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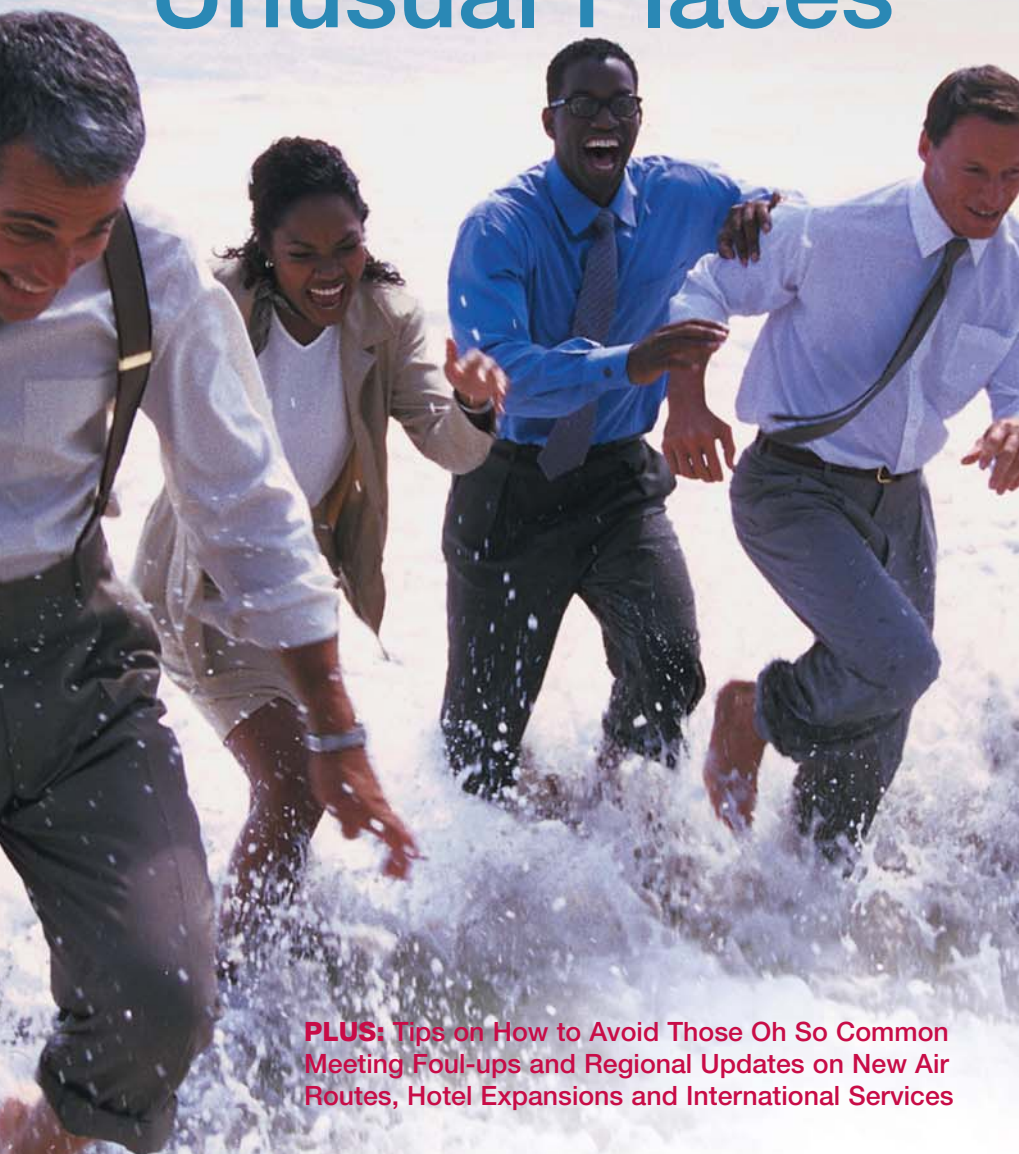
MAKING THE BEST OF BUSINESS TRAVEL

April 2004

Business Meeting Boomlet

Taking the Troops to

Unusual Places



PLUS: Tips on How to Avoid Those Oh So Common Meeting Foul-ups and Regional Updates on New Air Routes, Hotel Expansions and International Services

Publisher's

Letter

LET'S GET OUT OF THE OFFICE!

