-go concepts and interactive culinary activations. That might mean customizable grain bowls, raw juices, and gluten-free baked goods, or globally inspired bento boxes and "hot bowls" designed to serve thousands efficiently without sacrificing quality. Chef-attended stations add to the energy, with Southern staples like shrimp & grits and chicken & waffles reimaged as interactive experiences doubling as both meal and entertainment. "Live chef stations are increasingly popular, even in high-volume settings," Velasquez says.

Across the city, that same balance of innovation and authenticity continues to define Atlanta's dining scene. At Atrium and Bellina Alimentari—two concepts by restaurateur Tal Baum at Ponce City Market—the experience goes beyond the plate. Set within a historic building along the BeltLine, the Ponce City Market offers groups an environment that feels local while still delivering a wide range of culinary perspectives. Baum's concepts reflect key trends shaping group dining today, from seasonally driven menus and high-quality sourcing to flexible, experiential formats like shareable plates and interactive elements like pasta-making and curated wine experiences. At Atrium, that translates to refined, modern American cuisine with a focus on clean flavors and elevated presentation, while Bellina Alimentari offers a more relaxed, ingredient-driven take on Italian tradition rooted in simplicity and authenticity. "The food needs to be grounded in something familiar, even if there's a creative twist," Baum says. "We focus on clean flavors, high-quality ingredients, and thoughtful execution rather than overcomplicating dishes. When you do that, you can still have a strong culinary perspective without alienating guests."

Wolfgang Puck Catering brings a similarly thoughtful approach to large-scale events. Menus lean into regional flavors like peaches and pecans while also reflecting broader wellness trends through lighter, seasonal offerings. "We're seeing a shift toward seasonal, health-conscious choices," says Allison Grady, senior director of sales and catering for Wolfgang Puck Catering. "Instead of traditional sandwich-and-salad menus, we offer options like a grain bowl bar." Interactive elements are also central to the experience,



Chef-led stations allow guests to connect to the food, its origins, and preparations.

Courtesy Wolfgang Puck Catering



Event F&B at Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta emphasizes personalized innovations and experience-driven presentations.

Courtesy Levy Restaurants & GWCC

from build-your-own stations to chef-led activations connecting guests more directly to the food and its origins. This approach often comes to life through partnerships and storytelling, combining locally sourced ingredients and onsite engagement, Grady says. "For an event next month, we are partnering with a local farm on an interactive 'make your own grain bowl and salad station,' with a farm representative on hand to talk about their produce, farming practices, and seasonality. Guests are always intrigued by how the food was grown."

Similarly, Proof of the Pudding approaches menus with a chef-driven mindset, reimaging classic Southern ingredients through a more modern lens. Familiar dishes like shrimp & grits, buttermilk fried chicken, and pimento

cheese are elevated through refined techniques, while more inventive presentations—such as seafood-driven displays like their "Winter Seacuterie," featuring sushi, lobster, crab, and oysters—bring a global sensibility to the table. "It's no longer a choice between traditional or modern," says Chris Bazemore, director of sales and business development for Proof of the Pudding. "Clients want menus that reflect Atlanta's roots while also speaking to a diverse, well-traveled audience."

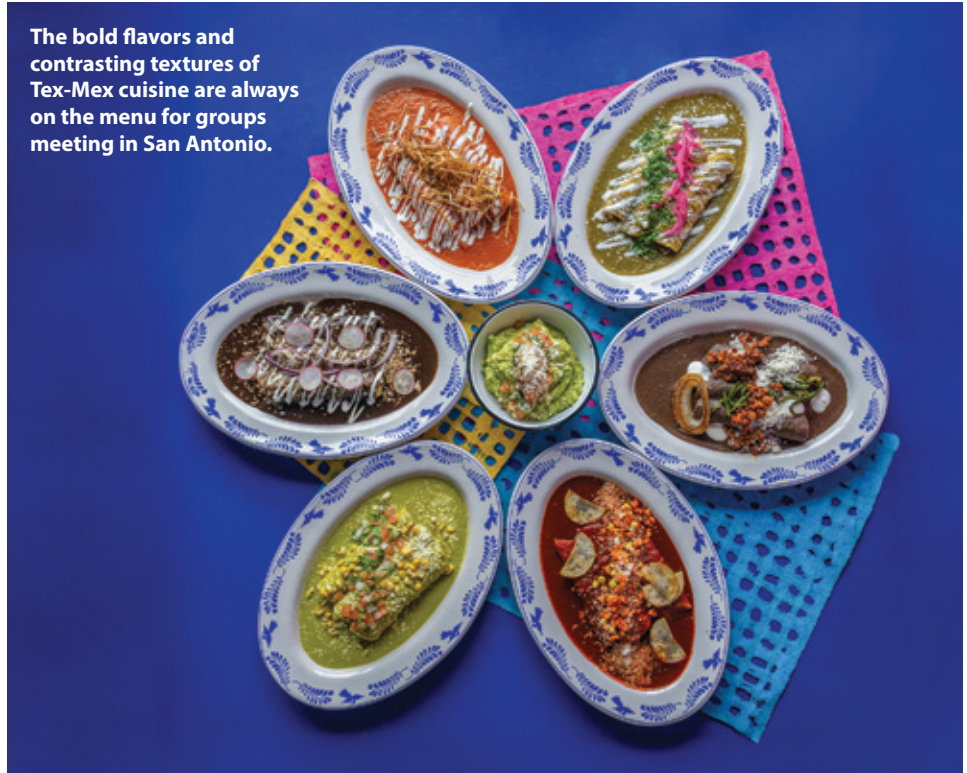
At InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta, this duality is equally apparent. Menus are highly customizable, allowing planners to strike a balance between showcasing Southern staples and introducing globally inspired options, such as poke bowls, street tacos, paella, and dim sum. Flexibility extends to the format itself, where

Courtesy Factor 110

As F&B plays heavily into the overall event experience, even snacks and sweets are elevated with creative designs and themes.



The bold flavors and contrasting textures of Tex-Mex cuisine are always on the menu for groups meeting in San Antonio.



Courtesy Grupo LaGloria

Courtesy Proof of the Pudding

Shrimp & grits and other Southern classics are being reimagined for events, using refined techniques for an elevated, modern twist.



chef- and mixologist-attended stations—from gourmet small plates to made-to-order favorites like mini donuts and eggs Benedict—create a more interactive, personalized experience for guests. Brian Ettelman, director of catering and conference services, says, “These experiences create natural points of engagement, allowing guests to connect with the culinary team while enjoying something personalized, whether it’s a composed plate or a crafted cocktail.”

Charleston, S.C.: a Lowcountry culinary destination

Renowned as one of America’s most celebrated food cities, Charleston offers an ingredient-driven approach. Here, the focus shifts from scale to storytelling, where Lowcountry flavors and seasonal sourcing shape menus. For planners, that translates into boutique experiences where food and beverage not only reflect the destination but also help define it.

“What makes Charleston stand out is how naturally F&B is woven into the experience of being here,” explains Matt Owen, vice president of communications for Hotel Bennett. “It’s not something that feels added on for meetings; it’s already part of the city’s identity. We have an incredible network of chefs, farmers, fishermen, and purveyors who are deeply connected to the region, and that shows up on every menu.”

Local storytelling is at the heart of the culinary experience at Hotel Bennett. The property draws on the rich bounty of the Lowcountry, emphasizing seasonal, locally sourced ingredients, such as Carolina Gold rice and North Carolina lump crab. Menus are designed to be both elevated and approachable, offering planners flexibility to create tailored experiences for their groups. This philosophy comes to life in interactive stations, from oyster shuckers serving raw oysters to chefs preparing seared crab cakes tableside, or a Southern barbecue counter featuring carved brisket and pulled pork with house-made sauces. “Guests are looking for more than just a meal—they want interaction, storytelling, and a real sense of connection,” Owen says. “For us, it’s about creating those standout moments that guests carry with them long after the event ends.”

Courtesy Oliva Restaurant Group

Groups at Atrium and Bellina Alimentari, both located at Atlanta's Ponce City Market, can enjoy experiential dining options like shareable plates and pasta-making classes.



At The Mills House, Curio Collection by Hilton, meetings are intentionally designed to mirror the dining experience at its in-house restaurant, Iron Rose. Executive chef Suzy Castelloe focuses on translating the restaurant's seasonal, Southern-forward menu into formats that maintain the same level of quality, presentation, and guest interaction, whether through plated dinners or reception-style gatherings. "Groups don't want the standard stereotypical banquet event anymore," Castelloe says. "They want it curated specifically to what their groups want—more of a create-your-own-menu planning process." This approach allows signature dishes—like an oyster & shrimp stew with chorizo and Carolina Gold rice or a barbecue pork belly blending regional flavors—to be served in a way that feels true to the restaurant. Specialty cocktails and locally brewed beers further reinforce a dining experience that feels less like a banquet and more like a night out in Charleston.



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Courtesy Hotel Bennett

Carving freshly prepared meats, shucking raw oysters, and searing crab cakes tableside create standout moments for guests at Hotel Bennett in South Carolina.



CHEF'S CHECKLIST FOR SMARTER F&B CONTRACTS

A seamless culinary experience starts with a well-structured contract and clear communication. Executive chef Miguel Neira of the Sheraton Dallas suggests planners keep these key considerations top of mind when contracting and designing their F&B programs:

- **State the specifics.** Ensure the contract clearly defines minimums, guest-count deadlines, and any penalties for under/over attendance.
- **Spell out the costs.** Require detailed, itemized pricing that outlines all F&B, staffing, linen, tax, and service charge inclusions.
- **Clarify the terms.** Payment schedules, deposit requirements, and cancellation or attrition policies should be clearly outlined.
- **Build in flexibility.** The contract should allow for menu adjustments and include a clear process for accommodating dietary restrictions.
- **Map the timeline.** The full event schedule—including setup, service, breakdown, and any overtime fees—should be detailed.
- **Define service and staffing.** Staffing roles, ratios, and the selected service style—buffet, plated, or stations—should be specified.
- **Put it all in writing.** Document all details and changes, while allowing flexibility for minor last-minute adjustments.

Wild Dunes Resort delivers authenticity and seasonality in its meeting menus as well. The culinary team leans into Lowcountry staples like shrimp, oysters, and Carolina Gold rice while layering in global influences, from Korean-inspired sauces at a traditional Lowcountry boil to Mediterranean or Southeast Asian touches that keep dishes fresh and unexpected. “The goal is always to respect tradition while keeping the experience fresh, relevant, and a little unexpected for our guests,” says Shawn Signer, executive banquet chef.

San Antonio: a taste of heritage

As planners look beyond the expected, destinations like San Antonio are gaining traction. The city’s culinary scene is deeply rooted in culture and history. As a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, San Antonio brings together culinary influences from Mexican, Spanish, German, French, and Indigenous traditions, shaped in part by homegrown talent from the Culinary Institute of America. Chef and restaurateur Johnny Hernandez sees this evolution firsthand.

“San Antonio has long been home to its beloved Tex-Mex cuisine, but today it’s leaning into a broader expression of cuisine from the interior

Photos courtesy Sheraton Dallas



Sheraton Dallas executive chef Miguel Neira

Courtesy Wild Dunes Resort

At Wild Dunes Resort, Lowcountry staples layered with global influences offer a fresh approach to local flavors.



of Mexico, with regional dishes, refined techniques, and a deeper exploration of the traditions behind the food,” he says.

For meetings and events, that translates into menus that go beyond the expected—highlighting bold, layered flavors, fresh ingredients, and formats that invite interaction, from ceviche and margarita stations to chef-driven presentations. “It’s about balance and variety,” Hernandez says. “When catering, we bring together bold flavors and contrasting textures in a way that feels abundant and approachable, while still introducing guests to something new and giving them the true flavors of south Texas.”

Rising flavors: emerging culinary destinations

A new wave of destinations is gaining attention for their fresh, creative culinary approaches. Greenville, S.C., has a growing culinary reputation that’s translating into new opportunities for meetings that extend beyond the banquet room. As the city garners national attention—including recent MICHELIN Guide recognition—planners are increasingly looking to tap into its dining scene through offsite experiences and dine-arounds showcasing local flavors, says Jenny Morris, area director

STAR POWER: CELEBRITY-OWNED RESTAURANTS THAT WOW GROUPS

Booking a meal at a celebrity-owned restaurant can bring instant excitement to any group event. Beyond great food, these spots offer unique atmospheres and experiences that guests won’t forget.

1587 Prime | Kansas City, Mo.

At 1587 Prime, star power meets standout dining in a way that’s tailor-made for groups. Co-owned by the Kansas City Chiefs’ Patrick Mahomes and Travis Kelce, this steakhouse pairs elevated cuisine with an energetic atmosphere. With ample space, private dining options, and a polished yet playful vibe, the experience goes beyond the plate. The menu does not disappoint, featuring premium cuts, fresh seafood, and creative cocktails.

Courtesy Noble 33



1587 Prime

Casa Rosa | Nashville, Tenn.

At Casa Rosa, country star Miranda Lambert brings bold personality and a touch of honky-tonk glam to the group dining scene. Spanning four vibrant floors, the venue—owned and operated by TC Restaurant Group—offers flexible options for everything from full buyouts to rooftop gatherings. Planners can even lean into branded activations, from logo-stamped churro carts and color-coordinated cocktails to interactive entertainment like songwriter sessions or themed performers.

Courtesy Gabe Ford Photography/TC Group



Casa Rosa

The Twelve Thirty Club | Nashville, Tenn.

Singer Justin Timberlake brings a refined take on the classic supper club with his restaurant, The Twelve Thirty Club. Designed for everything from intimate receptions to full-scale buyouts for up to 1,000 guests, the multi-level venue blends upscale dining and curated entertainment, from the main stage and rooftop terrace to a cocktail lounge and private event space. What sets it apart is its restaurant-driven approach to event dining, with dishes prepared made to order in the main kitchen, just as during regular dining service.



