

MICE

CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

MEETINGS | INCENTIVES | CONFERENCES | CONGRESSES | EXPOSITIONS | EVENTS



PRAGUE:
a Golden stage for your
Unforgettable Event

**WOW!
HUNGARY**

VIENNA:
TOP meetings city and
Gustav Klimt's „The Kiss“

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MICE CEE



DEAR READERS,

Springtime has arrived, entering Central Europe like a wild and playful horse, and to accompany it, here we have the latest issue of MICE CEE.

This year, our magazine celebrates its 10th anniversary. In 2007, when we started, the meetings industry was very different and we are excited about its transformative journey through the present and towards the future. We would like to thank all our partners, readers, advertisers, and MICE specialists that have walked this journey with us, contributing to the success of our magazines.

The destinations in the specific area of Central and Eastern Europe have created the content in the current issue: we bring Central and Eastern Europe to the world and the world to CEE.

We hope you will enjoy this issue and find something interesting, new, or inspirational for you and your business.

Sincerely,

Zuzana Adamson PhD.

Publisher

zuzana.adamson@mice-cee.com

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PRAGUE WELCOMED THE LARGEST NUMBER OF EVENTS OVER THE PAST DECADE



According to the Czech Statistical Office data, Prague welcomed 4,426 conferences in the collective accommodation establishments in 2016 which is one-third of all events held in the Czech Republic. It is an increase of 5.7% compared to 2015, and it also is the largest number of events since 2006. The 2016 conferences organized in Prague attracted 541,412 delegates.

Czech Statistical Office data, which tracks only the events held in the collective accommodation establishments, with attendance of more than 50 persons, shows that meeting planners preferred four-star and three-star hotels for their events. Prague Convention Bureau's statistics also confirm the popularity of accommodation establishments as event venues. There were 2,528 events held in Prague according to the Prague Convention Bureau's data, out of which 85% took place in hotels, and the rest in other venues, congress centres and at universities.

"We can observe a very positive trend of delegates staying in Prague for longer time. While in 2015, delegates stayed here for 1.99 days on average, in 2016 it was 2.22 days. The statistics recorded a considerable increase of more than 100% even in the segment of events lasting more than six days. We believe the trend, which has a very significant economic impact on Prague, will continue in the following years," said Roman Muška, Managing Director at Prague Convention Bureau.

Prague Convention Bureau's statistics show that half of the events in Prague were attended by foreign delegates, who came to the Czech capital mostly from the UK, Germany, USA, Italy and Belgium. Pharmacy led the ranking of the most discussed topics, followed by industry, IT and telecommunication topics. Smaller corporate events with the attendance of less than 150 delegates prevailed over the bigger, predominantly association conferences and congresses with more than a thousand delegates ■

Slovakia: SACR is finished, long live tourism promotion!

After 21 years in existence, the Slovak Tourist Board (SACR) closed in November 2016 and from the beginning of 2017, responsibility for the promotion of Slovakia as a tourist and MICE destination passed directly to the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic. The ministry expects to be able to boost tourism more effectively and proactively due to this organisational change. However, the decision to bring SACR's activities to a close came at a time when a record number of tourists were arriving in Slovakia. In 2016, between January and September, the number of foreign visitors to Slovakia, including its capital Bratislava, reached more than 1,600,000 (this figure only includes people staying in hotels or similar accommodation, not those using Airbnb and other options.) By contrast, in 2015 there were a total of 1,721,193 visitors during the whole year. Between January and September 2016, the highest number of people came from neighbouring Czech Republic, numbering more than 500,000, with Poland in second position with 157,097 visitors and Germany next with 136,944 tourists. We can only hope that this organisational structure change will deliver positive results and the successful promotion of Slovakia as a tourist destination ■

New venue in Prague: let your delegates turn somersaults

Freestyle Arena Kolbenka in Prague opened its doors in 2016. Sports lovers will be ecstatic if you choose this unique venue for your MICE event and your delegates will enjoy an unforgettable experience. Freestyle Arena Kolbenka was rebuilt from an old factory hall, and its 1800m² space contains several sports facilities without equal in the Czech Republic. Inside the large sports grounds is a 500m² trampoline park, where you can somersault to your heart's content, as well as freestyle parks, ski and snowboard simulators. There are also ski jumps, fitness facilities, and much more ■



A NEW FLIGHT connecting RIGA, LATVIA and KAZAN, Russia



Latvian airline **airBaltic** will launch a new route between Riga and Kazan, Russia on April 26, 2017 to offer convenient options for travellers from the Baltic and Russia. **airBaltic** will fly twice a week from Riga to Kazan, with a Boeing 737 aircraft carrying passengers for a flight lasting 2 hours and 25 minutes. One-way ticket prices start at 99 Euros, including airport fees and transaction costs. A full schedule of airBaltic flights can be found on the company's website at airbaltic.com ■



VIENNA: a record number of meetings in 2016

In 2016, Vienna's meetings industry recorded more events, bed nights, and value added than ever before, according to Director of Tourism Norbert Kettner. Last year, 567,000 delegates (an increase of seven per cent on 2015) participated in a total of 4,084 congresses, corporate events, and incentive events (up by 11 per cent) in Vienna. The resulting number of bed nights increased by two per cent to around 1,718,000.

Nationwide, the value added by the Vienna conference industry once again broke the significant one-billion-euro barrier, contributing a total of €1.072 billion (up three per cent) to Austria's gross domestic product (GDP). Eighty per cent of this value added was associated with international congresses, which in 2016 attracted about half the total number of meeting delegates, and three quarters of bed nights. Meetings, congresses, and incentive events in Vienna secured nearly 20,000 year-round jobs throughout Austria.

Overall, the Austrian capital recorded almost 15 million bed nights in 2016, 12 per cent of which were connected to the meetings industry. For some years now, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) has ranked Vienna among the leading congress metropolises worldwide ■

BUDAPEST: New W Budapest hotel slated to open in 2020

W Hotels Worldwide, now part of Marriott International, have reached agreement with QPR Properties Kft., part of Constellation Hotels Holding Ltd., to debut the iconic W Hotels brand in Hungary with the opening of **W Budapest**. In an ideal location on Andrassy Avenue (a UNESCO Site) – which is known as Budapest's Champs-Elysées - the hotel will be situated on the city's most luxurious shopping street located directly opposite the State Opera House ■

The Barceló Hotel Group is rebranding its hotels

They will have completely different names and logos, and will fall into four hotel categories. This change will also affect their two properties in Prague: Barceló Praha and Barceló Praha Five will be transformed into Hotel Occidental Praha and Occidental Praha Five. The new colours and branding are inspired by the Mediterranean ■

EUROPE: Top digital countries in 2017

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) evaluates the performance of both individual EU countries and the EU as a whole in comparison with Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Iceland, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, and the U.S.

The results? Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands have the most advanced digital economies in the EU followed by Luxembourg, Belgium, the UK, and Ireland. Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Italy are ranked the lowest on the DESI. In 2016, all member states improved their DESI, with Slovakia and Slovenia making the most progress ■



UAE: Ferrari World Abu Dhabi unveils "Turbo Track"

The new heart-pounding rollercoaster is set to open at the end of March. The three-stage experience, which gives guests an authentic feel of what it is like to be a Ferrari test driver, is the latest thrilling addition to the park. Adults and children alike will have their limits put to the test, as they get a glimpse into the advanced world of the Ferrari Driver Academy, where drivers get all-round, extensive, technical, athletic, and cultural training to ready them for joining the world's best-in-class driving talent.

Starting in a briefing room, and culminating 64 metres above Yas Island, Turbo Track will turn guests into new recruits, and Ferrari World Abu Dhabi into a futuristic testing facility for aspiring test drivers. The opening two stages of the experience include on-screen training and performance analysis.

The completion of Turbo Track was a monumental feat of engineering, following a highly complex process that saw a 16m2 opening created in the glass funnel, a signature design feature at the centre of Ferrari World Abu Dhabi. The top of the track is now Yas Island's highest point, and it was created by the same company that built Formula Rossa - the world's fastest rollercoaster.

Turbo Track will become the third ride to be launched at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi in a 12-month period, following the opening of Flying Aces and Benno's Great Race in 2016 ■



LONDON: Organising weddings at the GHERKIN



Standing 180 metres tall at 30 St Mary Axe is the towering London venue known as The Gherkin. With its striking architecture, designed by the world-renowned Norman Foster, it is

one of the capital's most prestigious and iconic venues. Located on the 39th floor is a stunning restaurant with a panoramic view that offers a unique dining experience. There are also a range of distinctive spaces within the venue. The area available for weddings and other special occasions is located on levels 39 and 40, boasting an impressive event space which features breath-taking 360-degree views across London. Both levels are licenced to hold ceremonies for up to a total of 140 guests, a sit-down wedding breakfast for 140 or a standing reception for up to 260.

Since 1847, Searcys has been one of the UK's most prestigious catering companies. With a passion for quality and an ability to execute an event to the very highest of standards, it has developed a world-famous reputation for catering and hospitality at its iconic, exclusive venues in London and Bath ■

AIM E-Library – Launching a New Web Platform for E-Learning

When you manage a company whose offices are spread across many different countries, gathering the staff in one place for training programmes is logically difficult. There is an increasing need for ways to update, equip the team with the necessary skills for effectiveness and efficiency, to keep them abreast of new technologies, to increase quality and convey all the information needed for a successful company. This was the challenge for AIM Group International, how to create programmes to help their people develop the needed skills to perform their tasks and this is the idea behind AIM e-Library, a web-platform dedicated to internal training and development.

AIM Group has embraced a "continuous training" philosophy. This means that all the teams can regularly brush up on skills – and develop new ones – as well as re-learn certain job functions and keep up with changing company procedures and quality standards or new meeting industry trends. Through the technological partner, Tecnoconference Group, all tutorials will be recorded in the AIM Virtual Studio, a virtual studio completely realised with computer graphic design, giving birth to an innovative E-Learning Virtual Reality. *"Thanks to our partner and sponsor Tecnoconference Group", said Patrizia Buongiorno, Vice President of AIM Group International, "we will be able to train all of our teams in a variety of different topics saving time and most importantly, increase knowledge and productivity."* ■

Thailand increases tourism income by 11%

In 2016, there were a record number of tourists – 32.59 million foreign people – heading to Thailand which represents a nine per cent increase in comparison with 2015. Income from the tourism sector increased by 11 per cent and reached 2.52 trillion bahts (£60 billion/\$US 72 billion). The highest numbers of tourists came from China, South Korea, Japan, western countries, and from ASEAN countries neighbouring Thailand ■

GO CZECH REPUBLIC



DISCOVER THE CZECH REPUBLIC - A GOLDEN STAGE FOR YOUR NEXT MICE EVENT.



AREA AND LOCATION

The Czech Republic extends over an area of 79,000 square km in total and is located in Central Europe. It has approximately the same size as Austria or Ireland. The Czech Republic is divided into three parts: Bohemia in the west, Moravia in the east and Silesia in the north-east. The country is divided into 14 regions, the largest being the Central Bohemian Region.

BORDERING COUNTRIES

Germany (646 km), Poland (658 km), Slovakia (215 km) and Austria (362 km).

CITIES

Praha (Prague) is the capital city with a population of 1,188,126 inhabitants. The other big cities include Brno (400,000 inhabitants) which is the capital of Moravia, Ostrava (319,000 inhabitants), Pilsen (170,000 inhabitants), Olomouc (about 101,000 inhabitants) and Liberec (98,000 inhabitants).

CLIMATE

The Czech Republic has a mild climate and has four seasons. The highest mountain is Sněžka (1,602 m AMSL), situated in Krkonoše and with an average yearly temperature of 0.4 degrees, while in the lowlands in Moravia, the average yearly temperature is about 10 degrees C.

AREA CODE

+420

CURRENCY

The Czech Crown (CZK), in Czech "koruna".