Motivation. Creativity. Inspiration. These are all things we are looking for in our work environment. Yet, being energized and buzzing with creativity is no easy feat in the *Land of Dilbert*, as I call it – the grand maze of tan and grey cubicles where so many of us find ourselves from 9 to 5. Even when traveling, the bland decorum of office space is inescapable. And worse than uninspiring surroundings is being stuck in a meeting for eight-plus hours with speakers who seem to drone on and on. Your productivity, charisma and drive are zapped. But fear not....

This month, **Frequent Flyer** writer Paul Burnham Finney uncovers some unusual and refreshing places to take your troops and get them motivated (page 7). The sheer beauty of some of these spots, such as Tanque Verde “dude” Ranch in Tucson, will be sure to ignite some powerful brainstorming. Your troops will be able to unwind, destress, which in turn gives them energy to get excited about the products and services you want them to sell or produce. Getting out of the traditional corporate environment can do much good, both for the employee and the employer.

But a serene and eye-appealing locale is not the only thing needed to stimulate new ideas and help people unleash their untapped creativities. Motivating speakers and a well-organized schedule of events are also important. Jack McGuire's feature on meeting dos and don'ts highlights some common-sense tips on having a successful meeting (page 3). The most important tip: being prepared by making sure the meeting room is the right size (not too small or too big), the microphone works (no, “one, two, three testing”) and the coffee is hot and plentiful.

Business in 2004 is expected to be on the upswing, and a lot of that success will depend on how you motivate and energize your troops to sell more, market your products and be as productive and creative as possible. I hope you enjoy our list of memorable meeting spots and our tips on avoiding those unforeseen but common meeting foul-ups. And if you end up going to one of the locations we suggest, please write to us and let us know what you thought. We can be reached at FFeditor@oag.com.

Happy travels,



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OAG Frequent Flyer

Forum

Reality Check

The current state of the airline industry reminds me of the automotive industry 20 years ago, the car-rental industry 10 years ago and department stores today. They are out of touch with their customer base. The big airlines can't seem to figure out who they are. Are they a low-price carrier with no frills? If so, they don't have low prices comparable to Southwest or JetBlue. Are they a full-service airline? If so, they are void of most of their services. The airlines need to decide who they want to be and then get focused. Right now they are a hybrid sending confusing signals to their customers.

Steve Saltzman

Makes No Sense

Can you explain or get an airline to explain its pricing policy of hub versus spoke? Example: I am from Wilmington, North Carolina, and US Airways is the major airline in this area. To fly from Wilmington, I must almost always connect with a hub in Charlotte. To get the best price I check



the price difference if I would drive to Charlotte. It is almost always more expensive if I drive to the

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and participate in our Forum questions.

hub. It seems like there should be one price to fly from Charlotte to San Francisco and a little more to fly from Wilmington to Charlotte and then continue on to San Francisco. But in fact it costs more if I drive to Charlotte. It makes it look like the trip from Wilmington to Charlotte is better than free!

Tom Schutte

Major Necessity

If a hotel does not have high-speed Internet access in the guestrooms I will not stay there. The only time I will give in is when I am in a city that has no hotels with this valuable option. I consider this not an option but a necessary item. Over the last few years I have cut my stays with one hotel group from 60 to about 30 days since many of their hotels outside of the United States do not have this.

Howard Fine

Regarding the issues of Midway Airport and lounge access for British Airways and American customers (American and

British Airways are part of the oneworld alliance.):

Unfortunately, after several attempts, we still have not heard back from Midway brass and the airlines involved in the oneworld alliance and lounge access issue. We are continuing to call and write e-mails and promise to post any replies as soon as we get them. Stay tuned.

S adru Patel may not remember exactly how many meetings he attended during his career at Leo Burnett. But what he does remember is, “There were a lot of them!”

Figuring an average of three to four meetings a week, a quick back-of-an-envelope calculation reveals a total of more than 10,000 meetings during Patel’s 12-year ad-agency stint. “And about 75 percent of them,” adds

are protesting,” he says, “is not meetings per se, but rather the all-too-frequent type of meeting where very little is accomplished and attendees are bored to death.”

“Almost every meeting is too long and a lot of them shouldn’t be held at all,” states training manuals author Jeffrey Mayer of SucceedinginBusiness.com. Citing as an example the ubiquitous Monday morning staff meeting, Mayer says, the deadly repeti-



We’ve got to stop meeting like this!