The Twelve Thirty Club

Courtesy The Twelve Thirty Club

Ramsay’s Kitchen | Caesars Virginia, Danville

Helmed by celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay, Ramsay’s Kitchen delivers both star power and substance. Set just steps from the action at Caesars Virginia, the restaurant brings an elevated approach to the resort’s dining experience, with a menu inspired by his global travels and anchored by signature dishes like Beef Wellington, lamb chops, and pan-seared branzino. Ramsay’s Kitchen offers planners a built-in, high-profile venue where attendees can unwind and enjoy a standout culinary experience without ever leaving the property.



Ramsay’s Kitchen at Caesars Virginia

Courtesy Caesars Entertainment

of sales and marketing for Hyatt Regency Greenville. “We are seeing more groups wanting to host dine arounds through the city versus your typical banquet dinner,” she says. That interest also carries over on property, where groups are seeking more immersive,

restaurant-style experiences, often hosting buyouts of its onsite restaurant, Roost Free Range Kitchen, which features Southern staples like shrimp & grits, barbecue, and biscuits alongside seasonal ingredients and curated beverage pairings.

Bentonville, Ark., is emerging as a must-watch culinary destination, spilling over into its meeting and event offerings. New restaurants, boutique hotels, and food trucks are bringing global flavors to locally sourced ingredients, giving planners the chance to craft genuine and distinctive experiences.

“Being a caterer in Bentonville is so much fun. All the new restaurants, food trucks, and variety of foods being introduced in the area keep me on my toes,” says Terri Paul of Catering Concepts. For meetings, signature menus like the “Taste of Arkansas”—featuring grilled chicken with pepper cream sauce, roasted pork loin with bourbon sauce, Arkansas rice, and seasonal vegetables—allow groups to enjoy chef-driven dining that reflects the city’s creativity and roots.

Birmingham, Ala., has established itself as a culinary destination, earning widespread acclaim for elevating dishes and using simple local ingredients. “There’s a distinct style in Birmingham,” says Jonathan McKinney, director of sales and marketing at Renaissance Ross Bridge Resort & Spa. “Chefs are taking Southern ingredients and traditions and elevating them. It creates something that feels both rooted and progressive.”

At Renaissance Ross Bridge, an elevated, chef-driven approach directly reflects what meeting planners are seeking. Classic local ingredients like Conecuh sausage, Gulf seafood, and stone-ground grits are reimagined with a modern presentation and global influence, while experiential elements—from chef-led cooking demonstrations to interactive breaks like “Fries with That Shake,” which pairs house-made milkshakes with a chef-attended station—bring energy and engagement to the table.

Beverage programs are also evolving to meet more inclusive expectations, with crafted mocktails and local brews playing a central role. “Planners aren’t just looking for good banquet food anymore. They’re expecting a culinary experience that reflects the destination,” adds Rachel Pace, director of events at the resort. “There’s a higher bar now for creativity, presentation, and authenticity, and we welcome that. It pushes us to think beyond traditional formats and deliver something memorable.” 🍷

Courtesy Hyatt Regency Greenville, SC



Some groups opt for onsite restaurant buyouts over banquet options to enjoy a more refined dining experience.

Courtesy Renaissance Ross Bridge Resort & Spa



Fresh ingredients bring the richest flavors to dishes.

Courtesy The Mills House

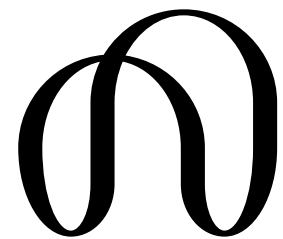


At Wild Dunes Resort, Lowcountry staples layered with global influences offer a fresh approach to local flavors.

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ORGANIC DINING AT SOUTHALL FARM & INN

Photos courtesy Southall Farm & Inn



January, Southall Farm & Inn's signature restaurant, earned a MICHELIN Green star in 2025.

Southall Farm & Inn, a 500-acre wellness retreat in Franklin, Tenn., is a refined, sustainability-driven destination rooted in the evolution of a family farm owned by Paul and Laura Mishkin. As a Green Seal-certified property—also recognized with a MICHELIN Key—it places environmental stewardship at the core of every experience.

From agriculture to hospitality, Southall operates with a closed-loop philosophy designed to minimize waste and maximize connection to the land. A 5,000-square-foot propagation house and 10,000-square-foot hydroponic greenhouses enable efficient, year-round growth, reducing reliance on external sourcing. Orchards overlooking Lake Mishkin feature thousands of apple trees across dozens of varieties, while terraced, hand-tended kitchen gardens yield heirloom vegetables—both prominently featured in the culinary program. In addition, eight apiaries, home to approximately 140 hives and millions of bees, play a vital role in pollination while also producing award-winning honey—an essential component in maintaining the farm's natural ecosystem.

Southall's hyper-seasonal, field-driven culinary philosophy is reflected in menus shaped by organic produce harvested at peak freshness. This approach extends across all dining venues and group experiences. January, the property's signature restaurant, showcases inventive yet approachable dishes built around locally sourced ingredients, such as lamb belly lettuce wraps, nduja dumplings, and arctic char with strawberry, house-made hot sauce, and lemon balm. In recognition of its sustainable practices, January earned a MICHELIN Green star in 2025. Sojourner offers a more casual, all-day dining format with such options as smoked trout dip, mortadella hoagies, and its signature burger with onion jam, aioli, pickles, and cheddar cheese on a brioche bun. For ingredients not grown on site, the culinary team upholds its commitment to regional sourcing by partnering with Tennessee-based purveyors, such as Bear Creek Farm, Noble Springs Dairy, and Nashville Grown.

Meeting and event groups can enjoy Southall's intimate, immersive environments, which connect guests directly to the land and its



Sojourner at Southall Farm & Inn features elegant yet approachable dining.



At the Apiary Lab, beekeepers host a variety of activities that include honey tasting.

bounty. The Jammery, a marble-clad space accented with copper and lined with house-made preserves, serves as a hub for interactive culinary programming. Here, chef Richard Jones leads workshops, tastings, and teambuilding experiences centered on harvesting and preparing seasonal ingredients. With capacity for up to 24 guests, the setting encourages hands-on engagement, often beginning with a walk through the farm before a chef-led, multi-course tasting of the current week's harvest.

The Hilltop Pavilion provides another distinctive venue, accommodating up to 50 guests in a secluded setting with sweeping views of the surrounding landscape. Its outdoor kitchen is designed for elevated, fire-driven cooking, adding a rustic yet refined dimension to private events.

Beyond dining, Southall offers a range of curated group activities, many of which highlight its apiary program. Led by expert beekeepers and certified honey sommeliers, experiences range from guided bee walks to immersive tastings at the Apiary Lab, where honey is paired with spirits and explored through its diverse flavor profiles.

By emphasizing direct interaction with farmers, chefs, and artisans, Southall Farm & Inn creates a deeply personal experience. The result is a setting where sustainability, agriculture, and hospitality intersect—offering guests not just a place to gather, but a meaningful connection to the rhythms of the land through food and drink.

—Helen Jacob



Courtesy Visit Loudoun

Wineries, breweries, and distilleries add a festive atmosphere and local flair to events

By Matt Swenson

On the outskirts of the Washington, D.C., suburbs, Visit Loudoun, the destination marketing company for Virginia’s Loudoun County, is putting a twist on a timeless marketing classic. As it turns out, Virginia is not just for lovers; it’s also for wine lovers.

By branding itself as “D.C.’s Wine Country,” Loudoun County—with 50 wineries throughout the region—has captured a distinct buzz at a time when meeting attendees expect unique, authentic experiences beyond the traditional ballroom setting. According to Cvent, 48% of event organizers say they are sourcing special event venues (non-hotels), and 35% note their decision to source special venues comes down to attendee experience.

Loudoun County’s association with vineyards and other spirit houses, combined with its mix of natural assets and big-city amenities, including Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) and technology centers, is contributing to the region’s appeal. “Our destination pairs rolling hills, scenic vineyard landscapes, spacious rural breweries, distilleries, and barns with the infrastructure and convenience today’s meetings demand,” says Ann Hayes, Visit Loudoun director of sales. “The result is a setting that delivers a true sense of place without sacrificing ease of travel, making it an appealing alternative to traditional urban and suburban venues.”

In 2024, Loudoun County led the northern Virginia and Washington, D.C., areas in hotel occupancy rates, outpacing other suburbs and the nation’s capital. The meetings and sports tourism sectors generated \$53 million in direct economic impact, according to data gathered through Destinations International’s Event Impact Calculator.

Wineries, breweries, and distilleries maintain their authenticity in large part because many are family-owned. While the drinks are good, it’s not just the alcohol that appeals to event planners seeking venues for group functions and activities, ranging from teambuilding to networking to awards recognition. They offer fresh experiences for groups.

As a cherry on top, many of the venues are run by hospitality experts themselves, who can seamlessly coordinate logistics once the meeting planner has outlined the objectives. Richard Patrick, co-owner of Cathead Distillery in Jackson, Miss., says, “When the preparation is thoughtful and the environment easy, people relax, conversations happen naturally, and the event takes on a life of its own.”

In addition to Cathead Distillery and Loudoun County, planners can choose from hundreds of similar venues throughout the South to bring a festive spirit, an authentic atmosphere, and warm and welcoming Southern hospitality to their events. Cheers to happy planning!

Courtesy Visit Loudoun

Meeting planners seeking a different setting beyond traditional meeting spaces can choose from 50 wineries in Loudoun County, Va.



Courtesy Château Élan Winery & Resort

Château Élan Winery & Resort in Braselton, Ga., features eight dining venues and 110,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space for group events and private tastings.



Courtesy Dawsonville Office of Tourism

Granddaddy Mimm's Distilling Co. makes all its moonshine, whiskey, vodka, and spirits at its original distillery, located in Blairsville, Ga.



Granddaddys and castles in Georgia

The beauty of an event in a winery is that it can be an escape from the big city. Corporate meetings in Atlanta suburbs and exurbs can enjoy the luxury of access to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) without the hustle and bustle of downtown.

Château Élan Winery & Resort in Braselton, 40 minutes from Atlanta on a good traffic day, has nearly 200 acres of vineyards incorporated into its 3,500-acre property. With a luxury inn, three golf courses, a 35,000-square-foot, European-style spa, and eight dining venues (serving the house-made wine), the all-encompassing resort is popular for corporate meetings. Day or evening trips are available.

The venue's size and flexibility accommodate intimate groups of five up to large galas of 1,000 guests. Its premier meeting space is a 40,000-square-foot conference room, but there is ample outdoor space. Common corporate event formats include: executive board meetings and

retreats; conferences and general sessions; corporate dinners and galas; teambuilding experiences; and outdoor receptions and resort activations, such as culinary activities and wine tastings.

Once a planner completes the site selection, Château Élan's event coordinators can handle the logistics. "Our team focuses on understanding each client's goals, then bringing them to life," says Rochelle Francis, director of catering and events. "From the first conversation to the final toast, we ensure every detail is handled with intention."

Also in northern Georgia, Dawsonville is the unofficial "Moonshine Capital of the World," according to Dustin Heard, director of tourism for Dawson County Chamber of Commerce & Office of Tourism Development. "Part of our story is moonshine and racing," Heard says, referring to the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame and Atlanta Motorsports Park, both located in the city, and the "granddaddy" of Georgia distilleries.

Granddaddy Mimm's Distilling Co., with locations in Dawsonville and Blairsville, often hosts local associations, corporate events, fundraisers, social gatherings, teambuilding activities, and more. Groups at the Dawsonville location have included MyLaps, a global sports events company with an office in Georgia, as well as Dawsonville Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club of Dawson County, and Young Producers 400 North Realty.

According to the distillery's website, "Granddaddy" makes all of its moonshine, whiskey, vodka, and spirits onsite. The moonshine formula dates back to the Great Depression, when founder Tommy Townsend "stumbled on his legendary perfected recipe." The Dawsonville site, known as "The Garage," is an offshoot of the original Blairsville location, but shares the same family charm.

"Our appeal lies in the combination of our unique history, handcrafted premium spirits and beers, and a dedicated staff committed to making every guest feel like family," says Jeannie "Roger" Ledford, who serves as the venue's events specialist and also runs the bar operations and client engagement.

A stage is the centerpiece of the main event venue, which holds approximately 100 attendees. A fenced-in outdoor area can expand the gathering space, allowing groups to enjoy the mountain views.

According to Heard, family-run operations often provide a more personal, welcoming environment than traditional meeting spaces. As a result, the focus goes beyond alcohol to also include storytelling, connection, and the overall experience. "The appeal has really been the story behind the distillery," Heard says. "Once guests meet the owner and hear the story, it draws them in."

In Dahlonega, Montaluce Winery & Restaurant has a range of indoor and outdoor event spaces for corporate meetings, retreats, and private functions. Beyond the destination's scenic backdrop, Montaluce feels like a different world with its Tuscan-style designs and offerings.

Built-in culinary and wine programming includes tastings, pairings, and dinners, while experiential add-ons include vineyard activities and teambuilding opportunities.

Event spaces range from intimate rooms for 15 attendees up to 175-person-capacity rooms. A full-property buyout is available for large groups.

Making history in Mississippi

Mississippi was the final holdout for doing away with prohibition law—33 years after the 18th Constitutional Amendment was repealed in 1933.

Courtesy Discover Dahnonega



The Tuscan-style Montaluce Winery & Restaurant in Dahnonega, Ga., offers built-in culinary and wine programming, as well as add-ons like vineyard and teambuilding activities.



In Jackson, Miss., groups can sample Cathead Distillery's eight award-winning, small-batch spirits or enjoy bespoke cocktails for an elevated experience.

Andrew Welch/Courtesy Cathead Distillery

Flash forward to 2010, when Austin Evans and Richard Patrick founded Cathead Distillery in Jackson. The state's first and oldest distillery now produces eight award-winning, small-batch spirits and was named a 2020 James Beard Award semifinalist for Outstanding Spirits Producer.

In the South, the term "Cathead" was first coined by blues musicians as a compliment to artists they respected. Today, the moniker alludes to the distillery's authenticity, which planners seek in their event venues, Patrick says. "We host everything from small team off-sites and dinners to larger receptions, but planners hosting all types and sizes of events here are looking for something that feels distinctly Jackson and a little less conventional than a hotel setting," he says.