DISTANCES

Prague is situated 340 km from Berlin, 290 km from Vienna, 336 km from Bratislava and 535 km from Budapest.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

General emergency line 112
Police 158
Municipal Police 156
Ambulance 155
Fire Service 150

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

Prague Ruzyně Airport www.prg.aero
Brno Airport www.airport-brno.cz
Carlsbad Airport (Karlovy Vary)
www.airport-k-vary.cz
Ostrava Airport www.airport-ostrava.cz
Pardubice Airport www.airport-pardubice.cz

LANGUAGE

The official language is Czech. Especially in the bigger cities, however, people understand English.

MOBILE OPERATORS

T-Mobile, Vodafone, Telefónica O2.
The mobile connection is available almost everywhere.

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

1st January: Czech Independence Day, 8th May: Liberation Day, 5th July: Day of the Slavic Apostles Cyril and Methodius, 6th July: Jan Hus Day, 28th September: Day of Czech Statehood, 28th October: Independent Czechoslovak State Day, 17th November: Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day.

VACCINATION

No special vaccination is necessary prior to visiting the Czech Republic. If you are planning on staying in forest areas, vaccination against ticks is available.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Parliamentary democracy.

POPULATION

10,200,000 inhabitants.

POWER NETWORK

230 V/50 Hz, two-pronged plug with safety pin.

PRESIDENT

Miloš Zeman since 2013

RAIL TRANSPORT

The international and national rail network: www.cd.cz

ROAD TRANSPORT

BUS: www.studentagency.cz, www.eurolines.cz
RENT A CAR: www.hertz.cz, www.holidayautos.cz

SMOKING

Smoking is prohibited in all public places, such as bus stops, sports facilities, stadiums, trains, offices or schools. It will be against the law to smoke in indoor restaurants, theatres, and cinemas after May 31, 2017. Tobacco is sold to customers over the age of 18.

TAXIS

Taxis can be hailed in the street or booked over the phone. However, especially in Prague, it is advisable to order taxis in advance. The AAA taxi company provides a very reliable service: 221102211, 14014 (from Prague).

TIME

Central European Time (GMT + 1 hour), Summer Time applies from March to November: GMT + 2 hours.

Why choose the Czech Republic FOR YOUR MICE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS?

We bring you different perspectives on event organising in the country. We asked several professionals how they view the Czech Republic and Prague and why the Czech Republic should be in your „Hot List“ of destinations when planning your next meeting, congress or conference. And what makes Prague such an attractive and interesting destination for MICE events?

■ By Zuzana Adamson

BUYERS TALK

REPRESENTATIVES & SELLERS TALK



Andrea Michaels,
Owner, President of Extraordinary Events, Los Angeles, USA

I think Prague is a beautiful city. What draws me to it are its possibilities. There are some exceptional meeting and event spaces... how many cities offer such historic and gorgeous castles (palaces) and concert halls? There is a rich history around every corner and scores of well-educated residents who can tell you all about what you are seeing. It's a city where you can create some fantastic tours. Though the city itself has many practical as well as enchanting possibilities, a creative person can easily draw parallels from the destination into the corporate message of their unique meeting and then deliver a very special meaning and experience to their participants. And then again, there's a lot of amazing art. In other words, it is a city with much to offer including some wonderful cuisine.



Shira Newman,
Business Administrator at UK Drawing Booth, London, UK

Prague is simply enchanting. The red rooftops, the Danube bisecting the city, the history and exquisite architecture everywhere you look are only a few reasons to visit Prague. The people are warm and friendly, the shopping is fantastic, and everywhere you look you see beauty. Prague is a jewel of Europe.



Šárka Litvinová,
Chief Executive Officer at ASIANA

People with experience of organising MICE events in the Czech Republic are sure to return here. And that is the best recommendation. If you are currently contemplating it, don't hesitate. It's worth combining business and pleasure in the hands of professionals. The Czech Republic is easily accessible by air and by land from all parts of Europe as well as from all over the world. It has a wide range of accommodation and conference facilities catering for all requirements. There are so many places worth visiting and seeing – castles, manor houses, historic towns, and natural scenery, all of which are in quiet and safe surroundings. The huge range of activities (which we are continually adding to our portfolio of services) allows you to create unforgettable events. Unique events are organized here against the backdrop of historic monuments like Prague Castle, Charles Bridge, and the Colonnades of Karlovy Vary. The pleasant Czech climate, which is greatly appreciated by our clients from various destinations, enables us to organise events 365 days per year. Although we see new destinations appearing every year on the maps of incentive agencies and tour operators, central Europe, the Czech Republic, and Prague still hold unassailable positions amongst them. Moreover, there is the added benefit of good value for money: with the same budget for an event, one gets a richer programme, a higher rated hotel, a grander event venue, and more fantastic activities in the Czech Republic than what is offered in many other world-class destinations in Europe.

The Europea.travel team (a division of Asiana) will prepare the programme and look after the organisation of your event down to the last detail. We have years of experience organizing MICE events for clients from all over the world, and we can handle even the most demanding requests.

PRAGUE:

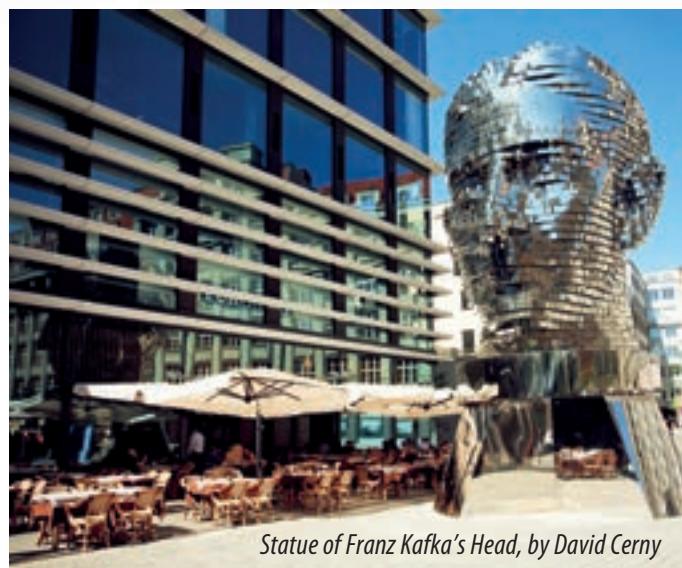
RESTAURANTS AND BARS WITH LUXURY INTERIORS, "FRAMED" BY HISTORICAL TOWERS AND SIGHTS

Even if you know the Czech capital well from past visits or events, when you head to Prague and walk through its centre, at first glance you will be surprised by the number of restaurants and bars, cafés, and original bistros with new, modern interiors - all with their own individual style and take on luxury. In places like these, you can organise events or just spend some time, have something to eat and drink, and savour the atmosphere of a modern European metropolis. Beautiful new design interiors offer inspiration and very often also present a new approach to the concept of food and eating in general.

■ By Zuzana Adamson

What they all have in common is transparency, both in the preparation and cooking of your chosen speciality, which creates great openness. Thanks to this approach, the distance between the kitchen and the customer is disappearing – you feel as if you are right in the middle of the action and it demands your participation as food becomes a form of performance art.

Let me share an example. I remember one dinner with my husband in an extremely luxurious fish restaurant in Vinohrady. We ordered nice fish with some side dishes and when the fish came to our table, carried on a special table chariot by a superbly-costumed waiter, we faced a special performance, after which we weren't sure whether



Statue of Franz Kafka's Head, by David Černý



Prague Congress Centre



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in the Kings Court Hotel*



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Europea Travel

The Central and Eastern Europe DMC and Inbound Tour Operator.

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More than **25 Years of Experience**, based in Prague, specializes in the organization & execution of **Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Events** and Special Interest groups. **Europea Travel** is right partner for you for **complete solution**. Our in-depth knowledge of the region, leading position in the travel industry, and creativity ensure our clients will enjoy a customized and successful program.

Europea Travel
is ready to help you in

- **Czech Republic**
- **Austria**
- **Germany**
- **Hungary**
- **Poland**
- **Slovakia**
- **Slovenia**
- **Croatia**

to laugh or cry! The waiter opened the cover and started to serve the fish for our table. But it was very slow, maybe too slow (it took about 20 minutes). I don't mind slowness in other areas - fill in the blank however you like - but food and very hungry people...no. Just NO! Finally, he started to cut the fish and take away the bones. This waiter was probably new in the business as it was obvious he was not very skilled in this process, so we tried to "steal" his job. We were so hungry, we tried to take over the process, cut the fish, and dress our plates.

However, he didn't seem to understand, smiled nervously, and continued to work in the way that his bosses had taught him. We tried to steal our plates but it was no good. In the end, we still had delicious fish. The bill was also very long and I am not sure if the waiter's artistic performance was included in the price! But don't worry, this is just a funny story. In most places, most of the time, a highly professional and formal service awaits you.

In many of these new restaurants, you sit at your table, watching the kitchen and the chefs at work through large glass windows in what is becoming a growing trend in European cities. Czech food has changed a lot in recent years and in a positive way. These new eateries offer

Europea

.travel



Activities



Events



Performances



Wide range of services as destination search, venue search, accommodation, transportation, F&B solution, event management including AV design and performances will help you to create memorable event.

A team of customer oriented, highly professional and experienced young staff is responsible for providing our clients with smart planning as well innovative and cost effective solutions, ensuring that each group's individual objectives will be met.

Europea Travel team will always do an extra mile to help you design tailor made solution for you. No matter what the event or the occasion, just name it.

References available on request



Hotel Cosmopolitan

specialities for vegetarians and vegans, oriental food, blends of tastes and smells, sophisticated combinations of wine and food, and many regional products which is one of the TOP trends here, as well as healthy fruit and vegetable drinks.

This development and move towards comfort, luxury, and sophistication is very visible in Prague. And that will be music to the ears of those clients and foreign visitors that appreciate being able to relax in quiet, luxurious surroundings, and enjoy an artistic and aesthetic approach to life. The atmosphere of the city is alive. Now that quality 4-star and 5-star hotels offer very affordable prices, you can come to Prague, take a break from your busy life, and stay in any one of several architectural pearls showcasing many different styles of art and historic monuments that fit in with the stylish modern developments. You will find all this within walking range as the centre of Prague is small and there is every chance that as you wend your way through its twisting and winding streets that you will discover an interesting sculpture or an unexpected little square around the next corner.

If you are a lover of art and art expositions, this year in Prague you will find some interesting events. The National Gallery seems to have come alive and is putting on attractive, classy, and sophisticated exhibitions. At the beginning of the year, it was Henry Rousseau - a most intriguing exposition. The expositions combine



Fitness Menu, a new concept of restaurant



both historical paintings or styles with modern and contemporary artists.

For tourists heading into the city, Prague has more and more to offer and even if some Prague localities are transformed by night into one big street party with many young people drinking and partying (such as Dlouha Street next to the Old Town Square, or the Vinohrady quarter), getting more drunk and having more fun as the night goes on, there are still several cool and quiet places where you can have fun. There are bars and restaurants, clubs for different needs and desires, dancing clubs, bars with lively music production, interesting theatre productions, and more.

These many and varied attractions are enticing more and more tourists and Prague's popularity with foreign visitors is rising. In the Czech Republic, in the first three quarters of 2016 (between January and September) about 9.3 million foreign people arrived, which is already 12.6 per cent more than in the same period in 2015. Prague hotels are on the up while accommodation via Airbnb is also popular with Czech people who are now coming to Prague to spend a weekend away from their home cities.

At the same time, investors seek administrative and office buildings in the centre of Prague that they can transform into luxury hotels. In 2017, the ancient IPB building on Senovazne Square is expected to be

transformed and refurbished, and on the same square, building number 3 with its courtyard should become a new 4-star hotel, owned by hotel chain Catalania. Not far from there, where the famous Café Imperial is located, the new Cosmopolitan Hotel was recently opened.