How to avoid those meeting blues

BY JACK MCGUIRE

the Chicago-area based entrepreneur, “were unproductive — bordering on worthless.”

Patel is not alone in his assessment of meetings. More people are attending more of them — and enjoying them less — than ever before. Meetings consume more executive and managerial time — counting the hours for travel and conference sessions — than any other organizational function. And the feedback from many attendees? “Oh no, no another meeting.”

According to a recent survey, conducted by Opinion Research Corp., of Princeton, New Jersey, 29 percent of workers attend three or more meetings per week and 34 percent say most are “a complete waste of time.”

“Meetings serve a vital function, of course,” says Chuck McPherson, president of Interactive Meeting Solutions, Santa Rosa, California, the meeting facilitation company that commissioned the study. “What attendees

tious routine of such a meeting “can take the heart and enthusiasm out of an organization. This isn’t a very productive way to start a week. Morning is the most productive time of the day for many people. That’s when they should be doing their work, not sitting around talking about it.”

Mayer’s advice? Schedule the staff meeting later in the day. “A successful afternoon meeting will put a cap on your day and give you a feeling of accomplishment for that day’s work,” he says.

Who’s at fault for faulty meetings? Part of the blame, says McPherson, is ours, when we come to a meeting not properly prepared. Each participant should know his role and responsibility. But the main culprit is the meeting planner, who measures out the proper ingredients, but fails to add a pinch of spice here and there to turn a bland meeting into a meaningful one.”



“Meetings are indispensable when you don’t want to do anything.”

—ECONOMIST JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

McPherson offers these common-sense meeting tips:

- Start on time and stay on schedule. Never keep attendees beyond the announced end time.
- At least two days beforehand, and longer if advance preparation is needed, provide meeting attendees with as much information as possible: agenda, roles, expectations, time frame, etc.
- Know what will work in your chosen forum and what won’t. If you’re not sure, save it for another time and place.
- Work through any attendees’ concerns ahead of time to minimize the risk of surprises or personalities that may stand in the way of a productive meeting.
- Help the team stay on track by redirecting the conversation back to objectives. You don’t have to be the facilitator to ask relevant questions.
- Hold people accountable, but reward them for being on time, being prepared, staying engaged and driving to results.

The first step in creating a successful meeting, says Kelly Schulz, spokesperson for Meeting Professionals International (MPI), headquartered in Dallas, is to come up with a clearly defined set of objectives that can guide the meeting along the desired path. “What those objectives might be,” she says, “will depend on the purpose of the meeting. Is it to educate, motivate, inspire, exchange ideas, impart information? The specific objectives should be pinpointed. And they should be attainable.”

Site selection is another important consideration. Where you meet will depend in part on the culture or personality of your company. What are the group’s demographics? A conservative, old-line firm might be uncomfortable in a glamorous setting. A group of youthful dot-com types, on the other hand, may be ideal candidates for a conference at a seaside hotel in the Bahamas or a lodge alongside the snowy slopes of Vail.

Choosing the best site, says Susan Cotton, sales/marketing director for Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club in Cape Cod, depends



on a variety of other factors. “Consider first your meeting goals. Next, the type of meeting, whether it’s a training session, board get-together or sales meeting. Is it an association or perhaps an incentive group? The time of year the meeting will be held is another important point.”

With the trend these days toward bringing along a spouse or a significant other to a meeting, or even the kids, Cotton says to consider what the property offers in the way of after-hours fun. “If a couple of extra days are tagged on to the formal meeting time as a reward for attendees, what sports and recreational facilities exist on and near the property?”

Accessibility of the meeting site is also important. Inconvenient transportation can adversely affect attendance. For those who do attend, a hassle getting there and home again, particularly in today’s world of heightened security, could put a damper on what might otherwise have been a productive, well-received meeting.

Along with such practical considerations as planning, programming and promoting a meeting, it’s vital to establish and maintain effective group psychodynamics once the meeting is under way. These are the intangibles, those unseen forces that shape the ebb and flow, the pace and mood of the meeting, the combination of elements that help determine whether the meeting will be a winner or an also-ran.

Considering a keynote speaker? Choosing the right one can be critical to the success of any meeting, cautions professional speaker Mark Sanborn, Highlands Ranch, Colorado, president of the National Speaker Association.