The venue bills itself as an events-driven facility, offering attendees the chance to experience the distillery up close, right where the booze is made. "You can smell it, see it, and hear it," Patrick says. "That proximity creates a sense of place that's hard to replicate and gives guests something to connect to beyond just the event itself."

Planners can choose from seated dinners, cocktail-style receptions, tastings, and more casual indoor-outdoor gatherings. Cathead Distillery's F&B team also makes bespoke cocktails specially curated for each group, which adds another elevated level to the experience.

Nothing finer in North Carolina

Not long after the turn of the 20th century, Statesville, approximately 40 miles north of Charlotte, near the junction of I-40 and I-77, was voted dry, thereby stopping the flow of some of the country's most popular whiskey. More than a century later, Pete and Vienna Barger, owners of Southern Distilling, are reclaiming North Carolina's whiskey tradition.

Opened in 2013, the artisanal distillery is set on a 20-acre campus with a 12,000-square-foot events center, The Preserve, which hosts gatherings of up to 300 attendees one to three times per month. In addition, a speakeasy seating up to 25 attendees serves as a backdrop to multiple events each month, notes Lizz Updegraff-McGrew, marketing, events, and retail coordinator for Southern Distilling. "Being in a distillery adds a unique element; tastings, tours, and the ambiance elevate your event and make it memorable," she says, comparing it to a standard meeting room. "It's a place where people actually want to be."

Childress Vineyards in Lexington (N.C.) was founded in 2004 by NASCAR team owner Richard Childress. The winery features more than 70 acres of vines and 15 varieties of European vinifera grapes, and has won more than 750 awards. Outdoor and indoor venues

include the grand pavilion and its surrounding outdoor terrace, as well as intimate settings, such as the Barrel Cave and Victory Lounge. Childress Vineyards is available for private events, including weddings and corporate events, and offers several experiences and packages. The Tour, Tasting, & Lunch Package includes a private winery tour, a tasting of eight wine varietals, a souvenir wine glass, and a lunch buffet.

Suds in South Carolina

Planners in the Palmetto State are in for a "hopping" good time and good craft beers.

"Our clients like the idea of a brewery or distillery as a unique option for a venue," says Ariana McGill, senior sales manager for Destination South Meetings + Events, based in Charleston.

Holy City Brewing has been a proven winner for McGill, who says the waterfront venue's raw bar experience is a hit with attendees. "Oyster shuckers go around and shuck oysters for guests that they can then enjoy, along with views of the marsh," she says.

The Porter Room gives groups a turnkey, meetings-ready experience. It includes built-in audiovisual, a private bar, and direct access to the brewery campus so guests can move seamlessly from presentations to receptions without changing venues. The room's warm, industrial aesthetic and adjacent private outdoor space can accommodate board retreats, training sessions, client dinners, awards celebrations, and receptions.

Also in Charleston, Commonhouse Aleworks delivers a community-centric taproom and outdoor space ideal for more casual, culture-building events. It offers semi-private rentals of the taproom and outdoor space, featuring Adirondack chairs and tables.

Caitlin Frank, senior manager of global events for a biotech company, enlisted Myrtle Beach CVB to help secure Crooked Hammock Brewery for a group dinner of 180 guests. The location, five minutes from the group hotel, and atmosphere were perfect for her needs. "It offered the casual vibe we wanted and local flair that we would not have experienced from a big-box chain restaurant," Frank says.

Its beer garden is one of six spaces available for private events, and planners can choose from a variety of meal options, including a buffet and action stations. "Crooked Hammock was so easy to work with throughout the planning process. The staff knocked the onsite execution out of the park," Frank says, noting that she promises to return for a future event.

New Realm Brewery in Greenville hosts four corporate events each week, according to Carley Reinholtz, the brewery's event coordinator.

Courtesy Visit NC



In Statesville, N.C., Southern Distilling Co. hosts private tours, tastings, and other group events in its main distillery, The Preserve events center, and speakeasy.

Courtesy Visit Myrtle Beach



Crooked Hammock Brewery blends the coastal vibe of its Myrtle Beach, S.C., location with fun activities.

Forrest Clontz/Courtesy Savage Craft Ale Works



Savage Craft Ale Works features indoor and outdoor event space, including The Armory and Biergarten.



Childress Vineyards in Lexington, N.C., founded in 2004 by NASCAR team owner Richard Childress, offers outdoor and indoor venues for group events, including the Grand Pavilion and Barrel Cave.

Childress Vineyards/Courtesy Visit NC



New Realm Brewing's location in Greenville, S.C., can accommodate up to 120 people in the cellar or on the outdoor terrace, 250 in the taproom, or 750 for a full buyout.

Kris Decker/Courtesy Firewater Photography

She says the popularity of New Realm Brewery and similar venues reflects attendees' desire to break from hotel banquets and other standard settings. "Guests enjoy being in an environment that feels social and relaxed while still having access to high-quality food, craft beverages, and professional event service."

New Realm can accommodate approximately 750 for a full buyout; private spaces can accommodate up to 120 attendees in the cellar or outdoor terrace, or 250 participants in the taproom. According to Reinholtz, recent uses of the spaces include seated dinners, networking receptions, presentations, team celebrations, lunch-and-learns, happy hours, vendor or customer appreciation events, and large-scale buyouts for conference openings or closing receptions. "With multiple indoor and outdoor spaces available, we're able to tailor the layout and flow to match the goals of each event," she says.

New Realm Brewery also has locations in Auburn, Ala.; Atlanta; Charleston, S.C.; and Suffolk and Virginia Beach, Va.

Savage Craft Ale Works in West Columbia—which resides in the former West Columbia

City Hall, jail, and fire station—has left many nods to the building's original purpose. Its main event space, The Armory, features large barn doors that open directly to the Biergarten. It can accommodate up to 63 guests for seated events or 150 for receptions.

Vino in Virginia

Loudoun County's 50 wineries include the 404-acre Breaux Vineyards in Purcellville. Remarkably, the property featured only three acres of grapes when it was initially planted in 1985. Today, it includes 104 acres of vineyards. Indoor and outdoor spaces are available at the family-owned, award-winning winery, which also wins over corporate groups with its secluded nature and sheer beauty.

In Leesburg, Stone Tower Winery regularly hosts corporate meetings and events. The Vineyard View Ballroom and adjoining Barrel Club Room can hold up to 400 attendees. Guests can enjoy scenic views of the Bull Run Mountains and take in lovely décor touches, such as unique chandeliers, stone accents, and a curved wall of windows offering sweeping views of the vineyards. Sparkling House is a modern venue with a capacity of 300 guests. 🍷

Known for its abundant hot springs and scenic beauty, the Natural State offers planners a variety of venues, hotels, and resorts for meetings and events, and its central location provides convenience, affordability, easy drive-in access, and two major airports: Little Rock's Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport and Northwest Arkansas National Airport, near Bentonville. Planners can choose from a mix of big and small, urban and scenic, business and pleasure, across beautiful and affordable destinations. With 52 state parks, thousands of miles of trails, and some of the most scenic drives in the country, Arkansas puts adventure within reach.

EVENT PLANNERS' GUIDE TO

AR

Arkansas

BY D. FRAN MORLEY



Courtesy Visit Hot Springs

Hot Springs' downtown and historic Bathhouse Row are surrounded by approximately 5,500 acres of Hot Springs National Park.

Northwest Arkansas

Bentonville

VisitBentonville.com; @VisitBentonville

Bentonville is perfect for small and medium-sized groups that want an elevated experience in a small destination with a big-city feel, according to Wes Oliver, director of sales for Visit Bentonville. "We have many unique and beautiful hotels, event venues, and meeting spaces, all in a walkable downtown. Planners keep coming back because of our proximity to corporate heavyweights, like Walmart, our incredible excursion and attraction options, and our central location and ease of access."

There are more than 2,800 guest rooms in the city. New in 2025, The Compton, a 142-room hotel, opened downtown with a variety of event options, including elegant presidential suites, a light-filled gallery to host 75 guests,

and a ballroom for 240 guests. Also new, Heartland Whole Health Institute opened in collaboration with the new Alice L. Walton School of Medicine, both of which are located on the campus of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Heartland Whole Health Institute offers customizable event spaces, including a ballroom seating 684 theater style. AC Hotel Bentonville opened last year on the new Walmart Home Office campus; it offers 153 guest rooms and 9,185 square feet of function space.

Additional hotels with event space include the 140-room DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Hotel Bentonville, with 8,162 square feet of event space; 105-room Four Points by Sheraton Bentonville, with 11,497 square feet of function space; 104-room 21c Museum Hotel, with a 2,500-square-foot main gallery and additional spaces; and 119-suite Home2 Suites

by Hilton Bentonville Rogers, with various event spaces, including a ballroom seating 300 banquet style. In addition, the 175-room Motto by Hilton Bentonville Downtown is located across the street from The Ledger, a coworking and meeting venue, which has 38 breakout rooms of varying sizes.

The 138-acre campus of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art features indoor and outdoor event spaces, including the Great Hall, which seats 450 people theater style, a 500-person capacity restaurant, smaller reception and meeting rooms, and numerous outdoor venues, including the Frank Lloyd Wright House Lawn. Other unique venues include The Momentary, with indoor and outdoor space for events of up to 4,000 people, and Record, with 8,100 square feet of function space and a capacity of 600 people. The recently renovated and reopened Compton

Timothy Hurstley/Courtesy Visit Bentonville



Bentonville's newly opened Heartland Whole Health Institute has customizable event spaces.

Gardens and Arboretum features new trails, artwork, and plantings, with an indoor Garden Room seating 120 guests.

Offering nonstop flights to more than 20 cities, Northwest Arkansas National Airport (XNA) completed a major terminal modernization, adding new restaurants and other amenities.

Eureka Springs

VisitEurekaSprings.com; @EurekaSprings

A tourist resort since the late 1800s, Eureka Springs offers unique options in a historic downtown, with blocks of local shops and restaurants, galleries, boutiques, and attractions, along with more than 60 natural hot springs in town and in the surrounding hills, according to VisitEurekaSprings.com.

The 61-room Basin Park Hotel is downtown's only full-service hotel. It has a full-service spa and a 250-person-capacity ballroom featuring its original 1905 hardwood floor and stained-glass windows. On a hill overlooking downtown, the 1886 Crescent Hotel & Spa has 72 guest rooms, a 2,947-square-foot ballroom, multiple meeting rooms, a conservatory, and an event lawn. Both historic hotels are known for their ghost tours.

Event venues include Blue Springs Heritage Center, with space to accommodate 500 reception guests, and City Auditorium, commonly called The AUD, which seats 1,000.

Fayetteville

ExperienceFayetteville.com; @FayettevilleAR

Fayetteville delivers both energy and authenticity in a seemingly effortless way, according to Dell Hall, tourism sales manager for Experience Fayetteville. "Our niche is creating meetings that don't feel confined. Whether it's incorporating cycling, the arts, or the natural beauty of the Ozarks, events here feel connected to the place, not separate from it," Hall says. "Planners can host a productive meeting and then immediately tap into outdoor experiences, local culture, and a vibrant downtown."

Home to the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville has lively arts, music, and culinary scenes with creative opportunities for hands-on teambuilding. "Standout experiences are the Fayetteville Ale Trail, featuring nine breweries, and our dining experiences, which range from chef-driven restaurants to casual local favorites with a strong emphasis on regional ingredients," Hall says. Soul Compass provides curated group experiences tailored to a variety of interests, including local history, wine and brewery tastings and tours, interactive trivia, shopping, and other adventures.

There are more than 2,400 guest rooms in the city. Full-service hotels with meeting space include the 234-room Graduate by Hilton Fayetteville, AR, with 13,154 square feet of function space; the 115-room Hilton

★ See Breakout Spotlight

City	Map Location
Bentonville	A1
Conway	C3
El Dorado	C5
Eureka Springs	B1
Fayetteville	A2
Fort Smith ★	A3
Hot Springs ★	B4
Jonesboro	E2
Little Rock ★	C3
North Little Rock ★	C3
Pine Bluff	D4
Rogers	A1
Springdale	A1
Texarkana	A5
West Memphis	F3

Garden Inn Fayetteville, with 9, 226 square feet of event space; and the recently opened Stonebreaker Hotel, a 78-room boutique hotel and Victorian-era home with 6,500 square feet of indoor meeting and retreat space, a 5,000-square-foot barn reception space, and additional outdoor gathering spots.

Offsite venues include Fayetteville Town Center, with flexible space to accommodate up to 650 banquet guests or seat 1,500 theater style in the Ozark Ballroom; Walton Arts Center, which seats 1,201 in the main hall and has two additional black-box theaters, a multipurpose room, and an outdoor amphitheater; TheatreSquared, with two theaters seating 275 and 120, a rooftop terrace, and other gathering spaces; and Fayetteville Public Library, which includes an event center with 470 retractable seats and also can accommodate 1,300 reception guests, along with other spaces.

Venues on the University of Arkansas campus include the Touchdown Club, which can accommodate up to 300 for receptions; 10,000-seat Barnhill Arena; and 10,400-square-foot SEC Club at Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium.



ARKANSAS / PRESENTS

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According to Experience Fayetteville, there is significant demand for hotels and venues during the University of Arkansas’ move-in weekends, football weekends, and spring commencement.