2016: Under a Sign of “Asia investing in Prague”

CEFC have been buying commercial real estate and profitable businesses across Europe for a couple of years now, but in 2016 they stepped up acquisitions in the EEC, and in the Czech Republic in particular.

Based on data revealed by CBRE, Asian capital invested in Czech commercial estates such as offices or logistic centres amounted to 36 billion Czech crowns. As Chris Shiels, the director of investments of the Prague office of CBRE, confirms, the most active “shoppers” in the Czech Republic in 2016 were investors from Asia, representing some 36 per cent of the total investments. Czech investors represented 32 per cent and German investors only 12 percent.

Singaporean property investment trust M & L Hospitality are the new owners of the Hilton Prague Old Town Hotel and a Gestin multi-use centre. The CEFC company added the recently constructed Florentinum complex to its portfolio, buying it from previous owners Penta at the end of 2016. Florentinum is a modern administrative palace situated in the centre of Prague not far from Prague Masaryk (formerly Prague Central) railway station. Discussions are ongoing about the total renovation of the surrounding area, together with the neighbouring quarter. The Florentinum has a business and shopping passage, an inside courtyard, and a garden.

The district around the railway station (close to Marriott and Hilton hotels, and Hilton Prague Old Town mentioned earlier) will soon undergo large-scale development, modernisation and reconstruction. Prague now boasts a great architectonic project, courtesy of the world-famous architect Zaha Hadid, who died in 2016. If all goes to plan, by 2020 there will be a new Central Business District, and its development and construction is being organised by Penta. This modernisation of Prague is the latest in a Europe-wide trend for development and reconstruction of city centres. One such example is Paris, where the modernisation of the “Belly of Paris” (the expression coined by French writer Emile Zola) – Forum Les Halles – was finished last year ■

New Central Business District,
the architectonic project by Zaha Hadid



AIM Group Prague



Tereza Havlášková
General Manager

WHO WE ARE

AIM Group organises over three thousand events and meetings every year. Our team of nearly four hundred people, from over 25 countries, works out of 15 offices around the world to put an extraordinary depth and width of experience at your service.

WHAT WE CAN DO

Despite our size, AIM Group still has a “small company” approach to client partnership. From the very start, we set out to understand the needs of each new client and learn their business and procedures.

AIM Group is committed to helping its clients reach their goals, to personalising their event experiences, to providing an innovative environment, and to making a difference.

REFERENCES

Jigzaw, Strykermeeting, 800 delegates /
External Launch Meeting Roche, conference 850 delegates /
St Gobain 350 years Anniversary 2000 delegates /
International Coach Czech Republic, z.s. ICF ČR congress /
Netherlands Football Association, KNVB, U21 Slovakia



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www.aimgroupinternational.com

Prague Congress Centre to be in the TOP 5 before 2020

[Q] Prague will host a prestigious congress in November. Why is it such a big event for the Prague Congress Centre and what led to the successful nomination?

It is a great success. It was a lengthy process to win such a nomination but we managed it and the ICCA congress will be held at PCC from 12th to 15th November 2017. Of course there was a lot of preparation behind it. The Prague Congress Centre participated in a bid together with the Prague Convention Bureau, led at the time by Lenka Žlebková,



**Mr. Roman Ray Straub,
Prague Congress Centre
Director, talks about
prestigious events and new
ambitious plans for PCC**

see the advantages as well as the drawbacks of the venue and revise your visions. How do you now see PCC?

PCC has a lot of potential. First of all, we are very well located because even from our congress centre you can see Prague in front of you. So, since we opened in 1981 we have had this advantage of the unique location close to the city centre. However, we need to update our technical equipment as well as the building and the venue itself. Honestly, the five months went very fast and



who now works with us at PCC as the Director of Sales & Marketing, Prague was bidding against many prestigious destinations. Last November we went to the ICCA Congress in Malaysia. 12 people represented the Czech Republic to get a good insight as well as to meet people from big PCOs who have organized several congresses and have very good professional experience. So, it is possible to say that the success is a combination of our team's endeavour and the potential of the destination and the venue. Prague is well known all around the world and we expect to have a very successful ICCA congress here, attended by colleagues from meetings industry and our goal is to beat the record attendance figures of the ICCA congress held in Leipzig in 2011.

[Q] You have been in your position at PCC since 1st October 2016. You have had five months to

in that time, we have established a new marketing team and there have been a few changes to the sales and support team. With the planned renovation, which is starting this year, we are going to have an up-to-date product and I believe it is a great potential for us to expand.

[Q] Why did you decide to leave the hotel business and move on to MICE business?

Basically, I worked in the hotel business for more than 30 years, from the age of 18. I passed my exams in Brussels, decided to go to a hotel school and I graduated after four years with a bachelor's degree. When I started to work at PCC I did not fully leave the hotel business. Part of the PCC is Holiday Inn, a hotel with 251 rooms that opened 15 years ago. So, I also manage and cooperate with the experienced hotel team. For sure, the congress business is a little bit different. In the hotel business, you

work with the leisure industry and nearly everything is at short notice so the pace of work is different. In the congress environment, you talk about long-term plans. I also appreciate the wide variety of activities. At PCC, you are involved with all kinds of businesses, from automotive to medicine and from pharmacy to culture.

[Q] What kind of person are you?

I was brought up in quite an international environment. I have a German passport; I was born in Germany but at a very young age the whole family moved to Brussels as my father worked for the EU and we were raised in that European spirit. I was very lucky that I attended an international school and had many international friends. We also lived in different countries and I was exposed to different cultures. So, I am an open-minded person, I like the variety of mentalities, religions, and backgrounds. I am a family person; I think family is very important. I believe in good education and work experience. I like being around people, because I think in our business being around people makes the difference.

[Q] PCC is preparing for an important facelift. Some changes have already been made to the technical areas. What can Prague expect from

the reconstruction and how long will it take? And in how many phases will it be done?

There will be several phases. These will cover all sorts of adjustments and repairs to bring PCC up to international standards regarding energy-saving technologies through to renovation of the façade and interiors and then the final phase, which is the construction of a new exhibition hall. We have already announced an architectural urban design competition to invite proposals for the PCC extension. The new exhibition spaces will help us harness the full potential of PCC and become competitive in the marketplace. The deadline for the renovation is the ICCA Congress, and the new hall is planned to be finished in 2020.

[Q] What is your wish for PCC in the future?

To become a destination which will be rated among the TOP 5 congress venues in Europe. I believe that we can get there because we cooperate well with Prague Convention Bureau and PCOs like Guarant and C-IN and such synergy can of course bring excellent results. Our great advantage is also the versatility of PCC, its location, the quality of hotels, as well as the beauty of Prague itself ■



PRAGUE CONGRESS CENTRE



New Executive Rooms

- 254 air conditioned rooms + free Wi-Fi
- 5 meeting rooms in Holiday Inn hotel and 20 halls and 50 meeting rooms in the Prague Congress Centre



Champagne Club



ENJOY THE COMFORT
AND EXCELLENT SERVICE
IN THE ORIGINAL
INTERIORS OF THE HOTEL
WITH ELEMENTS OF ART
NOUVEAU AND ART DECO.

HOTEL SAVOY PRAGUE

GLORY OF GOLDEN PRAGUE

EXPERIENCE THE HISTORICAL CENTER OF PRAGUE,
JUST A STEP BY PRAGUE CASTLE AND STRAHOV MONASTERY.

Since it's opening in 1911 Hotel Savoy became a favorite place for famous personalities of historical Prague. In the twenties, apart from the well established restaurant and café, Hotel Savoy also hosted one of the first cinemas in Prague.

The current resemblance of the hotel came with the reconstruction in 2015. Although the location of Hotel Savoy is in the very heart of historical Prague, it is just a 20 minute drive from Vaclav Havel Airport. The hotel's secured, underground garage offers a great parking option for up to 14 cars. Hotel Savoy is easily accessible by public transportation.



All of our sumptuous 56 Anglo-Saxon rooms and 7 large suites provide natural daylight and are prepared to meet any of your requirements. Our Anglo-Saxon library and Savoy Lounge with its 111 sqm offers just about everything you need for a conference, business meetings and other social events.

Taste the best of Prague at Restaurant Hradčany, where tradition goes hand in hand with the modern and innovative cuisine. Hotel Savoy is looking forward to your visit.



22 QUALITIES THAT MAKE A GREAT LEADER I.

- 1. FOCUS**
- 2. CONFIDENCE**
- 3. TRANSPARENCY**
- 4. INTEGRITY**
- 5. INSPIRATION**
- 6. PASSION**
- 7. INNOVATION**
- 8. PATIENCE**
- 9. STOICISM**
- 10. WONKINESS**
- 11. AUTHENTICITY**

(From James Roger Hamilton's
Entrepreneurs Institute)



5 Trendy & Fashion CAFES & BAKERIES in Prague



1 Cafe - Cafe

This is a café with a very modern and stylish design favoured by celebrities, located on Rytířská Street in the centre of Prague near the Wenceslas Square. In this cosy and charming place, you can have here fresh salads, soups, toasts, sandwiches, cakes, ice creams, and there is a breakfast menu as well. And you can meet some Czech celebrities while you're at it!

2 Kavárna Obecní dům

One of the most beautiful cafés in Prague is located on the ground floor of the Municipal House. Although the high point of art's avant-garde movement and the Prague elite is now in the past, the spirit of the 20th century is clearly very much alive here. The interiors are in the Art Nouveau style, and you can have your cup of coffee after visiting the Municipal House, one of the most important monuments to the Art Nouveau style, created at the end of 19th century and the start of the 20th.



3 Bakeshop Praha

This is a popular place where you can get delicious coffee, fresh pastries, and homemade cuisine in lovely surroundings in the centre of Prague near the Old Town Square. On the walls, you can admire „socialist realism“ ar with Czech posters from the 1950s that depict workers in the fields. If the weather allows, you can savour your cup of coffee outside as well, sitting on a bank connected to one of the building's walls.



4 Bistro Proti Proudu

The Karlín District has transformed in recent years into a lively and hip quarter, where you can now find many new stylish cafés, shops, and wine bars. One of them, opened in 2015, is inspired by the prolific inventor and electrical engineer Frantisek Křižík (who the nearby station, Křižíkova, is also named after). A wall pattern formed by a series of black cables reminiscent of electrical currents adorns the interior. The owners are journalists and the name of the bistro means „against the current.“

5 Antonin's Bakery (Antonínovo pekařství)

What is normal in Paris is very rare in Prague - to see a baker working and creating fresh bread and to be able to buy it while it is still fresh and warm. One of the exceptions is this lovely place where fresh bread, pastries, home-made cakes, and soups of the day can be consumed in the homely atmosphere of this wonderful bakery. It is located in Vinohrady, near the Church of the Most Sacred Heart of Our Lord on the Jiřího z Poděbrad Square and a few steps from the TV Tower Žižkov.

Shop until you drop in Prague

While in Prague, the best things to buy are local specialities: glass, Bohemian crystal, and porcelain. The most popular products are those made from Bohemian crystal (cut glass with original and interesting patterns) such as wonderful

You can also purchase Czech garnets, costume jewellery, handmade accessories, and replica Art Nouveau tapestries. You can find fine Tiffany Lamp replicas in Prague. These are much sought after, particularly by French tourists. As these lamps were first created in 1895



chandeliers, which are available in many sizes. Make sure to check that the product you choose comes from a well-known manufacturer because there are differences in the quality of items that fill shops in the centre of Prague.

they are considered part of the Art Nouveau movement, and they are handmade by skilled craftsmen. There are several fashion shops as well as souvenirs and other local Czech products to buy in Prague ■



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Fashion Arena Prague Outlet is the largest outlet in the Czech Republic, located just 20 minutes from Prague City Center with over 200 premium national and international brands 30%–70% off all year round.