Avoiding Those Unforeseen, but oh so Common Meeting Foul-ups

Every eye in the room is transfixed on the glass of water balanced precariously on the edge of the lectern. Will it fall? The speaker drones on, oblivious to the impending disaster. Finally, someone seated in the front row can stand it no longer and mercifully removes the mesmerizing tumbler.

While this may seem an unavoidable occurrence, it’s an actual example of a potential meeting faux pas.

Unfortunately, such glitches pop up with monotonous regularity to spoil even the most perfectly rehearsed presentation. Yet, with a bit of foresight, they might easily be avoided.

Long before the last “Hello, my name is” badge has been tossed away, attendees will have made their own assessment of whether your meeting was a hit or a miss.

And the fact you had a top-drawer speaker or threw a rip-roaring bash on closing night may not be the deciding factor. It’s the little things, many just under the surface, which can pop up to haunt you.

Hot room, warm Cokes, cold coffee, audiovisual mishaps and the 101 bloopers the average meeting is heir to, are not always avoidable. The point is, you should take every precaution possible to guard against them.

The first line of defense is being aware of what they are. Beyond that, learn how they might be prevented. Here are some common meeting spoilers and their antidotes:

For starters

Sleeping rooms not ready upon arrival? What a great way to get

your meeting off on the wrong foot. Particularly if attendees have traveled some distance and are tired and cranky. It’s the meeting planner’s obligation to arrive at the meeting early and work with the front desk and housekeeping to make sure attendees are quickly checked in and heading for their rooms.

A meeting room that’s too large or too small

A room that’s too large can be just as uncomfortable as a room that packs them all in. In a barn-like atmosphere, intimacy is lost and attendees have that uneasy feeling that they’re lost in space.



The important thing is not how powerful the speaker's name is, but whether he can deliver a presentation that has wallop, while at the same time, matches the goals and purpose of the meeting.

"There's nothing worse than an ineffective speaker," says Sanborn. "To find the right one, one that matches your particular meeting's needs, ask around among your business associates or your industry colleagues for recommendations."

Remember though, that hearing your guest speaker for the first time when your attendees do is courting disaster. Before you book him, check him out in action. Or if that's not possible, at least view a videotape of a previous appearance.

When you're ready to pull out all the show-biz stops, and you have a hefty meeting budget to support it, consider the multi-image computerized spectacular.

With colorful costumes, flashy stage lighting and visual effects, choreography and music with customized lyrics to reflect the company message, it can be a barn burner. Such theatrical high jinks can be the corporate tie that binds the home office with the team out in the field.

At the same time remember the creative spark that energizes and stimulates a meeting doesn't have to be a dog-and-pony show with strobe lights, laser beams and hip-hop music. Sometimes a simple idea, something a bit out of the ordinary, will do the trick.

Finally, when the meeting is concluded, MPI's Schultz suggests that before everyone heads for the exit, gauge the effective elements (and the mistakes) of the meeting with a post-meeting evaluation. "Keep it simple," she says, "and no longer than a single page. From the results you can ensure a better meeting next time." ■■

"No grand idea was ever born in a conference, but a lot of foolish ideas have died there." — AUTHOR F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

A crowded room has about as much appeal as a middle seat on a jam-packed 727.

An improperly lighted room

Allow enough ambient room light. The meeting room should be dark enough for effective PowerPoint projection but light enough for taking notes. Test the lighting before the meeting and adjust it until it's right.



Faulty speakers

It's a drag for the audience to be subjected to a long-winded speaker who drones on and on, way over his allotted time. It's the meeting leader's responsibility to tactfully, but forcefully get the

speaker to stop. As embarrassing as this may be, anything short of physical removal is OK.

Where's my Starbucks?

No one likes wasting precious break time waiting for the "coffee-and" to arrive. Avoid this annoyance by providing the catering department with an exact schedule of breaks. Then stick to it. Before each break, make sure the refreshments are set up where they should be or well on their way.

Mike frights and sound bites

Have you ever been in a meeting where the mike squeals like a stuck pig? Of course you have. It's one of the most common meeting mistakes. Actually it's not the microphone that's the problem, but the fact that either the mike is directly under a ceiling speaker, or the sound level is set too high.

How about these common refrains, "Can you hear me in the back?" Or, "One, two, three four, testing."

That's amateur night. Test the sound equipment in advance.