Fort Smith

DiscoverFortSmith.com;

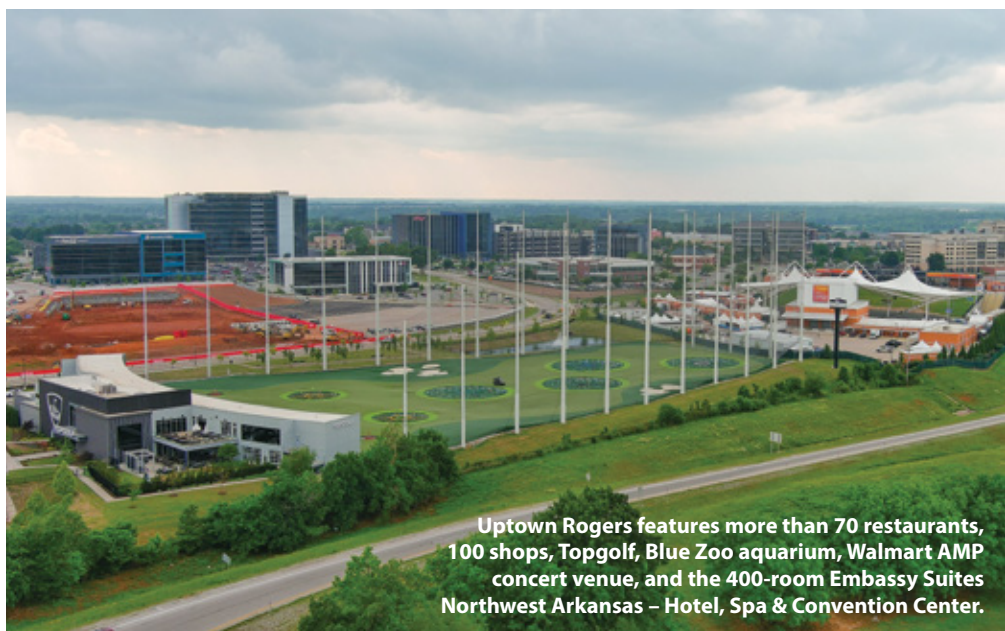
@DiscoverFortSmith

As the original gateway to the West, Fort Smith offers planners a blend of history, hospitality, and convenience, according to Ashleigh Bachert, executive director of Discover Fort Smith. “We pair a rich heritage with a vibrant public art scene and a welcoming atmosphere that makes events memorable. Attendees enjoy walkable downtown venues, unique offsite experiences like the U.S. Marshals Museum and Miss Laura’s Brothel Museum, and easy access to major highways and regional flights.”

Other attractions include Fort Smith National Historic Site, Fort Smith Museum of History, Chaffee Barbershop & Military Museum (where Elvis got his GI haircut), and Fort Smith Regional Art Museum, plus nearby state parks, including Devil’s Den, Lake Fort Smith, and Prairie Grove Battlefield. “We’re a family-friendly destination where all ages can enjoy hearing frontier stories, discover interactive historic exhibits, and enjoy the miles of trails and parks along the river,” Bachert says.

Fort Smith offers more than 2,750 guest rooms. The 255-room Wyndham Fort Smith City Center has 15,880 square feet of column-free event space and connects to the City of Fort Smith Convention Center, which features 116,800 square feet of function space, including a 1,331-seat performing arts center, a 40,000-square-foot exhibit hall, eight meeting rooms, and additional indoor and outdoor spaces. The 178-room Hampton Inn Fort Smith has two small meeting rooms, while the 138-room Courtyard by Marriott Fort Smith Downtown offers 2,565 square feet of function space for events with up to 80 people.

Adjacent to the convention center, the historic Bakery District has multiple indoor and outdoor spaces, co-working spaces, a coffee shop, and a bookstore; a children’s museum is planned for the future. The United States Marshals Museum features 14,000 square feet of function space for corporate events, dinners, galas, and receptions, including an atrium with a wall of windows overlooking the Arkansas River.



Courtesy Destination Rogers

Uptown Rogers features more than 70 restaurants, 100 shops, Topgolf, Blue Zoo aquarium, Walmart AMP concert venue, and the 400-room Embassy Suites Northwest Arkansas – Hotel, Spa & Convention Center.

Rogers

DestinationRogersArkansas.com;

@DestinationRogers; @DestinationRogersAR

Rogers has a lot to offer planners, says Luke Wiggins, vice president of sales for Destination Rogers. “For those who want to extend a convention trip into a memorable family vacation, we are in the heart of northwest Arkansas, where visitors will find world-class museums, a vibrant food scene, adventures at Hobbs State Park and Beaver Lake, and welcoming Ozark hospitality. Northwest Arkansas is also the home of industry giants Tyson Foods, Walmart, and J.B. Hunt Transport, and home to regional offices for many other Fortune 500 companies, which means we have some of the foremost experts in the world in those fields here in our area.”

Rogers has a historic downtown and the ever-growing Uptown Rogers, which has developed over the past 20 years to now include more than 70 restaurants, 100 shops, TopGolf, the Blue Zoo aquarium, the 11,000-person capacity Walmart AMP concert venue, and the 400-room Embassy Suites Northwest Arkansas – Hotel, Spa & Convention Center. The hotel offers 125,000 square feet of event space, including a ballroom for receptions of up to 4,400 people. Expected to open in Uptown in late summer 2026, Hotel Vin Rogers will feature 125 guest rooms and 12,000 square feet of meeting and event space, along with a rooftop venue and an elegant outdoor gathering space. Uptown also is home to the world’s largest Ruth’s Chris

Steakhouse, which opened last year across from the convention center; it features multiple meeting and event rooms with a seating capacity of 550 guests.

Other event hotels include Hotel AVAIL, Hilton Tapestry Collection, which opened in 2025 across from the Walmart AMP with 168 guest rooms and two function spaces for up to 120 banquet guests, and the 122-room Courtyard by Marriott Bentonville Rogers Promenade, with 3,010 square feet of meeting space.

Destination Rogers offers a new excursion and teambuilding option, 37 North Expeditions. According to the company’s founder, Danny Collins, the company provides curated outdoors experiences, which include planning, transportation, guides, gear, and meals. “Our team manages every logistical detail from start to finish, ensuring a high-quality, seamless experience that allows guests to focus entirely on connecting with the outdoors,” Collins says. “Offerings include hiking, kayaking, outdoor education, horseback riding, and more.”

Springdale

ExploreSpringdale.com; @ExploreSpringdale

Springdale offers planners a combination of affordability, authenticity, accessibility, and experience, according to Jared Sullivan, director of communications and marketing for Explore Springdale. “Plus, we offer added value through available incentive grant funding for qualified groups,” he says. “We also have easy access across the region,

Courtesy Explore Springdale



Arvest Ballpark, home of the Northwest Arkansas Naturals, includes suites for up to 55 people and a party deck for 100.



Visitors can take a break from meetings and enjoy Conway's cycling and mountain biking trails.

Courtesy Visit Conway

flexible venues, and a revitalized downtown. Host an event, then take your attendees to a Minor League Baseball game, on a scenic train ride, or on a variety of outdoor adventures.”

Springdale has more than 1,500 guest rooms. The city’s largest venue is the 206-room Holiday Inn & Northwest Arkansas Convention Center, which features 61,000 square feet of function space, including 23 meeting rooms and the 10,952-square-foot Arkansas Ballroom, which seats 1,800 people. The 102-room Hampton Inn and Suites Springdale is directly across the parking lot from the center. The 119-room Home2 Suites by Hilton Springdale features 4,080 square feet of event space, including two meeting rooms. Set to open in early 2027, Hotel Sundry, a Hilton Tapestry property, is expected to have 113 guest rooms and approximately 3,000 square feet of meeting space, according to Explore Springdale.

Offsite venues include The Apollo on Emma, a downtown venue in a renovated theater with a ballroom seating 400 guests, additional inside rooms, and a garden patio for up to 250 seated guests; the Jones Center, with a 340-seat auditorium and other meeting rooms; Arvest Ballpark, with suites for up to 55 people and a party deck for 100; and Heroncrest Event Center, with a 7,300-square-foot great hall and 6,000 square feet of lawn and patio space. Sassafras Springs Vineyard & Winery offers a variety of event venues, including the Stables, which seats 400 inside and 300 on the veranda, plus

The Lodge and The Retreat, each with four guest rooms.

Shiloh Square offers outdoor gathering space for festivals, receptions, and other events in a walkable, revitalized downtown with a new outdoor concert stage at Luther George Park.

Upper Delta Region

Jonesboro

TourJonesboro.com

As the hub of northeast Arkansas, the Jonesboro Tourism & Visitors Bureau welcomes gatherings with meeting rooms and venues that provide comfort and convenience for small and large groups, according to TourJonesboro.com

Facilities located on the campus of Arkansas State University include the 30,000-seat Centennial Bank Stadium; 10,252-seat First National Bank Arena, a multipurpose facility with a 271-seat auditorium, an arena floor that can accommodate 280 exhibit booths, and space to seat 500 guests banquet style; and the 203-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Jonesboro Red Wolf Convention Center, which has more than 40,000 square feet of event space, including 14 meeting rooms and a ballroom for up to 1,000 banquet guests.

Additional event space includes the 109-room Hilton Garden Inn, with space to seat 300 theater style; Harmony Gardens, with two indoor event spaces to seat up to 300 guests; and Native Brew Works, with a taproom that seats 25-65 people.

West Memphis

ExploreWestMemphis.com;

@CityofWestMemphis

Just minutes from downtown Memphis, Tenn., West Memphis is a smaller town with convenient connections to big-city amenities across the river, plus its own attractions and charms, according to ExploreWestMemphis.com.

Big River Crossing, the longest pedestrian and bike bridge over the Mississippi, connects the two cities and meets at a 10-mile multi-modal corridor in West Memphis, which features Ducks Unlimited Park and the Big River Trail System.

Event venues include the 1,031-seat Civic Auditorium and the adjacent, recently renovated Eugene Woods Civic Center, which can accommodate 400 people for banquets.

According to ExploreWestMemphis.com, there are approximately 1,400 guest rooms in the city. The 300-room Southland Casino Hotel has space to accommodate 100 people for receptions or seat 60 for meetings. The 121-room Radisson Hotel West Memphis has 7,272 square feet of function space.

Lower Delta Region

Pine Bluff

ExplorePineBluff.com

Pine Bluff puts a personal touch on events, according to ExplorePineBluff.com. Groups meeting in the city can expect welcome visits from city leaders, among other complimentary services, and might enjoy a Pine Bluff Heritage

Courtesy Little Rock CVB



and a genuine sense of place. Our walkable downtown places convention venues, hotels, restaurants, and riverfront experiences within steps of one another. Attendees can move from meetings to meaningful experiences without the friction of navigating a larger city. Beyond logistics, the people and culture make the experience memorable. Little Rock blends rich history, a growing culinary scene, and a strong sense of community. It feels welcoming, approachable, and authentic, which keeps planners and attendees coming back.”

Little Rock continues to invest in its downtown core, Gemberling says. “A new visitor experience center is in development, designed to better connect attendees to the city from the moment they arrive. The River Market’s Ottenheimer Hall is set to undergo a transformation that will further elevate its role as a central hub for dining, events, and gathering. Phase two renovations at B. Finley Vinson Plaza, adjacent to Robinson Center, began in late 2025, enhancing this important riverfront space for both community use and event activations. More than \$10 million in capital improvements have been made at Statehouse Convention Center and Robinson Center to ensure their meeting spaces remain modern, flexible, and aligned with planner needs.”

The 220,000-square-foot Statehouse Convention Center has a ballroom seating 1,300 banquet guests, 82,892 square feet of exhibit space, seven meeting rooms, and additional registration and pre-function spaces. It is directly connected to the 418-room Little Rock Marriott, which has an additional 44,747 square feet of function space. The LEED Gold-certified Robinson Center has nearly 25,000 square feet of meeting space, including a ballroom seating 500 banquet guests, a 2,222-seat performance hall, and a 5,477-square-foot terrace overlooking the Arkansas River. DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Little Rock, connected to Robinson Center, offers 288 guest rooms and 12,736 square feet of function space.

Other hotels include the historic Capital Hotel, which features a ballroom seating 150 guests and several smaller event spaces, and offers a hotel buyout option. Hilton Garden Inn Little Rock Downtown has 3,102 square feet of event space. Residence Inn Little Rock Downtown, Hampton Inn & Suites Little Rock-Downtown, and Homewood Suites by Hilton all have smaller event spaces and are within a few blocks of the convention center.

Trail trolley tour or a customized tour tailored to their specific interests.

Pine Bluff Convention Center includes a 14,400-square-foot banquet and exhibit hall, a 1,844-seat auditorium, and an arena that can seat more than 7,500 people. A 125-room Courtyard by Marriott is expected to open in late 2026 next to the convention center.

Located at Pines Mall, the 80-room Holiday Inn Express & Suites Pine Bluff includes a 2,000-square-foot event room. The ARTx3 Campus offers a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces, including a 240-seat theater, gallery rooms seating 150 guests, and several classrooms seating approximately 20 people each.

There are 1,620 guest rooms in the city. Holiday Inn Express & Suites Conway, which completed a full renovation in 2025, offers 87 guest rooms and a meeting room seating 40. Hilton Garden Inn Conway has 103 guest rooms and space to seat 150 guests theater style.

The largest event space in the city is Conway Expo & Event Center, which offers 6,200 square feet of meeting space for 200 guests and a 40,000-square-foot expo hall.

In nearby Morrilton, Winthrop Rockefeller Institute is a nonprofit conference, event, and retreat facility located on the cattle ranch home of former Arkansas Gov. Winthrop Rockefeller. Conference facilities available for business, government, education, and nonprofit events include an 80-seat theater, a 250-person-capacity conference hall, and additional function spaces. The institute offers teambuilding activities, sports programs, and professional development courses. Overnight accommodations at the institute include the 30-room President’s Lodge, 25-room The Meadows, and 10-room The Orchard.

Little Rock

LittleRock.com; @LittleRockCVB

What sets Little Rock apart is how seamlessly everything connects, says Gina Gemberling, president and CEO of the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). “Little Rock offers a rare balance that planners are actively seeking: accessibility, affordability,

Central Arkansas

Conway

VisitConway.org; @ConwayArkansas

Conway has a young, active vibe, says Rachel Shaw, executive director of Visit Conway. “We’re a college town, home to three colleges—the University of Central Arkansas, Hendrix College, and Central Baptist College—and most residents are under the age of 28, which adds to that fun vibrancy. Having three colleges in a town of 70,000 people is a unique feature that we love.”

Conway is a hotspot for biking, and the city has worked to create shared spaces on city streets, as well as dedicated cycling and mountain bike trails.