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More on: fashion-arena.cz



THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN PRAGUE EXHIBITS CZECH ART TREASURES



While in Prague, it is always a good idea to take in some art collections, and especially those exhibiting the work of national artists, painters, and sculptors. Although influenced by various global styles and movements during its history, Czech art has many specific features that will interest lovers of culture.

The National Gallery in Prague has for a couple of years now been actively creating and attracting interesting expositions.

However, there are also permanent collections that are well worth visiting. The National Gallery, which is made up of a number of buildings and historic structures, is a great place to see Czech paintings, sculptors, and other interesting pieces of art.

The permanent exhibition in the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia, one of the oldest and most important Gothic buildings in Prague, has a great collection of medieval art in Bohemia and Central Europe from 1200 to 1550. The first part of the exhibition, on the first floor, traces the development of Czech art from the panel paintings and sculptures of the mid-14th century, by artists such as the



anonymous Master of Vyšší Brod and the very well-known Master Theodoric, showing that Bohemia and Prague were also important centres of European art and culture during the 14th century.

Another important building housing Czech art collections is the Trade Fair Palace (Veletržní Palác), and it is a gem of



llery

an example of Czech Functionalist architecture. Located near the Prague Trade Fair grounds, there you can admire Czech and international art from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. There is an extensive collection of artwork by Austrian and German artists, among them Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, and Oskar Kokoschka as well.

The story of modern Czech art began in the mid-19th century. The art collection traces its development through artistic movements, generations, and individual artists,



among them the chief exponents of Realism – Viktor Barvius and Karel Purkyně; the Prague National Theatre generation – Alphonse Mucha, Josef Václav Myslbek and Vojtěch Hynais; and artists espousing Art Nouveau and Symbolism – Mucha, Maximilian Pirner, and František Bilek. The founding generation of modern artists is represented by Antonín Slavíček, Jan Preisler, and Max Švabinský. This National Gallery building also houses the world's most comprehensive collection of works by Kupka that documents the painter's transition from Symbolism to abstract art.

At the Trade Fair Palace, you can also see collections of Czech art from the 1930s and after, including works by Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen, as well as many other artists ■

FRANTISEK KUPKA (1871-1957)



The Czech painter and graphic artist was a pioneer and a co-founder of the early phases of the abstract art movement and Orphic Cubism (Orphism). Kupka's abstract works arose from a base of realism, but later evolved into pure abstract art. Kupka studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and he later settled in Paris. There he briefly attended the Académie Julian and the École des Beaux-Arts.

Kupka illustrated books and posters and he also became known in Paris for his satirical drawings. He lived and worked in the Parisian suburb of Puteaux and often exhibited in New York as well as the French capital.

TOYEN (1902-1980)

She was a Czech painter, draftsperson, and illustrator, and was a member of the Surrealist movement. She studied at the Academy of Arts in Prague and worked closely with fellow



Surrealist poet and artist Jindřich Štyrský. She spent a large part of her life in Paris with Štyrský, where the two of them founded an artistic alternative to Abstraction and Surrealism, which they dubbed Artificialism. Toyen's sketches, book illustrations, and paintings were frequently erotic, and she contributed erotic sketches to Štyrský's *Erotická Revue* (1930-33). Toyen moved to Paris permanently and also worked with André Breton and Benjamin Péret.

JAN ZRZAVY (1890-1977)



He was a leading Czech painter, graphic artist, and illustrator of the 20th century. Although he is regarded as a Symbolist he was heavily influenced by European medieval art. Throughout his life, he was inspired by spectacular landscapes, both abroad (France, Italy, and Greece) and in his native country.



South Moravia: the second most popular region

In 2016, more than 1.6 million visitors headed to the South Moravia region, up 7.2 per cent from 2015. In terms of visitor numbers, this puts the region in second place in the Czech Republic, behind only Prague with its seven million foreign visitors.

South Moravia is very popular, as is its capital Brno, especially with visitors from neighbouring countries. The highest number of foreign visitors in 2016 came from Slovakia (97,000), Poland (88,000), Germany (64,000), and Austria (36,000) and these numbers are growing year-on-year.

►...26



WHAT TO VISIT IN BRNO



Spilberk Castle

Established during the middle of the 13th century, Spilberk Castle rises directly over the historical centre of Brno to a height of about 220 metres. It was built by King Ottokar II of Bohemia.



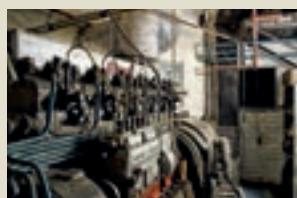
Galerie Vankovka

The Vankovka Gallery shopping and social centre was opened in 2005. It occupies 28,800 square metres on the borders of historic downtown Brno, directly between the bus and train stations. The area contains 130 shopping units and 1,000 parking spaces.



Brno Dam

This very large reservoir, surrounded by wonderful nature, is easy to reach by public transport and popular with nature lovers. You can take a boat, or take a trip by ferry, to Veveri Castle, which is nearby. There, you will find many hotels, some of which have meeting spaces as well.



10-Z Bunker

This can be found under Spilberk Castle and its origins go back to the Communist period. The 10-Z Bunker was the most important bunker in the area during that time. Today, the bunker provides special experience programmes with accommodation, and there is also a city tour focusing on the Communist part of the 20th century.



Meet at the new Courtyard by Marriott Brno, opened in autumn 2016

We talk to **Tereza Vašíčková, Director of Sales at Courtyard by Marriott Prague Airport, Pilsen, and Brno.**

1 Since opening in autumn 2016, the Courtyard by Marriott Brno has become very popular. Who are your main clients?

Based on Courtyard brand specifics our guests are those who travel to Brno for business. But our high-quality services also satisfy any guests coming to Brno for leisure.

2 What are the main facilities for EVENTS at the Courtyard by Marriott Brno?

For conferences our hotel offers 10 meeting rooms with state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, including boardrooms with built-in videoconferencing technology. Each meeting room benefits from natural daylight and provides direct access to the terrace. Our main ballroom, which is a 360m² space, can

host a maximum of 400 delegates. Our hotel is also an ideal place for weddings in Brno. The main wedding room provides space for up to 180 guests for a gala event and we can create the perfect atmosphere to meet any specific requirements.

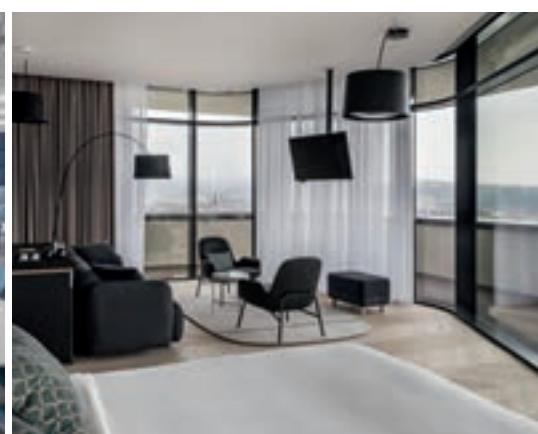
3 What kinds of events have taken place since the opening? Could you talk to us in more detail about one of them?

I would like to mention our official opening party. This event took place on 19th January and it was a great opportunity to meet our clients and guests. The main theme of the evening was The Art of the Switch during which we showed off the unique flexibility of our meeting space. During the evening, we changed the set ups of our meeting rooms right in front of the guests. To their surprise, a luxury car then drove out from below the stage. The rental of this car and a weekend stay in our hotel were the top prizes in the raffle. The guests had an opportunity to attend site inspections held by our sales team

and therefore they could explore our guest rooms including luxury rooftop apartments, fitness facilities, and the dining area. Guests enjoyed an interesting programme including music performances and a wide selection of refreshments prepared by our chef. Straight after opening we hosted a lot of Christmas parties. Several automotive companies chose our hotel as the perfect venue for promoting their cars. It is one of the great advantages of our hotel space. On a daily basis, we host small meetings for corporate businesses too.

4 One last word for our MICE readers?

I would like to invite them to our excellent restaurant, The Yard, which is a new restaurant concept established specifically for Courtyard by Marriott Brno. Our guests can taste local and international specialities and a wide selection of premium Moravian wines. Besides a great meal, visitors will also enjoy the unique atmosphere created by an originally designed Danish-style interior using high quality materials ■



LET US EMPOWER YOU

COURTYARD[®]
Marriott

BRNO

- ★ 201 comfortable design rooms including luxury rooftop apartment
- ★ All guest bathrooms feature a heated floor
- ★ 10 meeting rooms with daylight and state-of-the-art AV technology
- ★ Main ballroom with a capacity up to 400 delegates

- ★ The Yard Lounge and Dining restaurant
- ★ Rooftop fitness center
- ★ Underground parking
- ★ Private bus parking
- ★ Located in Brno's premiere business park

The South Moravia region also saw an increase in visitors from Lithuania, the UK, and Asia. Meanwhile, the number of tourists from South Korea increased by 25 per cent compared with 2015. Brno, with 727,000 visitors, was the number one destination for foreign tourists in South Moravia, while Aqualand Moravia attracted 700,000 visitors, Lednice Castle 431,000, and 370,000 people visited Brno Zoo in 2016.



BRNO: THE CAPITAL OF EXPOSITIONS AND EVENTS

Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic, has a population of more than 370,000 people. Its location, within 200 kilometres of Prague, Vienna, and Bratislava, makes this city at the convergence of the Svratka and Svitava rivers an attractive MICE destination.

Brno is well known for its race circuit, which hosts the Czech Republic Motorcycle Grand Prix, previously held a round of the Superbike World Championship, and hosts many other races and events ■

BVV: OPENING UP NEW PROSPECTS

The Brno Exhibition Centre is far more than just a home for trade fairs and exhibitions. For some years now, it has also hosted congresses, conferences, seminars, and company workshops.

The individual exhibition halls are very popular places to hold social and special company events, as well as political party conferences, company employee meetings, annual general meetings, and other events. Clients appreciate the variety of spaces available and the way in which they can modify and use them for their own specific needs.

Congresses, conferences, and specialist workshops make up the largest proportion of events held between individual trade fairs and exhibitions. The conference halls are as suitable for events organised for a small number of guests as they are for large international congresses. The team of skilled professionals at Brno Trade Fairs ensures that events run smoothly and they tailor congresses to meet precise needs, including accompanying exhibitions. There are many advantages of the congress spaces, including the huge number of hotel rooms available close to the pavilion, excellent transport links, and plenty of parking places.

The unique nature of the site means we are capable of organising events such as the large UITP Transport Congress, which requires an exhibition space of 30,000 square meters, including numerous conference halls, and catering for up to 4,000 people.

All these activities - and those that still only exist as a figment of their organiser's imagination - make the Brno Exhibition Centre unique. What is also positive is that our clients keep coming back to us, confirming that we are heading in the right direction and that we have much to offer them ■





Opening up new prospects

Trade Fairs Brno

Congresses | Conferences | Seminars



bestevents.cz

Rental of exhibition halls
and auditoriums





Vienna

fantastic art galleries, TOP meetings city, and Gustav Klimt's "The Kiss"

At a press conference hosted by the Vienna Tourist Board (VTB) on 22nd March, VTB President and Vienna City Councillor for Finance, Economic and International Affairs Renate Brauner, Director of Tourism Norbert Kettner, and Head of the Vienna Convention Bureau Christian Mutschlechner presented the 2016 meetings industry performance results.

In comparison with 2015, the number of events organised in Vienna rose by 11 per cent, triggering a two per cent increase in bed nights and an induced economic impact increase of three per cent. As a result, Vienna's meetings industry's economic contribution passed the €1 billion-mark for the second year in succession.

"Compared with 2015, which exceeded the one-billion mark for the first time, the contribution of Vienna's meetings industry to the national economy increased in 2016 by an additional three per cent to €1.072 billion," Brauner said.