All work and no play, etc.

No one resents a packed meeting agenda as long as there is adequate time set aside for relaxation. Balance is the key word here. Plan some events, like sports (if it's a multi-day meeting), maybe some group sightseeing, cocktail receptions — whatever — but allow enough time for attendees to go off on their own.



Business Meeting Boomlet

Taking the Troops to

Unusual Places

Strip away the wry comments about meaningless meetings, and you'll find plenty of business travelers eager to take the next plane out of town to a corporate meeting. If you have a modicum of social smarts you can shine — and learn what's really going on in your company.

BY PAUL BURNHAM FINNEY

Now, you're likely to spend a few days in a place you never quite expected — at the top of a New York skyscraper or in the vaults of a Napa Valley winery. That's because meeting planners, a breed with a beagle's nose for catchy places to book, try to assemble the troops in memorable places.

The fact is, the corporate meeting industry is huge — spending more than \$10 billion annually on planes, hotels, food, and audio/visual equipment, or about one quarter of the \$40-billion yearly bill for meetings and conventions of all kinds. At that rate, planning gurus almost run on empty in their constant quest for new or unusual places for corporate confabs.

Budgeting for Brainstorms

In any case, because of the current fetish for better employee communications, you're now more likely than ever to participate in a retreat, embellished with team building and sessions devoted to re-engineering (a shopworn but still trendy cure for what ails a company), brainstorming and product development. Though meeting madness is as old as the modern corporation, there are some current trends worth noting.

- Smaller meetings are on the upswing. They're cheaper, faster, easier to arrange.
- Corporations have shortened meetings — from, say, three to two days — to cut costs, according to Lauri Cioffi, editor-in-chief of *Meetings & Conventions*.
- Yet corporate planners are staging more meetings than ever — frequent, well-targeted ones designed to tackle the innumerable problems that beset companies these days.

By substituting group get-togethers for individual itineraries, corporate budgeteers nicely trim costs in a tradeoff similar to bus versus independent travel.

“You put your revenue producers all in

one spot, and 40 or 50 people hear the same message in one swoop,” as one meeting planner sums it up.

Locales with Panache

Most meeting planners keep motivation in mind when they seek locales with panache. That's why they favor cities with sex appeal like Las Vegas, New Orleans and Miami. After all, some meetings blend incentive rewards with serious talk, with spouses invited to come along and join in the fun — during the afternoon or evening free time. The Strip, French Quarter and South Beach are integral parts of the meeting scenario.

Just as high on the list of venues are golf resorts from the Greenbrier, with its championship courses, to the inimitable Pebble Beach. Not far behind are Sunbelt resorts with a smorgasbord of sports and diversions, from dude ranches to tennis camps.

In their hunt for “newness,” meeting planners are strong on off-season vacation spots where the rates are lower but the scenery and sports are just as alluring — think the U.S. Virgin Islands and other Caribbean islands in the summer, or Aspen, Sun Valley and Squaw Valley after the ski season has ended (with their recreational business of hiking and biking being more lucrative than their on-season specialty).

For details and tips on dozens of city sites with pizzazz, contact the International Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus in Washington (202-296-7888).

For advice on good locales, themed meetings and cost details, get in touch with Dallas-based Meeting Professionals International (972-702-3000).

A Gallery of 10 Winners

Here are some hot meeting prospects — some very new, others unusual even with age — that should create some buzz in your company.

Mandarin Oriental, New York:

Soaring to the top of the charts is the hotel that soars, the Mandarin Oriental Group's entry into the highly competitive Big Apple market. The lobby is at the base of the just-launched, much-praised, 80-story Time Warner Center at Columbus Circle. The real lobby is on the 35th floor, the guestrooms occupy the floors on up to the 54th, and the 6,000-sq.-ft. ballroom overlooking Central Park features floor-to-ceiling windows with spectacular views that astonish meeting-



goers. Two suites can seat 90 conferees while a boardroom is ideal for small executive meetings. The hotel's luxury comes with oriental touches reminiscent of those at its Hong Kong namesake.