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Little Rock offers 7,200 guest rooms, with nearly 2,200 in the downtown area.

Downtown’s River Market District has a market hall, an amphitheater, and two open-air pavilions. It is adjacent to the Museum of Discovery, which can accommodate 600 for events. The Clinton Presidential Center has more than 10,000 square feet of event space and is part of the 33-acre Riverfront Park, which connects to the 15-mile Arkansas River Trail via a pedestrian bridge. Unique event spaces at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, a LEED Silver-certified facility located in a downtown park, include the glass-walled Cultural Living Room, which can accommodate up to 300 for receptions, along with a 330-seat performance hall, an atrium, an event lawn, and additional smaller spaces.

North Little Rock

NorthLittleRock.org @ExploreNLR

Diversity and inclusivity set North Little Rock apart from other destinations, according to Everett Gaither, vice president of marketing and communication for North Little Rock Tourism. “What keeps meeting and event planners coming back is not only the accessibility of our destination but also the true hospitality of our community. You’re just minutes away from amazing outdoor adventures. Crystal Bluff at Big Rock Quarry attracts climbers from across the country, and the Arkansas River Trail passes beautiful views of the river, bridges, and many parks. In town, our Argenta Vibe Music Series offers free live music; the Argenta Dogtown Throwdown features local vendors, live music, and good drinks; and our 3rd Friday Artwalk is a great evening of art, music, and community.”

Located in the heart of the Argenta Arts District, the newly opened North Little Rock Event Center is a 31,000-square-foot facility with a ballroom seating 1,000 people banquet style or 1,500 theater style. Nearby, the 220-room Wyndham Riverfront Little Rock is North Little Rock’s largest conference hotel, with 14,000 square feet of function space. It is adjacent to the 7,000-seat Dickey-Stephens Park baseball stadium. Additional hotels with meeting space include the 119-room Hilton Garden Inn North Little Rock, with 4,015 square feet of function space, and the 75-room Tru by Hilton North Little Rock, with 1,102 square feet of event space.



Oaklawn Hot Springs includes a historic Thoroughbred racetrack, a 200-room hotel, a casino, a spa, 18 dining options, and an 18,000-square-foot event center.

Courtesy Arkansas Tourism

Also in the Argenta Arts District, the E.O. Manees House is a newly renovated historic mansion with indoor and outdoor event space for up to 300 guests. Additional garden and indoor function space at the mansion’s sister property, The Sanctuary at Argenta, can be combined with space at the historic mansion.

For more venue and entertainment options, Rock Region Metro Streetcar’s Blue Line connects North Little Rock to downtown Little Rock.

Southwest Arkansas

El Dorado

GoElDorado.com

Meetings in El Dorado can seamlessly connect event attendees with authentic local experiences, says Karen Hicks, vice president of community development for Go El Dorado. “Attendees can step out of their hotel and into live-music venues, galleries, public art spaces, restaurants, and outdoor gathering areas without transportation barriers. Our boutique hospitality environment allows planners to work directly with local leaders and partners who are committed to customizing successful events. Events here feel personal, supported, and memorable. The community takes pride in hosting, and that sense of welcome becomes part of the event experience itself.”

El Dorado’s revitalized downtown includes the Murphy Arts District, which features restaurants, the 2,000-person-capacity First Financial Music Hall, event lawns, and an outdoor amphitheater.

The El Dorado Conference Center, located on the campus of South Arkansas Community College, includes a 10,590-square-foot main hall and five breakout rooms that can be combined to accommodate 150 guests. The 1,800-seat El Dorado Municipal Auditorium includes a grand hall and a large lobby.

The 32-suite Downtown Guest Quarters Hotel offers event space for up to 75 guests. The Haywood El Dorado, Tapestry Collection by Hilton, located in the Murphy Arts District, has 70 guest rooms. Hampton Inn El Dorado, Country Inn & Suites by Radisson El Dorado, Fairfield Inn & Suites El Dorado, and Comfort Inn & Suites El Dorado all have small meeting rooms.

Hot Springs

HotSprings.org; @VisitHotSprings

Hot Springs is one of the only places in America where you can host a large conference and then walk across the street right into a national park, says Tammy Clampet, director of sales for Visit Hot Springs. “Within a five-minute stroll from the convention center, attendees can be soaking in mineral waters on

Bathhouse Row, dining at world-class eateries, and exploring the same streets that Al Capone and Babe Ruth once walked. In minutes, they can transition from meetings in the morning to mountain biking in Northwoods or betting on Thoroughbred racing at Oaklawn.”

Hot Springs Convention Center has 103,000 square feet of clear-span exhibit space, 15 breakout rooms, a 1,000-person-capacity ballroom, and a 6,000-seat arena with a newly updated sound system. It connects to the 246-room Embassy Suites by Hilton at Hot Springs Convention Center, which completed a full renovation last year. The hotel features 6,286 square feet of event space, including a 150-person-capacity ballroom. Adjacent to the convention center, the 196-room Hotel Hot Springs has multiple meeting rooms and a terrace, with a capacity of 420 people for receptions.

Additional hotels include the historic 484-room Arlington Resort Hotel & Spa, with 40,000 square feet of function space, and 142-room

Doubletree Hot Springs, with more than 8,000 square feet of event space, including a 400-person-capacity ballroom offering lake views.

Oaklawn Hot Springs, a historic Thoroughbred racetrack, also features a 200-room hotel, a casino, a spa, 18 dining options, and an 18,000-square-foot event center, which can accommodate 1,500 guests.

Hot Springs National Park shares the city’s main downtown street and includes historic Bathhouse Row, dating from the late 1800s. Some of the buildings still house traditional mineral baths and offer modern spa services, while some now serve as other businesses. Superior Bathhouse Brewery is the world’s only brewery to use thermal spring water and the only brewery within a national park. Downtown features numerous galleries, art studios, and attractions, including the Gangster Museum of America, which chronicles the city’s notorious history during the Prohibition Era.

Texarkana

ExperienceTexarkana.com

Situated on the Texas-Arkansas state line, the Arkansas side of this city offers a distinct history with a modern downtown, historic attractions, and an iconic post office straddling both state lines—the only U.S. post office of its kind, according to ExperienceTexarkana.com.

Located at the junction of Interstates 30 and 49, Texarkana offers easy accessibility and affordable event options. The area’s largest event space is the Holiday Inn Texarkana Arkansas Convention Center and the connected Arkansas Convention Center, which features a 10,000-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 883 for banquets.

Other venue options include Four States Fairgrounds, which includes a 6,500-seat entertainment center and the Fine Arts Building, which can accommodate 400 people for banquets. 🍷





Courtesy Oaklawn Hot Springs

Oaklawn Hot Springs



Oaklawn Hot Springs combines convenience and service with exciting racing and gaming entertainment to deliver memorable meetings. The Event Center features more than 18,000 square feet of flexible event space, while the Forbes Recommended hotel offers 200 upscale guest rooms. Guests can enjoy incredible dining at two onsite, Forbes Recommended restaurants, along with casino action, live Thoroughbred racing (seasonally), and relaxing treatments at The Astral Spa. An onsite event team helps make planning seamless from start to finish.

Oaklawn.com

Courtesy Rightmind Advertising

Discover Fort Smith



Located at the crossroads of I-40, I-49, US 71, and US 64, and just a short flight from Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW), Fort Smith offers convenient access without big-city congestion. Convenience, affordability, flexible spaces, attentive service, and warm hospitality come together to create standout experiences. Between sessions, attendees can explore Fort Smith's rich history, diverse restaurant scene, museums, vibrant public art, and a walkable downtown—making memories beyond the meeting room.

DiscoverFortSmith.com

Brent Walker

North Little Rock Tourism



North Little Rock is a value-driven destination with big impact for meetings and events. Hotels, venues, restaurants, and attractions are conveniently clustered, creating a seamless and stress-free experience. Attendees can enjoy a variety of activities blending connection, nature, and adventure, such as paddling the Arkansas River, biking the North Shore Trail, and more. Located at the crossroads of interstates 30, 40, and 57, and just 10 minutes from Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport (LIT), North Little Rock offers easy accessibility.

NorthLittleRock.org

Courtesy Little Rock CVB

Arkansas: The Natural State



Arkansas' scenic outdoor spaces, walkable downtowns, historic venues, cultural attractions, and Southern hospitality offer planners plenty of ways to build an itinerary with personality. Attendees can explore museums, state parks, trails, lakes, gardens, local restaurants, and one-of-a-kind venues. From the Ozark Mountains to the Delta, each region has its own pace, setting, and story, making it easy to pair meetings with experiences that feel fresh, grounded, and distinctly Southern. Arkansas is an accessible and welcoming meetings destination, full of character.

Arkansas.com/Groups

North Carolina's special blend of scenic beauty and cutting-edge infrastructure keeps event planners returning, year after year. From the tech-driven hubs of the Research Triangle to the coastal warmth of Wilmington, the Tar Heel State also offers diverse backdrops for any gathering. With its world-class hospitality, high-capacity venues, and outstanding access via air, car, and rail, the destination ensures seamless logistics and memorable experiences.

EVENT PLANNERS' GUIDE TO

NC

North Carolina

BY NICOLE DUFOUR

Asheville's natural beauty, modern amenities, vibrant culinary offerings, and rich arts and cultural scenes make for memorable meetings.



Courtesy: ExploreAsheville.com

Coastal

Crystal Coast/Southern Outer Banks

CrystalCoastNC.org; @TheCrystalCoast

North Carolina's "Southern Outer Banks" boasts 85 miles of picturesque beaches and is accessible via I-40 or Coastal Carolina Regional Airport (EWN). The region blends professional, well-equipped event facilities with serene coastal beauty.

Crystal Coast Civic Center in Morehead City features more than 20,000 square feet of flexible space and accommodates up to 1,200 guests for receptions or 1,000 seated theater style. In Beaufort, a 10-minute drive away, the Beaufort Hotel has more than 10,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space. In the Bogue Banks beach town of Atlantic Beach, DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront features 7,920 square

feet of meeting space, with its largest room accommodating 800 guests.

The Merrell Estate & Gardens also offers indoor event space for 200 and an outdoor lawn for 300. Groups also can tour historic Beaufort, track Shackleford Banks' wild horses, or take sunset catamaran cruises.

Goldsboro/Wayne County

VisitGoldsboroNC.com; @VisitGoldsboroNC

Maxwell Center Regional Agricultural and Convention Center, commonly known as The Maxwell Center, features a 14,515-square-foot hall with a banquet capacity of 900 people and offers onsite catering. Located on The Maxwell Center campus, Homewood Suites by Hilton Goldsboro has 2,125 square feet of event space.

Goldsboro Event Center accommodates up to 400 guests indoors and 500 outdoors. The 111-room Hampton Inn Goldsboro, located

between the two event centers, includes meeting space for up to 50 people.

Greenville/Pitt County

VisitGreenvilleNC.com; @VisitGreenvilleNC

Greenville Convention Center sits on a 32-acre campus and features 91,000 square feet of event space, including 36 recently updated breakout rooms, 11,000 square feet of recently added contiguous space, and a new ballroom with a capacity of 300 for receptions. The campus also includes a 28,800-square-foot exhibit area with a capacity of 2,880 theater style.

On the convention center campus, three AAA Three Diamond hotels offer more than 400 total guest rooms and additional function space: Hilton Greenville, with 43,194 square feet of meeting space, including a 10,152-square-foot ballroom for 1,260 guests seated theater style; Holiday Inn Greenville by IHG, which accommodates 70 to 500

people; and Hampton Inn Greenville, with two function spaces for smaller events.

Downtown, the new 101-room Hilton Garden Inn Greenville University Area opened last year; it features 1,200 square feet of event space and a rooftop bar.

New Bern/Craven County

VisitNewBern.com; @VisitNewBern

North Carolina’s first capital, New Bern offers a rare blend of history and waterfront beauty. “What sets New Bern apart from other destinations is its scenic waterfront at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent rivers, paired with a highly walkable, historic downtown,” says Katie Harrison, sales and business development executive for Visit New Bern. “Attendees can easily move between venues, hotels, restaurants, and attractions without the need for transportation. It creates a relaxed and connected experience.”

The Riverfront Convention Center boasts 32,000 square feet of event space and accommodates up to 1,350 guests theater style or 1,000 for banquets. Nearby, DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel New Bern Riverfront has 99 guest rooms and more than 10,700 square feet of event space; its largest space accommodates up to 375 guests theater style. The Tryon Riverfront Inn New Bern, Tapestry Collection by Hilton, which opened last year, has 73 guest rooms and a meeting space for up to 30 people. The hotel’s restaurant, Compass Ross, offers a seasonal menu of New American cuisine and nice views of the riverfront. Other options include the new 100-room Holiday Inn Express & Suites New Bern – Medical Park by IHG and BridgePointe Hotel & Marina, which recently modernized its 115 guest rooms and offers event space for 280 people.

For unique event settings, the North Carolina History Center at Tryon Palace accommodates events of up to 300 people, while the Tryon Palace South Lawn fits tented events for 500 people. Another local venue, Flame Catering & Banquet Center, can host up to 300 guests.

Attendees can use their free time to explore four historic districts or visit James City for a close-up look at the history of one of North Carolina’s oldest African American communities. Croatan National Forest has coastal trails and waterways for outdoor teambuilding.

City	Map Location	City	Map Location
Asheville/Buncombe County	C2	Greenville/Pitt County	I2
Cabarrus County ★	E2, F2	Hickory/Catawba County ★	E2
Chapel Hill/Orange County	G2	New Bern/Craven County	I3
Charlotte	E3	Pinehurst/Southern Pines/Aberdeen	G3
Cherokee/Cherokee County	A3	Raleigh/Wake County	G2
Crystal Coast/Southern Outer Banks	J3	Rocky Mount/Nash & Edgecombe Counties	H2, I2
Fayetteville/Cumberland County	H3, G3	Statesville & Mooresville/Iredell County	E2
Gastonia/Gaston County	E2	Wilmington, NC and Island Beaches ★	I4
Goldsboro/Wayne County ★	H2	Winston-Salem/Forsyth County ★	F1
Greensboro/Guilford County ★	F1, F2		

★ See Breakout Spotlight

Wilmington, NC and Island Beaches

NCCoastalMeetings.com; @WilmingtonCoast

From its walkable convention district to coastal activities just minutes away, the Wilmington, NC and Island Beaches region offers planners an array of fresh possibilities.