The economic impact includes direct expenditure by participants, conference organisers, exhibitors, and accompanying persons, as well as income from other associated areas of the economy that the meetings indirectly affect (e.g. food and beverage suppliers, printers, construction companies, banks, insurance companies, communications companies etc.)

Meetings industry secures almost 20,000 year-round jobs

"Vienna's meetings industry once again proved to be a dependable employer, securing more than 19,700 year-round jobs nationwide," Brauner noted. "The records set in 2015 were surpassed with gains in all key indicators, with performances mirroring those of the capital's thriving tourism sector in 2016."



Vienna State Opera



ACV Conference Center

Tax revenue approaches €300 million

Tax revenue from congresses, meetings, and incentive events in Vienna amounted to €296.59 million in 2016. Of this total, €194.34 million went to the federal government, €36.15 million to Vienna, and the remainder to the other federal provinces and municipalities. Induced economic impact and tax revenue is calculated according to the Event-Model-Austria, a constantly-updated method developed by corporate advisor and Vienna University of Business and Economics lecturer Dr. Martina Stoff-Hochreiner.

Vienna: a global meetings star

For many years, Vienna has been at the TOP of ICCA's rankings for numbers of meetings and it maintains its

position as a leading city for meetings and as one of the industry's biggest stars.

This peaceful city on the Danube River is renowned for combining beauty, art, and charming Central European architecture that is visually pleasing, comprising several inspirational buildings, corners, small and large squares, and various statues, in perfect harmony.

An incredibly welcoming destination, it is easy to get to by plane and offers excellent MICE infrastructure. The city boasts stellar attractions both inside and outside the Ringstrasse - the ring road lined by the City Hall, the Vienna State Opera house, the Palace of Justice, the Austrian Parliament Building, and top class hotels such as the Hotel Imperial.

The largest of Vienna's venues is the Messe Wien Exhibition Congress Center that includes an exhibition centre with more than 55,000 square metres of space that



can host up to 30,000 people and a 7,000-square metre congress centre with room for up to 3,000 delegates.

The city offers MICE groups many quality hotels and venues with great services, such as Hilton Vienna, Steigenberger, Marriott Vienna, NH Danube City, Melia Vienna, The Ritz-Carlton, InterContinental, and others.

When one hears the word "Vienna", one of the first things that comes to mind is a plethora of great art galleries containing collections by incredible world-renowned painters. These include Palace Albertina; Kunsthistorische Museum; Belvedere Museum Vienna, where you can see Gustav Klimt's work exhibited; the Dorotheum, one of the world's oldest auction houses; the Academy of Fine Arts, where you can see works by Hieronymus Bosch; and more. The Gustav Klimt collection is an absolute must-see. It includes "The Kiss", the famous painting he created between 1907 and 1908, which was later considered as the high point of his "golden phase". You might find that this gorgeous painting, now more than 100 years old, still has something to say to us today ■

3 LARGEST CONGRESSES in 2017

NAME of the EVENT	NUMBER of DELEGATES	DATE	VENUE
European Congress of Radiology – ECR	20,000	1/3-5/3/17	Austria Centre, Vienna
27 th European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID)	11,000	22/4-25/4/17	Messe Wien Exhibition & Congress Center
General Assembly of the European Geosciences Union – EGU	12,000	23/4-28/4/17	Austria Center Vienna

WOW! HUNGARY



MEET IN THE MICEST COUNTRY
WITH A PLETHORA OF GREAT
HOTELS, VENUES AND DMCs.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY STATISTICS

In December 2016, the number of nights spent by international tourists increased by 21 per cent and that of nights spent by domestic tourists by 8.6 per cent compared to the previous year. The migrant crisis continues to affect the number of foreign arrivals and prices of accommodation establishments increased by 17 per cent. In 2016, accommodation establishments recorded 27.7 million tourism nights which represents 7 per cent more than in 2015. Total gross revenue rose by 9.1 per cent at current prices and amounted to more than HUF 402 million.

Turnover based on tourism nights from the most significant source countries grew significantly. Guests arriving from the UK and Italy spent most tourism nights, and in the case of those countries, the number



grew by 20 and 17 per cent respectively. In domestic accommodation establishments, almost one sixth of all international tourism nights – 14 per cent more than in 2015 – were spent by guests arriving from Germany and Austria. In the case of the Czech Republic, France, Russia, and Romania, which are also considered significant source countries, considerable growth (ranging between 17 and 58 per cent) was also recorded in the number of tourism nights spent in domestic accommodation establishments ■

THE ECONOMY

According to exports of goods data, the Hungarian foreign trade sector has been dynamically expanding since the middle of 2013. Monthly data shows year-on-year growth of between 5 and 10 per cent. In the first eight months of 2016, the Hungarian foreign trade sector posted a surplus of more than €1 billion, compared to the same period in the previous year. This constitutes a year-on-year increase of more than 18.7 per cent.

In the fourth quarter of 2016, the gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 1.6 per cent year-on-year and by 0.4 per cent quarter-on-quarter. In 2016 overall, GDP rose by 2 per cent, driven by the agricultural and

market services sectors. The foreign trade sector posted an unprecedented surplus of €10 billion, while the general government budget deficit was well below the 3 per cent threshold.

The recently concluded six-year wage agreement is expected to result in faster economic growth by boosting competitiveness and demand. In its Macro-Economic and Budget Outlook published in December 2016, the Ministry for National Economy predicted economic growth of 4.1 per cent for 2017 and 4.3 per cent for 2018. The European Commission's recently published Winter 2017 Economic Forecast is also predicting accelerated growth ■

NEW DEVELOPMENT PLANS

For Hungary's tourism industry, 2016 was the best year yet. Hungarian Tourism Agency chief executive Zoltán Guller told the media in February 2017 that in order to make Hungary one of the TOP 5 European tourism destinations in the next two years and to double spending by foreign tourists, several developments are planned and some have already started.

These include upgrading 48 lakeside beaches at Lake Balaton costing 1.86 billion forints (€6 million), and replacing the lake's pleasure boats with electric ones. Wine routes will be built in the Sopron region in Western

Hungary, the Széchenyi Palace in the nearby Nagycenk will be renovated, and 23 billion forints (€74.5 million) will be spent developing tourism facilities around Lake Fertő (Lake Neusiedl), which straddles the border with Austria. In the northern part of the country, more than 90 billion forints (€291.8 million) will be spent on developments in the Tokaj-Hegyalja region, where the 700-metre glass bridge of Sátoraljaújhely will become the longest structure of its kind in the world, almost twice as long as the current record-holder in China, which measures 430 metres ■

Why choose Hungary FOR YOUR NEXT MICE EVENT?

We spoke to various professionals from the meetings industry about Hungary, and its capital Budapest – the „city of spas.“ We asked those who promote Hungary and those on the other side: buyers with experiences about this beautiful country.

■ By Zuzana Adamson

REPRESENTATIVES & SELLERS TALK

BUYERS TALK



Digna Cudare,
*Owner of Digitours,
LATVIA*

Budapest is an excellent place for people to meet and organise events.

Let me give you

my reasons why Budapest is an excellent MICE destination:

- Good conference centres and venues
 - Many hotel rooms in different categories available
 - They are experts at organising big events
 - Transportation is very well organised
 - Good flight connections
 - It is a safe place
 - Beautiful city with lots of historical monuments
 - Gourmet kitchens and friendly local people
- Hungary and Budapest are both places to which you would always want to return.



Szilvia Fabian,
*Manager for MICE Events at Kompas,
HUNGARY*

Hungary is a country which boasts one of the world's most beautiful cities: Budapest, the "Pearl of the Danube"; where 2,000-year-old Roman ruins and 400-year-old Turkish monuments can be found side

by side; where Central Europe's largest freshwater lake - Balaton - is located, providing a natural paradise for its visitors; where hundreds of therapeutic mineral springs gush up from the depths; and there is something else that keeps bringing visitors back - the legendary Hungarian hospitality. To all of these "ingredients" you add the paprika and you get a beautiful combination that you will find nowhere else and our company is here to help make all of this happen... We are a local DMC with a team of highly educated and motivated experts. We are offering a wide selection of services throughout Hungary, from hotel reservations to excursions and tailor-made arrangements for incentive groups. Our work with our clients is based on a real partnership, starting from a blank canvas, taking into account every detail, until the final version.



Róbert Szűcs,
Executive Chef at Spoon, BUDAPEST

The first answer that comes to mind is "Why not?" But if I try to think as an event organiser I would say Budapest is quite "new" as a destination. We do have loads of activities all around the city which are attractive for the general public as well. New conference centres, places of historical interest, thermal baths, rustic pubs, and so on. The list is quite long. Hungary has the most Michelin-starred restaurants in the European region. I think that some kind of gastro culinary revolution is going on in our country. Whatever comes to the customer's mind, it will all happen here!

Spoon also plays its part in that with our unique atmosphere and great location! A consistently full restaurant does not happen by accident. At full capacity, Spoon can serve up to 450 people in a single evening at fine dining level. The three-person sales team is complemented by professional event organisers. Uniquely, we are the only Hungarian restaurant to have taken part in global industry exhibitions in Barcelona and Chicago for some years now.

Budapest:

New “**winds of change**” bringing in ideas for the new Europe

Now one of the leading MICE cities, Budapest was ranked 19th in 2015, based on International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) statistics. In the last few years, Budapest has become a very popular city for meetings and tourism. Numbers of international arrivals have consistently increased to the point where they have now surpassed pre-economic crisis levels. Leisure and MICE travellers dominate the market.

As EU states welcome masses of immigrants from several non-European countries, hundreds of thousands of Germans have left their home country and Hungary is one of their preferred

destinations. The area around Lake Balaton, which is seen as a quieter and safer place for both children and adults to live, has become a popular destination for German expats.

It is well known that within the European Union, Hungary represents a “rebel voice” and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán often speaks out strongly on issues such as immigration and the EU in general. Taking their lead from new American president Donald Trump, it now seems that certain “critical voices” in Europe are less afraid to express their views and will talk freely about problems within the EU in a way that was not previously possible. Will these winds of change blowing through the EU help create a “Better Europe”?





The Szechenyi Spa



Boscolo Hotel Budapest

One of the problems - for many years, a “great public secret” – was the subject of an extraordinary official conference in March 2017, organised by the Visegrád Group. Also known as V4, the group comprises Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland. This V4 Summit was focused on “Garbage Can” Food Quality in Central and Eastern Europe and was held in Warsaw, the capital of Poland.

Recent studies have shown that many multinational food companies add inferior ingredients to branded products destined for sale in poorer EU member states. In February, Slovakia’s Agriculture Ministry presented the results of laboratory tests showing that half of 22 products bought in Bratislava, the Slovak capital, differed in taste, looks, and composition from equivalent products bought in two Austrian towns across the border. In Slovakia,

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*Interiors of the Central Market Hall
in Budapest*



they were of a poorer quality. The results showed lower quantities of meat, higher amounts of fat, the presence of artificial sweeteners, many artificial preservatives, and products weighing less than advertised.

The Visegrád Group is tired of being “Europe’s garbage can”. According to Orbán, food quality double standards is “the biggest scandal of the recent past”. The Visegrád Group wants a better Europe, and the leaders of

the group issued a joint statement on their contribution to the Rome Declaration on World Food Security. They rejected the idea of a two-tiered union, and instead called for not “more or less Europe, but a better Europe.”

The four central and eastern European countries – Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia – created the Visegrád Group in 1991 in Visegrád, a Hungarian city on the River Danube. It was put in place to reinforce cooperation between the countries that together represent about 64 million people. There was early cooperation, especially in the tourism sector and in constitutional law, but until recently, there were few “signs of life” from V4. It seems that V4 has now woken up, and that positive changes inside the EU may come about as a result.