For taking camaraderie to a new level — very high — there's the MObar, the Lobby Lounge, and, on the formal side, Asiate, a restaurant already registering on the applause meter in the "City That Never Sleeps." For details and bookings, phone **866-801-8888 or 212-805-8800.**

Portofino Bay Hotel, Universal Orlando:

Fantasy is part of the meeting planner's bag of tricks, and no resort does it much better than Universal Studios' stunning re-creation of the Italian Riviera village of Portofino, down to the colorful waterfront, chic boutiques, cobblestone streets and sidewalk cafes. And it's a two-in-one winner — besides the escape to an Italian setting in sunny Florida, you have the run of Universal Studios with first-rate attractions, from wacky (a subway crash) to delightful (a *Jaws*-type chase in New England waters), to entertain the troops when the day's work is done. The resort can accommodate small-to-large groups in its 750 rooms (**888-782-9722**).

Loews Miami Beach, Miami:

A hit from the day it debuted, the Loews seaside resort has the best of both worlds: the efficiency and services of a top hotel, with an acre-and-a-half of flexible space for meetings,



coupled with all the jazz that makes Miami's South Beach a big draw. Spend hours soaking up the material in the PowerPoint presentations, and then step outdoors to stroll and people-watch along Collins Avenue, lined with reconstructed art deco buildings and rocking with fashionable denizens. You may even see an ad agency or a Hollywood shoot in progress. Looking for a meeting, South Beach style? It's easier than ever with "SoBe Simplicity." "Magnificent art deco-designed guestrooms, continental breakfast, mid-morning coffee break, deli lunch and one suite upgrade per 25 rooms!" reads the promo brochure. The hotel's

“Access Managers” are your planning partners for smaller meetings — from instant confirmations and contracts, to setups, menus, AV systems, and on-site coordination. For rates and availability, call the hotel (305-604-1601) or the Access office (305-604-3902).

Wentworth by the Sea, New Castle, New Hampshire: This Yankee resort born in 1874 and almost shuttered a few years ago now has a second life in the hands of Marriott. Tastefully restored — it had gone to seed while its owners and local preservationists debated its future — the 161-room hotel sitting atop a bluff on New Castle Island near Portsmouth (and about one hour north of Boston) now boasts duplex turret suites, a fine full-service spa, and plenty of art, both maritime and historic. Some of the memorabilia is a reminder of Wentworth’s earlier days as the “Grand Dame by the Sea” — in 1905 it hosted the signers of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty, ending the Russo-Japanese War and garnering President Theodore Roosevelt the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, the 10,000 square feet of meeting space can handle up to 400 corporate guests with free-time activities from tennis and golf at the Country Club to yachting and fishing at the Wentworth Marina. To make arrangements, contact 800-678-8946 or 603-422-7322.



Schmoozing Pays Off

If nothing else is accomplished, you still may go up three rungs on your career ladder by listening, learning and schmoozing — skillfully and tactfully — at a getaway packed with your office colleagues and, more importantly, your company executives you rarely get a chance to talk with.

Be prepared. Do your homework before the meeting, anticipating tricky situations and surprise questions. If a higher-up asks you during the cocktail hour — “How would you improve our company?” — have a plain-vanilla answer ready. Go heavy on sensible comments. Leave your prejudices at home.

Speak simply. Remember, your first goal is to communicate effectively. No talkathons allowed. If you have a pet theory that’s complicated, first try it out on your spouse, not a roomful of colleagues. Corporate executives have low tolerance for time-wasting explanations.

Ration your drinks. Even if you feel on edge, forego big splashes of alcohol during the Happy Hours. It’s been the bane of many bright-eyed, bushy-tailed employees who speak their minds too much and, in the process, get in trouble.

Mix golf and business. Don’t plunge into corporate chitchat — hold your comments for the back nine. If you luck into a foursome with higher-ups, use your time in the Cushman cart to promote yourself — diplomatically.

Equinox Resort & Spa, Manchester Village, Vermont:

Named after Equinox Mountain in its backyard, this classic white-painted New England hotel — as beckoning as a cozy bed-and-breakfast, despite its 183-room size — has some 10 meeting rooms, totaling 20,000 square feet of space. It was here that more than 200 years ago Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys assembled to talk independence in the walk-up to the Revolutionary War. Since then, the inn has gone through six name changes and as many architectural styles to become — after falling into ruin during the 1970s — a sterling property reopened in 1985 and now managed by the Rockefeller-founded RockResorts. Golf, tennis, horseback riding, fly fishing, shooting, archery and wintersports galore — the full menu of diversions includes dining in the venerable Marsh Tavern and undergoing personal restoration in the Avanyu Spa. Phone [800-678-8946](tel:800-678-8946) or [802-362-4700](tel:802-362-4700).