“Wilmington’s historic charm and rich past blend beautifully with modern design and new attractions,” says Molly Johnson, CMP-Fellow, vice president of sales and services for Wilmington and Beaches CVB. “Attendees and their families will also want to get here early and stay late. It’s that wonderful here.”

The 107,000-square-foot Wilmington Convention Center accommodates 2,500 people theater style or 1,750 people for banquets in its largest space. Approximately 900 guest rooms in the convention center district are within easy walking distance of the venue. The 125-room Aloft Wilmington at Coastline Center offers 10,344 square feet of event space and amenities, including rooftop and ground-level bistros. Other hotels in the area include the 272-room Hotel Ballast Wilmington, Tapestry Collection by Hilton, with 18,842 square feet of event space, and the 186-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Wilmington Riverfront, with 3,862 square feet of event space. For overflow accommodations

and additional space, planners might consider Courtyard by Marriott Wilmington Downtown/Historic District and Hampton Inn Wilmington Downtown.

The region’s island beaches offer more than 8,000 guest rooms. Hotels include Trailborn Surf & Sound, with 151 renovated rooms and event space for up to 200 people. Trailborn also has a 13-bedroom beach cottage, ideal for leadership teams or project groups. The 184-room Holiday Inn Resort Lumina on Wrightsville Beach has flexible space for 400 guests, and the 144-room Courtyard Marriott Carolina Beach Oceanfront can accommodate up to 300 people theater style. Golden Sands Beach Resort in Carolina Beach completed renovations and a rebrand last year, officially joining the Tapestry Collection by Hilton. Updates were made to the resort’s 116 guest rooms and amenities, including the Ocean Grill & Tiki Bar, while preserving the property’s classic coastal charm. The resort has 1,200 square feet of meeting space.

The Battleship North Carolina in downtown Wilmington can be both a fascinating attraction for history-focused group tours and a dynamic backdrop for specialized events. This summer, the expanded Cape Fear Museum of History and Science will open in downtown Wilmington, featuring a planetarium and more than 400 artifacts.



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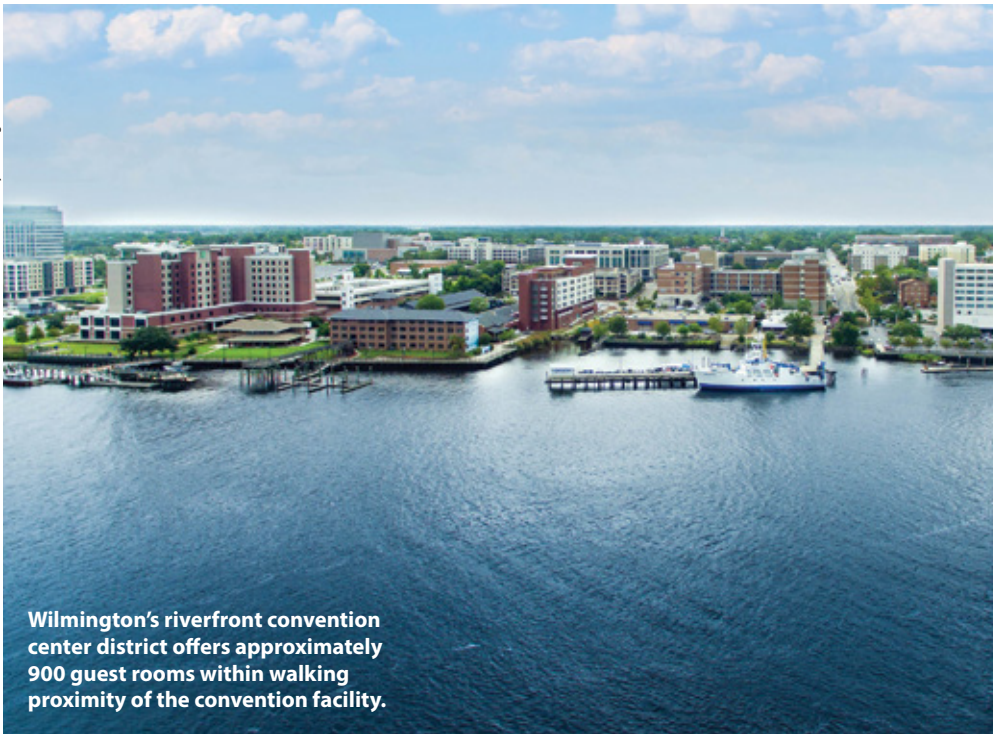


The Maxwell Center
3114-A Wayne Memorial Dr
Goldsboro, NC 27534
TheMaxwellCenter@waynegov.com

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Courtesy Wilmington and Beaches CVB



Wilmington's riverfront convention center district offers approximately 900 guest rooms within walking proximity of the convention facility.

A multimillion-dollar expansion is underway at Wilmington International Airport (ILM), with Phase 2 parking improvements slated for completion this fall. Broader airport improvements will continue through 2027.

Mountain Asheville/Buncombe County

AshevilleMeetings.com; @VisitAsheville

Asheville gets a lot of repeat business from satisfied planners and groups who love the region's distinctive mix of awe-inspiring landscapes, vibrant culinary and arts scenes, and a creative vibe, according to Connie Holliday, CMP, director of sales for Explore Asheville.

"Expanded flight service and the construction of a new terminal at Asheville Regional Airport (AVL)—which will double gate capacity—make it easy for groups to reach us by air, ensuring a seamless travel experience for events, meetings, and retreats," Holliday adds.



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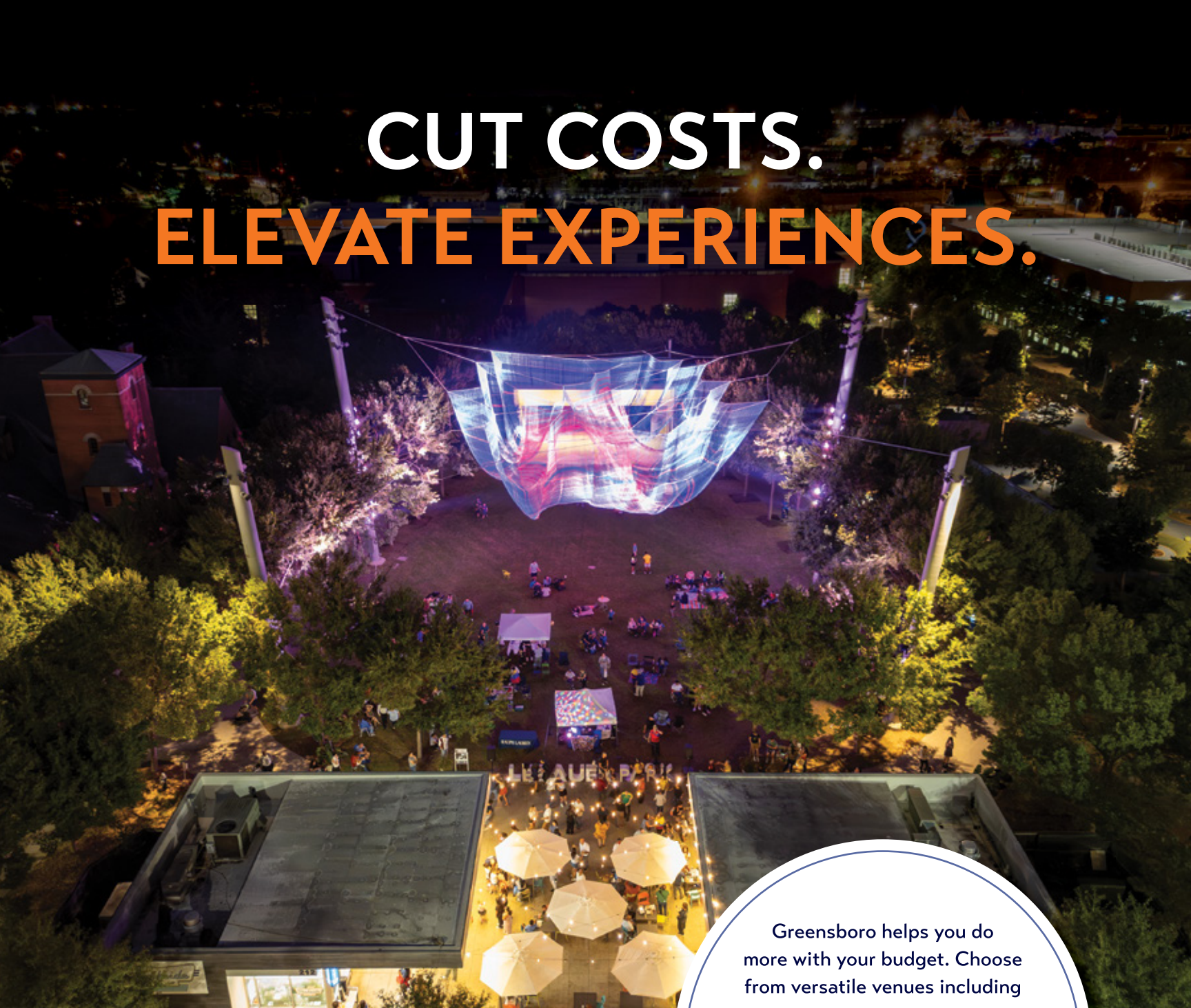
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NORTH CAROLINA

VisitGreensboroNC.com



Groups can enjoy whitewater rafting for fun teambuilding in Asheville.



Courtesy ExploreAsheville.com

The historic Omni Grove Park Inn features 513 rooms and 86,852 square feet of event space across 31 meeting rooms and two ballrooms; the largest space can accommodate up to 2,200 people theater style. The 219-room Inn on Biltmore Estate has event space for up to 80 guests, while the Biltmore Estate itself offers several venues and accommodates up to 600 people in its largest outdoor space. The 104-room Grand Bohemian Lodge Asheville, Autograph Collection has 5,560 square feet of event space for up to 200 people. Downtown Asheville's 71-room Flat Iron Hotel features six intimate event spaces, including a rooftop for receptions of up to 95 people. The 128-room Kimpton Hotel Arras accommodates 150 for receptions, while the 60-room Restoration Asheville can accommodate 250 theater style.

For unique options, Marquee Asheville reintroduced event space within its 50,000-square-foot facility. The new ReMixIt—a nonprofit creative reuse center and thrift store for art supplies—offers groups a colorful, community-focused option for meetings and teambuilding. Full-store rentals and mobile programming options will be available later this year. Revival Asheville,

a 350-person-capacity concert hall, pairs a restored setting with a restaurant, an outdoor patio, and a bar serving small-batch cocktails.

Asheville's food scene includes MICHELIN-recognized venues with private dining or buyout options, such as Cúrate, Soprana, Ukiah Japanese Smokehouse, Golden Hour, Mother, and Luminosa. Little Chango offers intimate dining and can also cater to groups of 20, while Sunny Point Café has a private event space for up to 50 guests.

Cherokee/Cherokee County **VisitCherokeeNC.com/@VisitCherokeeNC** **VisitCC.NC.com; VisitCherokeeCounty_NC**

Cherokee and Cherokee County offer groups access to authentic Native American culture, outdoor recreation in the Great Smoky Mountains, and excellent event venues.

Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort in Cherokee features 132,000 square feet of meeting space; its largest venue, a 32,745-square-foot exhibit hall, seats up to 3,531 guests theater style. The resort has 1,833 guest rooms and 12 onsite restaurants. Approximately one hour away, Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Casino and Hotel in

Murphy recently expanded, now featuring 596 guest rooms. It offers several specialized venues for smaller gatherings.

Hickory/Catawba County **VisitHickoryNC.com; @Visit-Hickory-NC**

Hickory Metro Convention Center features 132,000 square feet of space, including a 110,000-square-foot exhibit area and a multipurpose hall with a capacity of 2,000 guests. Area hotels include Crowne Plaza Hickory, which has 200 rooms and 10,000 square feet of event space for up to 400 guests. Courtyard by Marriott Hickory features 4,340 square feet, with a capacity of 80 people theater style.

Piedmont **Cabarrus County**

ExploreCabarrus.com; @ExploreCabarrus

"Where Racing Lives," Cabarrus County is home to Charlotte Motor Speedway, which features several event spaces, including the 6,200-square-foot Speedway Club for up to 450 guests, high-capacity, customizable garages for 1,000-plus people, and two 23,000-square-foot infield spaces.

Cabarrus Arena & Events Center has 140,000 square feet of flexible indoor meeting and exhibit space. The arena has a 28,800-square-foot floor, large enough to seat up to 5,000. The events center's largest space, at 40,000 square feet, accommodates up to 1,358 people.

Embassy Suites by Hilton Charlotte Concord Golf Resort & Spa features 308 guest rooms and 42,477 square feet of meeting space across 25 event rooms; its largest space accommodates 3,000 guests theater style. Great Wolf Lodge Charlotte-Concord features 402 guest rooms and more than 15,000 square feet of conference space; its largest space accommodates up to 600 people.

Chapel Hill/Orange County **VisitChapelHill.org; @VisitChapelHill**

Chapel Hill and Orange County offer a blend of "small-town charm and big-city flair," featuring the University of North Carolina (UNC) and a vibrant downtown. "From historic campus venues to modern conference centers, our area delivers an inspiring, intellectual atmosphere where business naturally meets world-class culture and

leisure,” says Marlene Barbera, director of sales for Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau.

The Carolina Inn, a Destination by Hyatt Hotel located on the UNC campus, features 16,721 square feet of meeting and event space and 14,242 square feet of outdoor gardens and courtyards. A historic and AAA Four Diamond property dating back to 1924, it also includes the hallmark Front Porch, with a capacity of 500 people. The 172-room Sheraton Chapel Hill Hotel has 19,564 square feet of event space, including a 6,900-square-foot outdoor deck and a 7,020-square-foot ballroom.