Hungary, like other central and eastern European destinations, has much to offer MICE groups. While Hungary is nicknamed the “Land of Healing Waters”, Budapest is the so-called “Spa Capital” of Europe. In Budapest, there are 241 hotels (19,374 rooms), categorised as follows: 5-star (less than 10 per cent; 4-star (35 per cent); 3-star (15 per cent); and other hotels. In the last few years, many new luxury properties which are well equipped for MICE events have opened in the city; Budapest now boasts a luxury Ritz-Carlton, the Private Palace Budapest, W Budapest (W Hotels Worldwide) and more ■

Great Incentive

4 GREAT INCENTIVE ACTIVITIES



1 Royal Palace of Gödöllő Excursion

The former residence of Sissi (Queen Elisabeth) is the second largest baroque palace in the world. The Royal Palace of Gödöllő is just a short drive (15-20 minutes) from either Budapest or Ferenc Liszt Airport, and it is also an ideal venue for your conferences and parties.

2 Cookery Course

This activity has become very popular among MICE groups. Almost every country offers you the chance to learn how to cook local specialities and you can have a lot of fun by doing it with your business colleagues. You will learn how to make traditional Hungarian dishes like goulash, chicken paprikash, stuffed cabbage or palacsinta, and find out about spices used in Hungarian cooking as well. This is usually a half-day activity.



3 Communist Times Tour

Go back to the "good old days" when we drove Trabants, drank at work, lived in blocks of flats, stood in banana lines, had two passports, coupon books, no TV on Mondays, and no freedom of speech. Experience the build up to the 1956 uprising, follow the marches, relive the battles, and hear the stories. The tour takes three to four hours.

4 Puszta and Countryside

You might prefer to spend a day out in the Puszta (also known as the Pannonian Steppe), which is part of the Great Hungarian Plain. This rural Hungarian landscape is well known for its horses and wild animals. The best-known



place there is the Lázár Equestrian Park where it is possible to organise many different activities. You will also have the chance to watch traditional horse and ox shows, enjoy local feasts, relax in the beautiful countryside, listen to live Gypsy music, and take part in many activities which are great for teambuilding.

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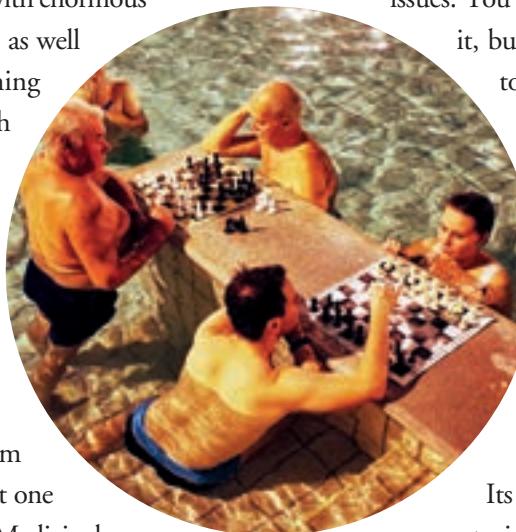


Hungarian SPAS' THERMAL waters offer range of benefits

If you are looking for a healthy combination of business and relaxation, then Hungary will meet your needs. Although it is "the world's spa capital", Budapest is not the only place to enjoy healing water with medicinal effects. In fact, Hungary is a country blessed with enormous thermal and medicinal water reserves as well as one of the largest thermal bathing lakes in the world. Hungary has a rich tradition of balneotherapy that dates back to Roman times.

Thermal water rises from underground at a temperature of 20°C or above. Given Hungary's extraordinary geological features, the thermal water there is often warmer than 30°C. Mineral water comes from groundwater layers, containing at least one gram of dissolved minerals per litre. Medicinal water is water rich in minerals that has scientifically-proven healing properties. In Hungary, most medicinal waters are thermal waters.

Relaxing in hot water relieves stress and anxiety, thereby accelerating your body's own healing mechanisms.



Underground water contains chemical elements that surface water doesn't, which alter the mineral contents of your body. The salts in the water stimulate your skin, and they are also very good for treating muscle cramps and other issues. You can bathe in medicinal water or drink it, but with moderation; spending about 20 to 30 minutes is recommended, as well as drinking a cup at a time more than once a day.

There are more than 1,000 hot springs in Hungary, so a visit to a spa is an absolute "must-do" when you are in this CEE country. One of the most unusual spas is the open-air complex at Egerszalók, about 129 kilometres east of Budapest.

Its nickname is Salt Hill: you can see that centuries of mineral deposits left by the flowing springs have turned the mountains white. There are 17 indoor and outdoor pools at the adjoining Saliris Resort. Many spas are connected to large resorts where you can find top class accommodation and event venues for your meetings ■



We talk to **András Csere, Director of the Caramell in Bükkfürdő**

- 1 The Caramell is the biggest hotel conference venue in western Hungary. Could you talk to us a little bit about your facilities for international conferences and meeting organizers?**

The Caramell Premium Resort is located in the West Hungary region. This part of the country shares its border with Slovakia, Austria, and Slovenia. The airports at Bratislava, Vienna, and Sármellék are easily accessible. Another advantage is that the M86 highway,



which was launched in October 2016, is only 12 kilometres away from the hotel. Our hotel is an ideal meeting point for all Central-Eastern European companies headquartered in Vienna (Austria). Various outdoor programmes are available in the hotel, so it is a perfect choice for smaller companies' team-building events. After a busy day, they can relax in the spa, offering a unique world of saunas, as well.

- 2 When we say western Hungary - I imagine spa cities with a lot of green spaces...am I right or wrong? And what else is there to do in the region?**

It's true, Bükkfürdő lies at the foot of the Alps, and this is a typical spa city. Győr and Szombathely are in the same neighbourhood, these two cities offer several cultural programmes. Sopron - the so-called West Gate - is one of our country's wine regions. The "Kékfrankos tour" starts from there, and continues into neighbouring Austria. Another accessible wine region is Pannonhalma-Sokoróalja, where the 1,000-year-old abbey can be visited. Hungary has one of the youngest wine regions in Kőszeg, which is about 20 kilometres away from Bükkfürdő - an ideal tour for bicycle fan groups. We are bringing cultural programs to our conference rooms: our guests can enjoy popular or classical music concerts or even



a game. Furthermore, this area offers different kinds of festivals from May to October.

- 3 Could you tell us about a MICE event that you have organised recently which was interesting, special, or very successful?**

Our last event was a year-end event, a gala dinner. It was accompanied by a murder mystery show – "Murder at the dinner" - where the guests had to find the killer by the end of the evening. It was a very special programme.

- 4 What kinds of groups and events can be organised at your resort?**

From small meetings to larger conferences (of 450 to 500 people), everyone will find our hotel a suitable option. Caramell is technically well-equipped and it is the most modern conference venue in this region, with between four and six rooms available at the hotel ■

3 SPA CITIES

- 1 Hévíz**



- 2 Hajduszoboszlo**



► The spa is one of the oldest thermal bath in Hungary.

- 3 Bükkfürdő**



► It is a popular spa destination close to the Austrian border.

► The town is located near Lake Hévíz, the world's second largest thermal lake.

22 QUALITIES THAT MAKE A GREAT LEADER II.

- 12. OPEN-MINDEDNESS**
- 13. DECISIVENESS**
- 14. PERSONABLENESS**
- 15. EMPOWERMENT**
- 16. POSITIVITY**
- 17. GENEROSITY**
- 18. PERSISTENCE**
- 19. INSIGHTFULNESS**
- 20. COMMUNICATION**
- 21. ACCOUNTABILITY**
- 22. RESTLESSNESS**

(From James Roger Hamilton's
Entrepreneurs Institute)



RIGA: MCE Central & Eastern Europe 2017 - The WOW Effect!

With combined forces, Europe Congress seriously outdid itself into delivering the MICE experience of the year in Riga within the past few days. Participation satisfaction is soaring and the 'WOW' experience delivered to all during the two and a half days, will leave a long-lasting memory. The boutique MICE B2B forum that creates business synergy through matching the needs of international event planners with the services of Central & Eastern European providers, kicked off on Sunday March the fifth. After having come from pre-event Fam trips, tours, or airport transfers, the welcome reception formed the official opening of the event. Welcome speeches were delivered by all event partners including the host venue, Radisson Blu Latvija.

The opening dinner took place in Riga's most prominent Palace straight in the heart of the city, the Blackheads House. It is here where Meet Riga offered all event guests a fabulous evening with Latvian fine cuisine and some excellent performances. Monday 6 March and Tuesday 7 March, the two days known within the MCE concept as being the business days, were indeed full of networking (not business, it was just used) action taking place.

Monday night offered a fantastic evening at the

Historical Latvian Gas Tower where the Latvian Investment and Development Agency, as an event partner, offered an experience complete with dinner and a show. After the dinner the DJ took care of finding the right beats to match the dancing need that had occurred and so the evening lasted long into the night.

The annual MCE Central & Eastern Europe closed with words by the Managing Director of Europe



Congress, Alain Pallas, the Director of Meet Riga, Aigars Smiltans and the Director of Sales and Marketing of the Radisson Blu Latvija, Andis Kielbickis. Further event partners such as Baltic Events & Tours, taking care of all transportation and tours, Turkish Airlines and Air Baltic, were thanked for their contributions before participants headed back home WOWed from this amazing two days experience ■

Railway to link Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan

The new Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, which is expected to be completed by early summer, will link the three countries, increase trade between many countries, and allow cargo to transfer from Asia to Europe. The new railway link will be 826 kilometres long.

"A cargo from China will be able to reach Europe in 15 days when the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railways gets completed. There will be both time and cost savings. Hence, an uneconomical transportation means will become economic when delivery time reduces from 45 to 15 (days)," said Ahmet Arslan, Turkey's Transport, Maritime and Communications Minister ■

& MICE INDUSTRY



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Guinness Gravity Bar



Guinness Building

DUBLIN: great whiskey, a plethora of writers and musicians, and the Guinness storehouse

2016 was a record-breaking year for overseas tourism to Ireland, with almost 9.6 million people arriving – which represents an increase of 10.9 %, or 941,300 additional overseas visitors, when compared with 2015. „That growth was recorded from all of our markets around the world, with exceptional results from North America (+19.4 % on 2015),” said Niall Gibbons, CEO of Tourism Ireland. „We have also seen record numbers arriving there from Mainland Europe (+8.5 %), and I also welcome the continued strong performance from Britain (+10.6 %), our largest market for overseas tourism,” he added.

■ By Zuzana Adamson

Ireland – and in particular its capital Dublin – has become a trendy destination, and there are many reasons for its popularity.

I dedicated a few days to a MICE inspection, discovering interesting venues and activities in Dublin for MICE organisers that wish to combine their events with typical local activities. The approach of the local people is at the same time very professional and warm, and they will do everything they can to ensure MICE events run smoothly. It was a pleasure for me to discover what Dublin can offer MICE groups.

Among the most well-known sights in Dublin is Trinity College Library. Founded in 1592, it belongs to the oldest university in Ireland and its main chamber, the Long Room, houses around 200,000 of the library's oldest books. Located on a historic 40-acre campus in the centre of Dublin city, you can also find on permanent display there the Book of Kells, containing famous Irish medieval gospel manuscripts that were probably produced early in the ninth century by the monks of Iona.

What's even more interesting for us is that you can use the historic Trinity College Library environment for your MICE events and meetings. The venue offers 33 meeting rooms for up to 1,200 delegates, as well as 800 bedrooms for accommodation. The largest room, the Burke Theatre, can host up to 406 people in a theatre-style layout.

The next stop on my MICE journey of discovery was the Irish Whiskey Museum which was the first of its type anywhere in the world! Housed in the heart of Dublin, it offers a unique whiskey tour and whiskey-tasting experience for individuals and groups. They also cater for small to medium-sized private groups and parties for every occasion. I enjoyed experiencing the history of whiskey production in a creative form that mixes story-telling, visual communication, and lively action. We tasted about four different types of Irish whiskey and I learnt a lot even though I am not usually a whiskey drinker...but after my stay in Dublin, who knows?! Immerse yourself in the science of whiskey with the lovely people that work here and both you and your MICE group



Trinity College Library



The Portrait Gallery



Irish Whiskey Museum

will have a great – and lively - experience. I very much recommend you visit.

If you really want to impress your company and its partners with your event and create a sense of ceremony and dignity, then Dublin Castle is probably the right venue for you. At the time of my site inspection, there were decorated tables prepared for a gala dinner in the Portrait Gallery (banquets for smaller groups of up to 99 people are available) so I took some pictures for your inspiration. The room was originally a supper room where banquets, often comprising 16 to 30 courses, were served on a long table extending along the entire length of the room. The original wood panelling lining the walls dates from the late 1740s so let the venue's long and rich history become the perfect backdrop for your event.



Whiskey-tasting experience

St. Patrick's Hall contains one of the most important decorative interiors in the castle. Formerly the ballroom of the vice-regal court, it is home to the most significant painting ceiling in Ireland completed by Vincenzo Waldré in the 1790s. Today, St. Patrick's Hall is the most important ceremonial room in the country and is used for important events such as state banquets for visiting dignitaries and the inauguration of Ireland's President, which takes place every seven years. You can hold an event for up to 202 persons there.

At the World Travel Awards in 2015, the Guinness Storehouse won the award for Europe's Leading Attraction, beating – among others – Paris's Eiffel Tower. The seven-floor high building is full of fun, interactive education, and insights into the process of Guinness production, including everything you ever wanted to know about the famous brand of dark beer. On top of the pint-shaped building is the Gravity Bar where you will get a free beer and a magnificent birds-eye view over the whole of Dublin. If you are lucky and the weather is clear you can even see the coast. The Guinness Storehouse event spaces are located across all seven floors, accommodating up to 2,000 delegates. The venue is suitable for everything from informal receptions to high-end gala dinners, from product launches to immersive culinary food experiences ■

IMEX declares new purpose for 2017: Reimagines key education programmes



Meeting and event professionals can learn 'How to plan with deeper meaning, innovation and insight in mind' as part of Purposeful Meetings, the new IMEX Talking Point and focus of IMEX in Frankfurt this May.

The new Talking Point, which reflects an industry shift towards delivering 'memorable moments' instead of meetings, and 'experiences' not events, will be explored throughout the show, which takes place 16 – 18 May is in addition to the education programme and its ten tracks, many networking events and extensive exhibition. Carina Bauer, CEO, IMEX Group, explains: "Any event planner who cares about their craft and truly wants to have a competitive edge will be excited to dig deeper into the IMEX Purposeful Meetings Talking Point.

"Our chief focus is always going to be on bringing buyers and sellers together, face to face, in the most efficient and enjoyable way possible. But, from a strategic point of view, having an annual IMEX Talking Point, or headline theme, will inject more immediacy, stronger direction and a clearer distinction between each show year to year."

The IMEX Group has also entered into a three-year agreement with EventCanvas.org Foundation which allows IMEX to offer Event Design Certification to selected participants. The certification training will be offered free of charge and provides planners from across the world with a common language for designing more innovative – and purposeful – events.

Ray Bloom & Carina Bauer, IMEX Group, Chairman & IMEX Group, CEO

Targeted and inspiring Monday education

The Event Design Certification is part of a new pre-show education programme taking place on Monday 15 May, the day before the show. Free of charge and open to all, the day will incorporate five core streams covering event design, future trends and supplier education. The popular Association Day also takes place the day before the show, offering free, tailored education exclusively for association professionals. The IMEX Association Day programme has been redesigned for 2017 and will feature a new Association Management Stream, covering topics such as understanding why members leave and how to persuade them to stay. There will now be two Meetings & Events Streams (A and B), discussing issues such as how to maximise member participation at your events, and how to identify and approach new sponsors.

Exclusively Corporate at IMEX, the dedicated event for corporate meeting planners and event marketers, has also been redeveloped for IMEX in Frankfurt this year. Tailored to address some of the challenges faced by planners, there is a full day of networking and free education on topics such as delivering ROI, creative event

formats, new technologies, security risk and emerging destinations and trends. After a series of group sessions, the education then splits into two streams with sessions on strategic global programme management for senior event professionals and operational issues for event managers.

Emanuele Caprarelli, Meeting & Event Planner at CROMSOURCE, Italy, who attended the event last year explains: *"This event is about getting us to think. To remind us not get stuck in our own ways of doing things. It's also good to meet people here. I've been in touch with people I met here at the event two years ago, and just saw them again today."*

More exhibitors to meet

The IMEX show itself offers a wide range of business opportunities and inspiration with new exhibitors including Saudi Arabia, Meet Puerto Rico, Barcelona, Vienna House Hotels and Choose Chicago. Exhibitors with expanded stands include Tourism New Zealand, Royal Caribbean International, Latvia, Slovenia, Accor and NYC.

With the largest global array of exhibitors from every sector in the meetings industry, buyers can discover 3,500 worldwide organisations, the latest trends and hundreds of meeting professionals under one roof. Combined with over 200 networking opportunities with senior level meeting professionals, and social events including Site Nite Europe, CIM-Clubbing and the IMEX Gala Dinner, this adds up to three inspiring and productive days of business. Mark Abbott, Director of Operations, Abbott Travel Group, USA, who visited the show last year sums up:

"My visit to IMEX was very fruitful. With 28 meetings in three days, I was able to cover more ground and obtain more information than I thought possible in such a short time. There is nowhere so much business can be done in so little time."

IMEX in Frankfurt takes place at Messe Frankfurt from 16 – 18 May 2017 ■



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DUBLIN: Eventex Awards – Global Winners



Walk Events (Poland): Winners in Best Event and Best Sporting Event for VERVA Street Racing 2016 – National Automotive Festival

During the Eventex Awards gala at Croke Park in Dublin, Ireland were announced the most outstanding achievements in the world of events. The awe-inspiring Hogan Suite gathered industry professionals from all parts of the world. The record number of 60 awards was distributed between 37 companies in 19 categories for best events and event technology! There was more than 40 MICE professionals as the jury, including Ms. Buongiorno, Vice President of AIM Group International, Ms. Adamson, Founder of MICE CEE B2B magazines and media company, or Linda Pereira, Senior Partner and CEO at L & I Communications Group.

Best Event was awarded to VERVA Street Racing 2016 – National Automotive Festival by Walk Events – a strategic communications company from Poland that also won Best Sporting event. “*It’s a huge appreciation for our entire team and client. We had a very successful year and these awards are encouraging us to work even harder in 2017! Eventex is a great opportunity to meet people from around the world to share experience, which I find inspiring*” – said Adam Kowalczyk, event director at Walk events. The greatest number of awards went to American companies, followed by UK, Ireland and the Netherlands. Attendify became the leader among the American event technology professionals, taking home a total of 4 awards, including the grand prize for **Best Event Mobile App!** In UK, Eventex awarded first prizes to Momentum Worldwide, Weli Creative and Connections Events, respectively for Best Trade Show, Best Festival and Best Conference. In Netherlands XSAGA stole the show with **People’s Choice Event** and Best Brand Engagement Event in addition to becoming a runner-up for Best Festival! Slido – the audience interaction tool was pronounced **Best Event Technology** ■

CROKE PARK, the largest stadium in Ireland, is home to the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), and has also played host to U2, Tina Turner, and even Muhammad Ali! Croke Park can hold 83,300 people, making it the third largest stadium in Europe.



For your meetings and events, there are 8 large suites and over 90 meeting rooms for up to 2,000 people. Croke Park is only 15 minutes drive from Dublin Airport and also provides 600 free parking spaces – it is the only venue that can offer this in Dublin. A 4-star hotel with 232 bedrooms is located right next door.



JOHANNESBURG: Gaining Insights into Africa

GainingEdge has released its latest edition of ‘knowledge bytes’ in conjunction with Meetings Africa scheduled for 28 Feb – 1 March 2017 at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg. In this edition Bruce Redor, Partner for Europe, Middle East and Africa, focuses on business events and Africa’s economic development.

GainingEdge has considerable experience in the African continent, working with both convention bureaus and/or convention centre developers in Nairobi, Abuja, and Zimbabwe, and in South Africa with Gauteng, Johannesburg, Northern Cape Province, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. GainingEdge was the consultant for South Africa Tourism on the organizational structure of its national convention bureau – the South Africa National Convention Bureau – and

development of its Mega Events Strategy. GainingEdge also provides representation services in South Africa’s key markets – Europe, China and India. At the upcoming Meetings Africa 2017 in Johannesburg, GainingEdge assisted the organisers by pre-qualifying their list of potential hosted buyers.

Additionally, Gary Grimmer CEO of GainingEdge and Gregg Talley, FASAE, CAE President and CEO of Talley Management Group, Inc, provided pro-bono startup advice and support to the newly formed Africa Society of Association Executives (AfSAE) which launched in February 2016.

Grimmer explained why AfSAE is important: “*Developing economies need stronger association communities because civil societies are vitally important for professional development and*

professional development is transformative economically and socially. With stronger association communities, they can then connect better to global knowledge networks and develop stronger global trade and intellectual engagement. Finally, having more regional associations will engender more meetings and help to build their business events industries.”

AfSAE’s establishment committee has representatives from Nigeria, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zambia, and covers a wide variety of industries.

While at Meetings Africa this year, Grimmer will attend the AfSAE Board meeting and also moderate two panels – the first on growing the African association market and another on how associations manage bids for hosting their congresses ■

PRAGUE: Leaders in Hospitality CEE & CIS Summit

Prague has been chosen to host the fifth annual Leaders in Hospitality CEE & CIS Summit, a flagship hospitality event that promotes and advances the region's hospitality sector internationally. The summit will take place on the 5th and 6th of June 2017.

Organized by Prague-based International Business Council, the summit has established itself as the only industry platform that brings together the most prominent international hospitality sector decision makers and senior industry professionals from all 30 CEE and CIS countries. The summit provides a unique opportunity for business leaders to set their business agendas for the year ahead while addressing the region's challenges and opportunities.

The event has previously been hosted by Poland, Austria, and Hungary, among others, and for its fifth anniversary the summit

returns to Prague, Czech Republic, where it was first launched in 2012. Recognising the importance of the Leaders in Hospitality CEE & CIS Summit, not only for the regional hospitality industry, but also due to the positive impact it has on tourism, trade, and the economy, the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic has endorsed the summit, as has Karla Slechtova, the Minister of Regional Development, and the Czech Chamber of Commerce.

The summit has also been endorsed by Czech Tourism, the Czech Bartenders Association, the Association of Czech Furniture Manufacturers as well as the Czech Association of Chefs and Pastry Chefs, members of the World Association of Chefs' Societies.

Over the course of the two days, attendees will be able to participate in multiple interactive educational panel discussions led by high-

profile industry experts. They will also have the opportunity to network with other hoteliers from the region as well as meet service providers and producers during one-to-one meetings with hospitality solution providers that exhibit at the event. Among them are leading global brands like Honeywell, Philips, Aksel, Atlas Concorde, and Ideal Standard International.

"It is with pleasure that we are sponsoring Leaders in Hospitality CEE & CIS at this year's summit," said Franck Racapé, EMEA Sales Director, Philips Professional Display Solutions. "We are excited to be part of this platform that supports, educates and inspires the hospitality industry where so many key influencers gather, especially with this being the fifth anniversary. For Philips Professional Display Solutions, the CEE-CIS region is a market full of opportunities and we look forward to sharing our innovative solutions at the summit," he added ■

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BRNO: The Best Year for BVV – Brno Trade Fairs

For Veletrhy Brno, located in the city of Brno (capital of Moravia), 2016 was the best year since the global banking crisis, and one of the best in its long history of trade fairs. Last year, more than 50 trade fairs, congresses, cultural and other events were organised on the grounds of Veletrhy Brno.