The UNC-operated and IACC-certified Friday Conference Center features 39,000 square feet of space across 26 areas, including a 400-seat auditorium and a 5,610-square-foot dining room for up to 400 guests. According to Barbera, the AAA Four Diamond Siena Hotel, Autograph Collection remains closed following a fire last year; it has no plans to reopen this year.

Chapel Hill’s culinary landmarks include two beloved 100-year-old institutions: Sutton’s Drug Store and the Carolina Coffee Shop. Kipos Greek Taverna and Mediterranean Deli recently welcomed customers back to its renovated and reimagined spaces. The restaurant offers private onsite dining and offsite catering.

Charlotte

CharlottesGotALot.com;

@CharlottesGotALot

Charlotte’s energy and rapid growth make it a premier destination for meetings. As the nation’s 14th-largest city, it offers a walkable Uptown district, where most hotels and attractions are within a 10-minute stroll. “Our community is notably welcoming and diverse, attracting approximately 157 new residents each day,” says TK Knight, vice president of sales and executive director of Visit Charlotte. “This steady growth has helped shape the

‘Queen City’ into one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation.”

Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT) recently added 175,000 square feet of new space and a 146,000-square-foot glass canopy.

Charlotte Convention Center has 600,000 square feet of leasable space, including a 280,000-square-foot contiguous exhibit hall. It connects via walkway to the 86,500-square-foot NASCAR Hall of Fame, which is available for group tours and private events.

The 700-room Westin Charlotte features 44,042 square feet of space, with a capacity of 2,200 theater style or 1,420 people for banquets in its largest room. The 305-room Sheraton Charlotte Hotel has 68,195 square feet of space and accommodates 1,800 people theater style. Le Méridien Charlotte offers 300 rooms and 51,774 square feet of function space. The 400-room Hilton Charlotte Uptown features 23,486 square feet of space and accommodates up to 1,200 guests for



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Learn more at ConferenceCenterGTCC.com



Dining options at Pinehurst Resort include Pinehurst Sandmines' Station 21, which features a Southwestern menu and offers views of Pinehurst course No.10.

cocktails. JW Marriott Charlotte has 381 guest rooms and 22,519 square feet of event space, including a 5,158-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 680 theater style. The 181-room DoubleTree by Hilton South Charlotte Tyvola has 9,964 square feet of event space and accommodates 400 for receptions in its largest space. The new Mecklen Hotel, which recently opened in the University City area, offers 175 boutique-style guest rooms.

Unique venue options include Bojangles Entertainment Complex, which has a new 4,400-square-foot event space with a capacity of 420 people for meetings and 260 for seated dinners. Charlotte's Iron District is home to the 32,000-square-foot Blume Studios, where groups can use flexible "blank canvas" space for immersive productions and events. Spectrum Center, home of the National Basketball Association's Charlotte Hornets, recently unveiled a \$245 million renovation with upgraded seating and concourses. Eastland Sports Campus in east Charlotte broke ground on a 30-acre amateur sports complex, featuring indoor and outdoor facilities; it is scheduled to open in 2028.

Fayetteville/ Cumberland County

VisitFayNC.com; VisitFayettevilleNC

"Fayetteville is a vibrant melting pot, where small-town charm meets global influence," according to Robert Cox, director of sales for Fayetteville Area CVB. "Thanks to Fort Bragg, Cumberland County is an international and diverse destination. We have cuisine from around the world, and arts and activities are all hallmarks of this diversity," Cox says.

Fayetteville's Crown Complex offers 100,000 square feet of meeting space across the 10,880-seat Crown Coliseum, Expo Center, Arena, and Auditorium. The venue recently completed renovations to its meeting rooms.

Area hotels with event space include the Embassy Suites by Hilton Fayetteville Fort Bragg, which has 165 guest rooms and 9,939 square feet of event space. To accommodate larger groups and overflow, the hotel often partners with the adjacent SpringHill Suites by Marriott Fayetteville Fort Bragg, which has 100 guest rooms and 2,500 square feet of space. DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Fayetteville features 148 rooms and 10,884 square feet of event space. Its largest function

area accommodates receptions for up to 550 guests. For smaller groups, the 110-room Holiday Inn & Suites Fayetteville W-Fort Bragg Area offers more than 2,000 square feet of event space for up to 145 people.

Fayetteville/Cumberland County offers several breweries. Gaston Brewing Co. features a full-service restaurant and a production facility, and accommodates private events of 20 to 25 people. Bright Light Brewing Co., Dirtbag Ales Brewery & Taproom, and The Mash House Brewing & Distilling Co. also offer private function space.

Cool Spring Downtown District, Fayetteville's arts and entertainment district, features more than 100 locally owned businesses and hosts such events as "4th Friday" celebrations, the local farmers market, and various concert series and festivals. Downtown's U.S. Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum features immersive exhibits. Other attractions include the Museum of the Cape Fear Historical Complex and Cape Fear Botanical Garden.

Gastonia/Gaston County

GoGastonNC.org; @GoGastonNC

Gaston County, approximately 15 miles west of Charlotte, gives planners a refreshing, laid-back option to urban meeting spots—without sacrificing convenience.

"Gaston County offers planners and groups a 'breath of fresh air,'" says Brandon Black, assistant director of Gaston County Tourism Development. "We offer a combination of unique venues, small-town charm, and professional infrastructure."

The Gastonia Conference Center features 30,000 square feet of space, including a 5,100-square-foot ballroom seating 450 for meetings and 300 for banquets, as well as six breakout rooms for smaller groups.

The 119-room Hilton Garden Inn Gastonia offers more than 10,000 square feet of meeting space, including a 5,248-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 871 theater style and 653 for receptions. The 130-room Courtyard by Marriott Charlotte Gastonia has 2,712 square feet of space for up to 106 theater style. The boutique Esquire Hotel, Downtown Gastonia, Ascend Hotel Collection has 35 luxury guest rooms and is located near the conference center.

Gaston County's many charming downtowns offer a rich array of culinary experiences, from old-style "fish camp" fare at Riverside

Fish House to upscale dining at Webb Custom Kitchen. Groups should also sample the local barbecue at such restaurants as Hillbilly's BBQ and Ray's Smokehouse.

Greensboro/Guilford County

VisitGreensboroNC.com; @Greensboro-Convention-And-Visitors-Bureau

Greensboro Complex, a multi-venue campus, includes First Horizon Coliseum, which seats up to 22,000 for major events; a downsizing curtain at the venue can reduce seating capacity to as few as 4,500. The complex's configurable Special Events Center features 60,000 square feet of exhibit space, a 5,000-seat mini-arena, and eight meeting rooms, the largest of which accommodates up to 335 guests. Additional onsite options include Piedmont Hall, which accommodates up to 2,300 standing or 1,000 seated guests, and the 298-seat Odeon Theatre. The Terrace banquet facility accommodates 450 for dining or 800

for receptions. The campus also features the Atlantic Coast Conference Hall of Champions, an amphitheater, and an aquatic center.

The Joseph S. Koury Convention Center, integrated into the 985-room Sheraton Greensboro at Four Seasons, offers 250,727 square feet of flexible meeting space across 90 event rooms. Its largest ballroom, at 40,000 square feet, accommodates 6,000 guests in theater and reception style. Grandover Resort & Spa, A Wyndham Grand Hotel features 244 guest rooms and accommodates up to 1,000 guests in its largest space. Resort amenities include two 18-hole championship golf courses, a spa, and an art gallery.

Pinehurst/Southern Pines/Aberdeen

HomeOfGolf.com; @HomeOfAmericanGolf

The Pinehurst, Southern Pines, and Aberdeen region of North Carolina is part of a premier golf legacy, claiming 20 of the state's Top

100 courses. This destination is where storied heritage and modern energy align.

The Four Diamond Carolina Hotel, a local showpiece since 1901, has 230 guest rooms, a 9,600-square-foot grand ballroom seating 1,000 theater style, and a 14,000-square-foot reception space for 700 guests. The historic Holly Inn in Pinehurst features four indoor spaces, with a capacity of 130 people theater style in its largest space. Recently renovated, the historic 43-room Manor hotel offers a "club-style" atmosphere and event space for up to 20 people.

Pinehurst Resort's latest and most ambitious expansion is Pinehurst Sandmines, which features Pinehurst No. 10, the resort's first original 18-hole course in nearly 30 years. Dining amenities include Station 21, featuring a Southwestern-themed menu, PL8TE Southern Table at Pinehurst No. 8, and Wiregrass, a farm-to-table venue.

The Sandmines has also spurred the development of a "hotel hub" managed by

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The Dambo Trolls are a popular attraction at Dix Park in Raleigh.

McPeake Hotels and comprising four brands: Courtyard by Marriott, Hilton Garden Inn, Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton, and TownePlace Suites by Marriott. The collection offers a total of 397 guest rooms and approximately 6,500 square feet of meeting space.

Beyond the greens, groups can enjoy a variety of immersive experiences. “The USGA’s Golf House Pinehurst and the adjacent campus, including the World Golf Hall of Fame, have created one of the best ‘walk-around’ golf experiences in the country,” says Phil Werz, president and CEO of Visit Pinehurst, Southern Pines, Aberdeen CVB.

Raleigh/Wake County

VisitRaleigh.com; @VisitRaleigh

“Raleigh elevates conferences and events through a communal spirit, where inclusion, progress, discovery, and friendliness can truly flourish,” says Malinda Harrell, CMP Fellow, CASE, director of sales for Visit Raleigh.

The LEED Silver-certified Raleigh Convention Center boasts 500,000 square feet of flexible event space, including a 32,617-square-foot ballroom and 20 meeting rooms; with 150,000 square feet of contiguous space, it can accommodate 8,980 guests banquet style or 10,000 theater style. A LEED

Gold-certified expansion, due for completion in 2029, will add 298,000 square feet, including 50,000 square feet of flex space and 13 meeting rooms. Construction has also begun on the adjacent 600-room Omni Raleigh Hotel, which is expected to open in late 2028 with 61,000 square feet of event space, a rooftop pool, and other amenities.

The Martin Marietta Center for the Performing Arts, part of the convention center and performing arts complex, boasts 80,000 square feet of event space across four venues: the 2,534-seat Raleigh Memorial Auditorium; 1,587-person-capacity Meymandi Concert Hall; 600-person-capacity A.J. Fletcher Opera Theater; and the Lounge, an intimate venue for smaller groups. In the Raleigh West District, the 700,000-square-foot Lenovo Center seats 19,500 people for full arena events and features 17,000 square feet of floor space. For smaller events, a curtaining system creates a more intimate setting for gatherings of 4,000 to 10,000 people. Other components at the Lenovo Center include six meeting spaces, 59 suites, 13 lounge boxes, and a 9,100-square-foot club restaurant (currently closed for renovations). The facility is currently undergoing major upgrades and additions, including expanded main concourses, a new mixed-use development, and a 150-key hotel.

The North Carolina State Fairgrounds offers 400,000 square feet of meeting space with a capacity of 16,333 theater style and 2,550 banquet style. The McKimmon Conference & Training Center, located at NC State University, features 37,000 square feet of event space for up to 1,200 guests.

Raleigh’s robust hotel landscape includes the 333-room Hilton Raleigh North Hills, with 30,093 square feet of event space; 379-room Raleigh Marriott Crabtree Valley, with 22,181 square feet of event space; 273-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Raleigh Durham Research Triangle, with 20,066 square feet of meeting space; and Sheraton Raleigh Hotel, with 18,925 square feet of event space. The 150-room Umstead Hotel and Spa—North Carolina’s only hotel to achieve triple Forbes Five-Star status—has 10,200 square feet of luxury event space.

The new Hilton Dual Brand Tempo and Homewood Suites, which opened last year, offers a total of 261 guest rooms and 6,586 square feet of event space. The new 150-room Oberlin Hotel is scheduled to open in August in the Village District, while The Pagemore Hotel at Fenton, a 186-room Tribute Portfolio property featuring 6,000 square feet of event space, is scheduled to open later next year.

Rocky Mount/Nash & Edgecombe Counties

ExploreNashCounty; @ExploreNashCounty
DiscoverEdgecombe.com

The Rocky Mount Event Center features 75,000 square feet of event space and can accommodate up to 370 standard exhibit booths and 4,000 people in its largest configuration. Hotels include DoubleTree by Hilton Rocky Mount, which has 166 guest rooms and 2,900 square feet of meeting space. Hampton Inn Rocky Mount has 124 rooms.

Statesville & Mooresville/Iredell County

StatesvilleNC.com; @DiscoverStatesvilleNC
VisitMooresville.com; @VisitMooresville

The 62,000-square-foot Charles Mack Citizen Center in Mooresville features six banquet rooms and a 233-seat auditorium. Statesville Event Center offers eight event spaces to accommodate up to 600 people. Accommodations include Hilton Garden Inn Statesville and Courtyard by Marriott Statesville Mooresville/Lake Norman.

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County

Visit [WinstonSalem.com](https://www.visitwinstonsalem.com); @VisitWinstonSalem

Winston-Salem offers a vibrant, walkable downtown area with more than 1,200 hotel rooms, easy access to Benton Convention Center, and diverse dining and nightlife.

“Meetings here are easy to plan, simple to navigate, and rewarding for attendees,” says Christian Schroeder, senior vice president of sales for Visit Winston-Salem. “Our region delivers the rare combination of big-city amenities and boutique-scale charm, making it a place that feels dynamic, intimate, and uncomplicated.”

The center of Winston-Salem’s meeting landscape is the Twin City Quarter, which includes Benton Convention Center and two adjoining hotels: the 319-room Winston-Salem Marriott and 146-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Winston Salem, each offering 15,000 square feet of event space. This connected hub features approximately 175,000 square feet of meeting and event space. Its newest addition,

Benton South, features the 24,000-square-foot Gallery Ballroom, with an adjacent outdoor patio.