The number of delegates and visitors reached the magical number of 780,000, while 6,000 companies exhibited. The largest events were the International Engineering Fair (MSV), and

agricultural equipment and technology fair TECHAGRO. The biggest exhibitor at MSV in 2016 was China.

The exhibitors filled 224 square metres of exhibition space, and the total space used by exhibitors reached 600 square metres. "When the economy goes well, it is the same for the trade fairs. We could see that the trade fairs are back 'in'. We expect very good business results that will be presented publicly in February. It was one of the best business years in our history," confirmed Mr. Jiri Kulis, BVV Brno General Manager.

GO and REGIONTOUR – Travel and Tourism Exhibition in Brno

At the BVV grounds between 19 and 22 January 2017, the GO and REGIONTOUR trade fair, focused on travel and tourism, took place. The REGIONTOUR part was an excellent presentation of the Czech regions, while the GO brings together travel agencies and representatives of the foreign countries, and is focused on foreign travel.



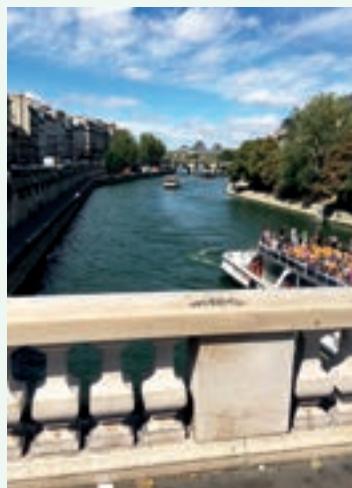
The first day of this exhibition is open only to tourism industry professionals, while the final three days are open to the general public and this has become very popular with Czech people, offering several conferences, various destination-specific presentations by leading individual travellers, and the Festival GO Kamera, the largest meeting of travellers.

Brno, together with its partners, put on a new and interactive exposition that gave visitors an authentic feel for the city; in one place, delegates could "know, taste, and live" Brno. Brno has many partner cities, and a partnership agreement with Debrecen, Hungary, was also signed. One interesting part of the travel and tourism trade fair is food festival RegFoodFest that presents specialities and regional products from Czech regions, mainly focusing on healthy and bio food. This year was its fifth successful year and visitors from foreign countries came in their droves to learn more about Czech products. Another traditional part of the trade fair is international competition Gastro Junior Brno – Bidvest Cup that is open to students training to be chefs, pastry chefs and waiters/waitresses. This is a very attractive show for visitors as well, and each year the internationally renowned jury chooses the best young talents in the field. This year, during its 23rd edition, there was plenty for the delegates to admire including the art of painting white sugar topping on small sweet gingerbreads executed by talented students.

This year GO and REGIONTOUR 2017 welcomed several new exhibitors from Czech regions, including, for example, Lednice-Valtice Complex (listed on UNESCO), the town of Dobris, the cultural centre of Benesov, regions around the Jeseniky mountains, as well as regions from Slovakia, among them the Nitra region, Trnava Tourism, the city of Skalica, Slovakian Paradise National Park, and others. There is a great atmosphere at Regiontour and if you want to learn about various Czech regions, you should put this event on your list. If you want more reasons to visit then there is also folk music, dances, singing, costumes, some surprisingly good wine, and food, as well as warm and welcoming local people ■

PARIS: THE FRENCH CAPITAL WILL HOLD 2018 AC FORUM

Paris has been chosen as the destination for the Association Conference (AC) Forum's next annual general assembly, which will run from 11 to 13 January 2018, following Frankfurt in 2017. The AC Forum is Europe's only networking platform established exclusively by and for associations with in-house congress staff. The majority of its members are medical congresses, but membership is also open to other disciplines. Their annual meeting provides an opportunity for members, drawn primarily from senior management and conference managers, to share experiences and exchange information. For Paris, hosting this event is a great opportunity to showcase what the city has to offer as a congress destination: a location in the heart of Europe, two international airports, high-speed trains linked to the major European capitals, a wide choice of venues, and of course the city's own strong commitment to welcoming European and international congresses ■



ACE of M.I.C.E. by Turkish Airlines:

a mix of BUSINESS productivity, networking EVENTS, and quality EDUCATION

The fourth edition of this interesting and impressive MICE trade fair that takes place in Istanbul was sponsored by Turkish Airlines for the first time. Between 22nd and 24th of February, three days of business meetings, networking activities, and educational programmes brought together delegates from 39 countries. There were 180 international buyers and 350 national buyers, as well as incentive companies, agencies, hotels and resorts, MICE companies representing 220 local and international exhibitors, 31 representatives from local and international media, and 38 speakers over 20 sessions. Including the delegates and professionals that also attended, there were around 17,000 people from the meetings industry.

Our magazines MICE CENTRAL & EASTERN



EUROPE were the event's media partners for the first time this year, and it was a very pleasant surprise to see so many professionals attending and taking an active part in the event. They created a friendly and professional atmosphere throughout and the venue, the Istanbul Congress Centre, was located conveniently in the centre of the city.

The organising company, Turizm Medya Grubu, and its chairman Volkan Ataman, put on an event that received a lot of positive feedback both from buyers and exhibitors. It seems that ACE of M.I.C.E., launched just four years ago, is growing and expanding year on year, in line with the MICE market in Turkey ■



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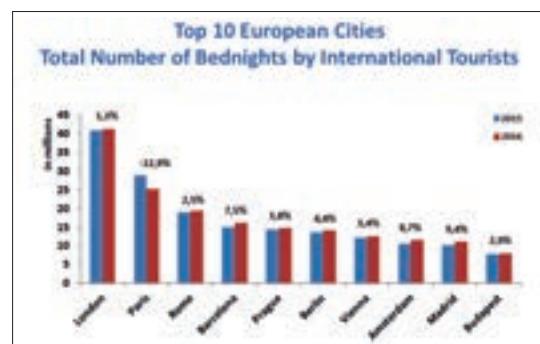


Media Partner:



Tourism in European Cities continued TO GROW BY 3.6% in 2016

European Cities Marketing (ECM) announced a 3.6% growth in city tourism in 2016, with the domestic market increasing by 6.0% and the international market by 2.3%, respectively. The top 10 cities in terms of bednights stayed the same as the previous year, with London, Paris, and Berlin at the top of the list. Italy, Russia, and Japan continue to decrease as source markets, while the Chinese market reached a stable growth of 2.2% as of this year. European Cities Marketing reported the preliminary results from the forthcoming European Cities Benchmarking Report with the findings that European cities continued their growth with a 3.6% increase in 2016 in total bednights compared to 2015. For the first time in recent years, domestic bednights (6.0%) grew more than international bednights (2.3%). The preliminary data feature results from 62 out of 121 cities, representing a total of 389.9 million bednights.



TOP PERFORMING CITIES

The top performing cities in terms of total number of bednights did not change in comparison to the previous year, except that Amsterdam replaced Stockholm in the top 10 list. London had the highest number of bednights in 2016 with a 7.3% increase, followed by Paris (-9.5%), Berlin (+2.7%), and Rome (+1.9%). Barcelona (+8.5%), Amsterdam (+6.6%), and Madrid (+6.4%) had the highest growth rates (excluding London).

For international bednights the list of the cities is the same, however the rankings differ. London (+1.3%) and Paris (-12.9%) are the top two cities with the highest number of international bednights. The decrease in growth in Paris can be seen both in total and international bednights, which shows that although the numbers are decreasing, Paris is still

one of the main city destinations in Europe. The Spanish cities of Barcelona (+7.5%) and Madrid (+9.4%) had the highest growth in the top 10 list.

FLUCTUAT NEC MERGITUR

Ignasi de Delàs, ECM President, explains: “We saw another exceptionally successful year for city tourism in Europe, despite major challenges arising. The terrorist attacks in Europe, and particularly in Paris, show the volatility, importance and resilience of tourism. Overseas markets such as China or Japan are particularly sensitive towards perceived risk which resulted in negative performance in 2016. However, since the last quarter of 2016 city tourism in Europe is back on track:

Visitor numbers are strongly and steadily recovering for Paris as well as for source markets which were decreasing for years, such as Russia. City tourism in Europe in 2016 was “tossed by the waves but does not sink”, as European Cities

remain the most attractive tourism destinations for visitors from all over the world and showed resilience and courage against terrorism.”

MAIN SOURCE MARKET DEVELOPMENTS

Main source markets USA (11%), Germany (9%), and UK (9%) make up approximately 30% of the source markets for European cities. The Chinese market, which was the fastest growing market in Europe, continued its growth with +2.2% in 2016. Italy (-4.3%), Japan (-11.8%), and Russia (-12.4%) continued their decrease, which makes up 9% of the total foreign market in European cities. Moreover, the results indicate that overall European city tourism is growing; however, this time the growth is coming from European markets rather than BRIC markets ■

MICE EXPOSITIONS 2017/2018

2017

24 – 26 JANUARY	 Eventex Dublin, IRELAND www.eventex.co
7 – 9 FEBRUARY	IBTM Arabia Gulf Incentives, Meetings and Business Travel Exhibition Abu Dhabi, UAE www.ibtmarabia.com
22 – 24 FEBRUARY	 ACE of M.I.C.E. Exhibition Istanbul, TURKEY www.ameistanbul.com
1 st – 2 nd MARCH	CONFEX London, UK www.international-confex.com
5 – 7 MARCH	 Europe Congress – MCE Central & Eastern Europe Riga, LATVIA www.europecongress.com
8 – 12 MARCH	ITB Berlin, GERMANY www.itb-berlin.de
16 – 18 MARCH	GIBTM Gulf Incentives, Meetings and Business Travel Exhibition Abu Dhabi, UAE www.gibtm.com
21 – 23 MARCH	IT&CM CHINA Incentive Travel and Conventions, Meetings Shanghai, CHINA www.itcmchina.com
23 MARCH	The Brussels & Global MICE Day Brussels, BELGIUM www.globalmiceday.eu
6 – 8 APRIL	AITF 16 th Azerbaijan International Travel & Tourism Fair Baku, AZERBAIJAN www.aitf.az
13 – 15 APRIL	SITT Siberia International Travel and Tourism Exhibition Novosibirsk, RUSSIA www.sitt-expo.ru
10 – 12 MAY	 ITB China Shanghai, CHINA www.itb-china.com
16 – 18 MAY	 IMEX The Worldwide Exposition for Incentive Travel, Meetings & Events Frankfurt am Main, GERMANY www.imex-frankfurt.com

5 & 6 JUNE	MICE CEE is Media Partner	Leaders in Hospitality CEE & CIS Prague, CZECH REPUBLIC www.hotelcee.com
13 – 15 JUNE		The Meetings Show London, UK www.themeetingsshow.com
15 – 18 JUNE		ITE & MICE Hong Kong www.itehk.com
SEPTEMBER 26 – 28	MICE CEE is Media Partner	IT & CMA – Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings Asia/CTW – Corporate Travel World Bangkok, THAILAND www.itcma.com.sg www.corporatetravelworld.com
10 – 12 OCTOBER	MICE CEE is Media Partner	IMEX America Las Vegas, USA www.imexamerica.com
25 – 27 OCTOBER	MICE CEE is Media Partner	ITB Asia Singapore, SINGAPORE www.itb-asia.com
7 – 9 NOVEMBER		WTM London, UK www.wtmlondon.com
12 – 15 NOVEMBER		56 th ICCA Congress Prague, CZECH REPUBLIC
28 – 30 NOVEMBER	MICE CEE is Media Partner	IBTM World – The Global Meetings and Incentives Exhibition Barcelona, SPAIN www.eibtm.com

2018

JANUARY	ATF – Asean Tourism Forum and TRAVEX Chiang Mai, THAILAND
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DBE - IAPCO 2017, Dubai, UAE



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