Other hotels with event space in downtown Winston-Salem include the 174-room Kimpton Cardinal Hotel, located in the iconic Reynolds Building. The hotel has event space for up to 245 people. The 70-room Historic Brookstown Inn accommodates events for up to 150, while the 75-room Hotel Indigo Winston-Salem Downtown by IHG has 1,600 square feet for small gatherings. Courtyard by Marriott Winston-Salem Downtown features 126 guest rooms and 2,900 square feet of space.

The 72,000-square-foot Millennium Center, also in the heart of downtown Winston-Salem, accommodates events of up to 1,500 guests. The Milton Rhodes Center for the Arts features the Hanesbrands Theatre (300 seats), Reynolds Place Theatre (250 seats), and Mountcastle Forum (125 seats), as well as gallery space and classrooms. Housed in historic former tobacco warehouses, the Innovation Quarter blends

technology with unique meeting spaces. Its anchor, Biotech Place, includes a conference center with 11 event spaces, including a 120-seat auditorium and a large atrium for up to 500 people. Innovation Quarter also includes the Bailey Power Plant and Bailey Park, a 1.6-acre green space with a natural amphitheater and covered stage, ideal for outdoor events. Tanglewood Clubhouse at Tanglewood Park reopened in 2025 following a renovation; it accommodates up to 120 people. Earlier this year, entertainment venue ROAR in Raleigh’s Downtown Arts District introduced its new Visualiner event space. The new addition features a stage and audiovisual capabilities, and accommodates up to 600 for receptions and 350 seated guests. The 50,000-square-foot Kernersville Recreation & Events Center opened last year, offering three full-size courts and conference rooms for large tournaments and multipurpose meetings. 🌊



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Cabarrus County, North Carolina is conveniently located along Interstate 85, just a 30-minute drive from Uptown Charlotte. With 30 hotels offering more than 3,000 rooms located just minutes away from exciting attractions and a variety of unique venues, the destination has affordable rates and can accommodate groups of all sizes.



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Courtesy Marriott Winston-Salem

Marriott Winston-Salem and Benton Convention Center



Downtown Winston-Salem's Twin City Quarter includes the 319-room Marriott Winston-Salem and Benton Convention Center, which connect via skywalk and adjoining parking decks, and offer planners the convenience of a single point of contact. Benton Convention Center features 160,000 square feet of space. The hotel and convention center's downtown location puts visitors in close proximity to area attractions, including the Downtown Arts District, Fourth Street's Restaurant Row, craft breweries, shops, and art galleries. Accessibility is easy via Piedmont Triad Airport (GSO).

TwinCityQuarter.com

Courtesy GTCC

Conference Center at GTCC



Located in Colfax on Guilford Technical Community College's (GTCC) Cameron campus, the Conference Center at GTCC offers 16,800 square feet of flexible space for groups up to 300, along with built-in audiovisual and onsite technical support. Spaces include a grand auditorium with tiered seating, divisible meeting rooms, a private executive boardroom, and a comfortable retreat space. Customizable room configurations and a dedicated events team ensure every event is planned and executed with care. The LEED Gold-certified facility is just minutes from Piedmont Triad International Airport (GSO).

ConferenceCenterGTCC.com

Courtesy Visit Hickory

Visit Hickory & the Hickory Metro Convention Center



Nestled between Charlotte and Asheville, Hickory is easily accessible, refreshingly affordable, and full of personality. The Hickory Metro Convention Center offers more than 100,000 square feet of flexible meeting space to accommodate events of 2,000+ attendees, along with modern lighting and audiovisual. Visitors can enjoy a vibrant downtown, featuring chef-driven restaurants, local breweries, live music, shopping, and art. The convention center and Visit Hickory CVB act as one organization, delivering a streamlined planning experience.

VisitHickoryNC.com

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Courtesy Explore Cabarrus

Explore Cabarrus County NC



As the home of Charlotte Motor Speedway, Cabarrus County offers premier motorsports entertainment—and so much more. Local attractions and activities include a historic gold mine, Southern Grace Distilleries at Whiskey Prison, and the state’s largest outlet mall. The area offers more than 3,000 guest rooms across 30 hotels, including Embassy Suites by Hilton Charlotte-Concord Golf Resort & Spa, which features 45,000 square feet of event space at Concord Convention Center. Cabarrus County is conveniently located along Interstate 85 and is 30 minutes from Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT).

ExploreCabarrus.com

Greensboro Area CVB



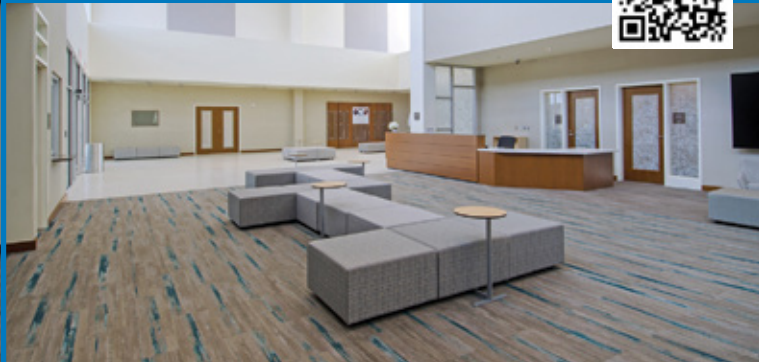
Centrally located in North Carolina’s Piedmont region, Greensboro is known for its friendliness, accessibility, and affordability. Greensboro can accommodate events of all sizes across a wide selection of venues, including the expansive and versatile Greensboro Complex and 250,000 square feet of meeting space at Joseph S. Koury Convention Center and the adjacent Sheraton Greensboro at Four Seasons hotel. Visitors can enjoy a diverse culinary scene, more than 135 area attractions, world-class golf courses, sports facilities, and more than 100 miles of trails and greenways.

VisitGreensboroNC.com

Courtesy Greensboro Area CVB

Joyce Vollmer

The Maxwell Center



The Maxwell Center in Goldsboro is centrally located in eastern North Carolina’s Wayne County. With 15,500 square feet of flexible event space, pre-function areas, breakout rooms, and an outdoor courtyard, it can accommodate intimate gatherings or large banquets. In-house services include lighting and décor packages, while regional caterers provide a variety of food options, from boxed lunches and barbecue to hors d’oeuvres and plated dinners. Homewood Suites by Hilton Goldsboro, located across the parking lot, offers additional meeting space on the same campus.

TheMaxwellCenter.com

Wilmington, NC and Island Beaches



Wilmington, NC and Island Beaches offers modern amenities in a historic city. The Convention District offers walkable access to shops, restaurants, and vibrant nightlife along a scenic riverwalk, while coastal activities await at three island beaches—Carolina, Kure, and Wrightsville, just minutes away. The 107,000-square-foot Wilmington Convention Center is the largest convention center on the North Carolina coast, accommodating 2,000 guests for meetings and other events. Planners can choose from more than 8,000 guest rooms, including full-service hotels and resorts with waterfront views.

NCCoastalMeetings.com

Courtesy Wilmington and Beaches CVB

Signia by Hilton Diplomat Beach Resort Unveils Fresh Focus on Gatherings & Design

By Helen Jacob



The beachfront landmark long known as The Diplomat Resort is repositioning itself for a new generation of guests, reopening as Signia by Hilton Diplomat Beach Resort after an extensive renovation.

Located in Hollywood, Fla., between Miami and Fort Lauderdale, the 1,000-room property has been a staple of South Florida hospitality since 1958. Now under the Signia by Hilton brand, the renovated resort complements its legacy with a more contemporary approach centered on design, dining, and shared experiences. The relaunch follows Trinity Investments' \$80 million overhaul of public spaces and culinary venues, part of a broader effort to modernize the guest experience while preserving the hotel's reputation as a social hub.

A reimagined lobby trades formality for flexibility, with layered seating, communal tables, and greenery-filled corners designed to accommodate everything from casual meetings to informal networking. The fluid atmosphere is equally suited to remote work, social gatherings, or a quick transition to evening cocktails.

Beyond the lobby, the resort opens onto the Verandah, an expansive oceanfront setting that captures South Florida's indoor-outdoor lifestyle, allowing guests to move between pools, cabanas, and lounge areas. The newly introduced Horizon Lawn offers a breezy setting for outdoor programming, including private events and live entertainment. With direct beach access and approximately 1,000 feet of shoreline, the design leans into both leisure activities and large-scale activations.

Dining plays a central role in the resort's repositioning, with six refreshed venues creating a cohesive, day-to-night dining experience, led by culinary director Miguel Santiago. Mornings begin at Palma Kitchen, featuring Mediterranean-inspired dishes like shakshuka and orange blossom French toast, while The Press offers fresh juices, specialty coffee, and house-made pastries for guests on the go. At Playa beachfront bar and grill, bold Latin flavors are highlighted in lobster quesadilla, ceviche de coco, and grilled parrilladas, and paired with frozen cocktails. Solara transforms the lobby into a polished all-day lounge, offering globally inspired plates, and evenings culminate at Diplomat Prime, the resort's signature steakhouse focused on precision, craftsmanship, and a more elevated dining atmosphere.

Meetings and events at the resort are amplified by both scale and design. The property features more than 200,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor event space, including the 50,000-square-foot Great Hall, four ballrooms,

and 39 breakout rooms. New additions, such as the Horizon Lawn and reconfigured communal interiors, expand options for planners seeking both formal and unconventional settings. From global conventions and corporate summits to weddings and beachfront receptions, the resort is designed to accommodate virtually any size event, and the layout encourages movement between business and social spaces.

"The Diplomat Beach Resort has long stood as a local icon for group gatherings, offering more than 200,000 square feet of flexible space suited for everything from large-scale conferences to smaller, more focused meetings," says Danielle Boyles, director of sales. "A mix of oceanfront venues, expansive ballrooms, and a dedicated convention center allows planners to tailor each event with ease. Paired with its coastal setting, the property delivers an experience that feels both polished and engaging for groups of all sizes."

Club Signia, a new, private lounge on the upper floors, offers a more intimate environment for VIP guests, with dedicated service and spaces suited to small gatherings or executive meetings.

Wellness amenities, beach programming, and curated daily activities round out the experience, giving attendees reasons to extend their stay beyond scheduled events.

The resort's meeting and event space is complemented by its top-rated wellness sanctuary, The Diplomat Spa + Wellness, along with a robust lineup of amenities like complimentary water sports, bicycles, beach fitness classes, daily activities, recreation, and live entertainment. 🍹



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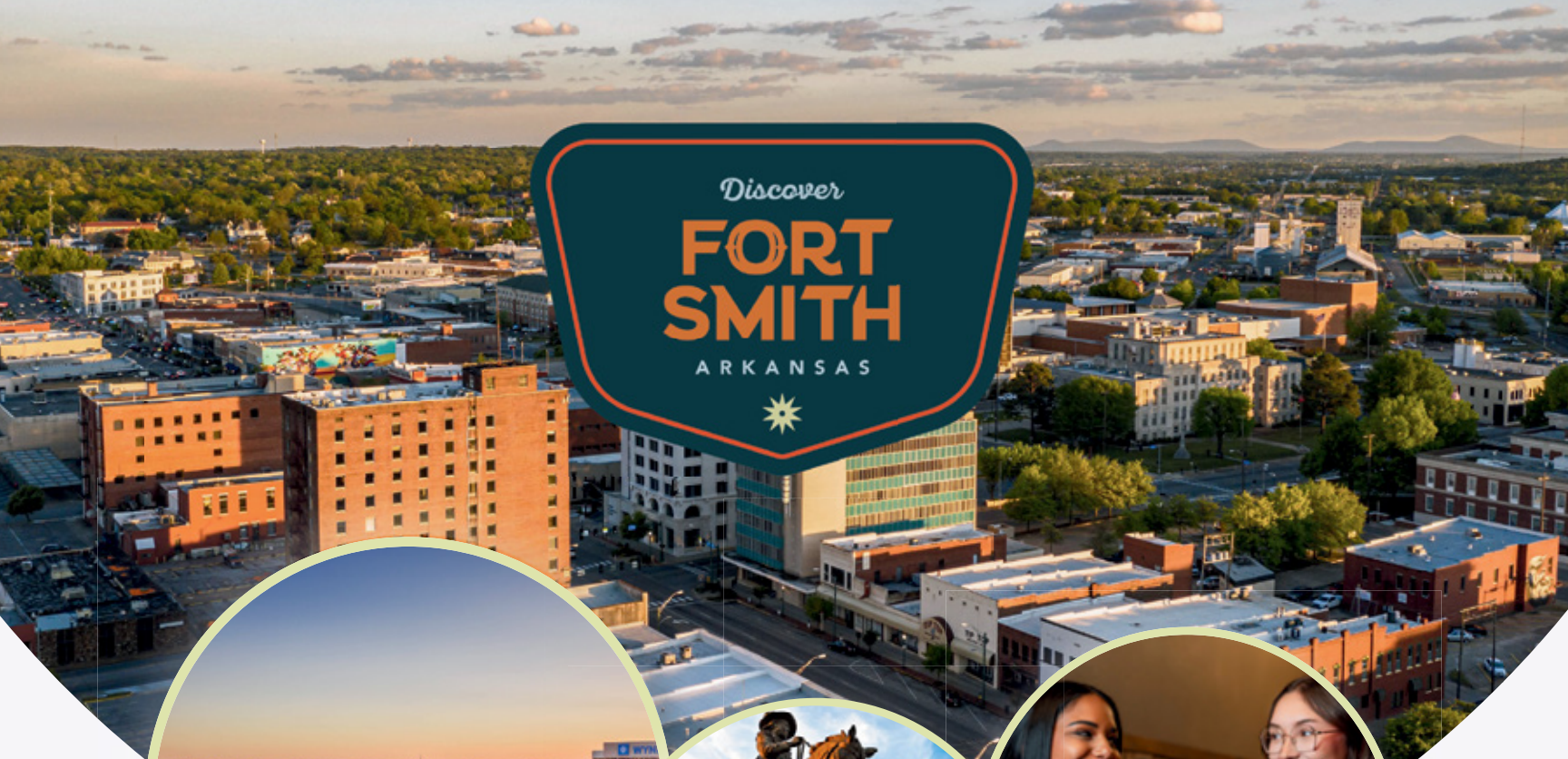
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