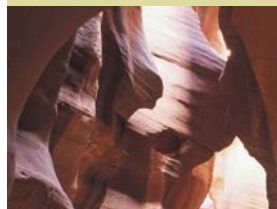
Hyatt Regency at Union Station, St. Louis:

Meet, speechify, listen, rap, present, exchange business cards — and do all this in a train station built in 1894 and once considered (arguably) the world's largest and busiest rail terminal. Not long ago, the Hyatt chain took the six-story, barrel-vaulted ter-

minal lobby with Tiffany stained-glass accents and shaped a luxury hotel around it, meticulously preserving the plaster detailing, bas-reliefs, frescoes and marble floors. Altogether, the meticulously restored landmark is a big hotel with 539 rooms and 35,000 square feet of meeting space, enough to accommodate some 1,500 attendees at a conference or banquet. When you're wandering around the Hyatt, you can hardly tell when the hotel ends and the adjoining festival marketplace of a hundred shops and restaurants begin in the 11-acre, glass-enclosed train shed. No problem finding things to do after the speeches and AV shows, between the station's attractions and the other lures in St. Louis, including tours of the Anheuser Busch Brewery, to night-crawling in the riverboat casinos. Phone [800-678-8946](tel:800-678-8946) or [314-231-1234](tel:314-231-1234).

Tanque Verde Ranch, Tucson:

This is one cool dude ranch designed for city slickers who want an authentic — and occasionally staged — taste of the Southwest. In 1928, cattleman James Converse transformed Tanque Verde from a working cattle ranch into a resort ranch with thick adobe walls, beamed ceilings, oodles of fireplaces and mesquite wood corrals — all done in the Sonoran style. The 60 guest casitas



(little houses) dripping with Southwest artwork and antiques and comforters are only the beginning of the ranch's many enticements, which include programs like "Harmony with Horses" and "Women of the West"; ranch specialties such as BBQ breakfast rides and horse handling, training and roping; to traditional sports of almost every type — tennis, fishing, hiking — and a notably dedicated staff. Most guests end up raving about their Tanque Verde experience, partly because of the skillful blend of the real Old West and the 2004

10 More Memorable Meeting Spots

Arizona

Arizona Biltmore, Phoenix

Design elements from Frank Lloyd Wright, sprawling layout, knockout pool, good golf, many meeting options. **800-950-0086.**

The Boulders, Carefree

North of Scottsdale, stunning rock formations, to-die-for décor in casitas, blue-blazer lifestyle, splendid golf, new Golden Door spa, great for classy meetings. **800-553-1717.**

The Phoenician, Scottsdale

Huge guest quarters, 654 rooms, highly rated Mary Elaine's for fine food, a center for well-being, golf and tennis, luxurious meeting facilities. **800-888-8234.**

Royal Palms Hotel & Casitas, Phoenix

An industrialist's former hacienda, near Camelback Mountain and upscale shopping, casitas that wow, excellent for executive meetings. **800-672-6011.**

Loews Ventana Canyon, Tucson

Set in the Santa Catalina mountains, a stream through the lobby, dramatic cactuses, 398 rooms, superior golf and cuisine, popular meeting spot. **800-234-5117.**

California

Ritz-Carlton Huntington, Pasadena

Recently restored palatial pad, gorgeous gardens and views, antique-loaded public areas, smallish guestrooms but superb meeting venues. **800-241-3333.**

Monterey Plaza Hotel, Monterey

In the center of Cannery Row action, guestrooms facing water, excellent meeting facilities. **800-334-3999.**

Harvest Inn, St. Helena

Heart of Napa Valley, 54 rooms, feather beds and fireplaces in English Tudor-style inn, vineyards nearby. **800-950-8466.**

Villagio Inn & Spa, Yountville

Napa Valley standout opened in 1998, charming Tuscan-style villa, 112 rooms, champagne breakfasts, afternoon tea, good for boutique meetings. **800-351-1133.**

Michigan

Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island

Between Lakes Huron and Michigan, world's longest porch (660 ft.), suites named after First Ladies, shooting location for Hollywood films, Woodfill Conference Center and other meeting rooms. **800-334-7263.**

—P.B.F.



Tanque Verde Ranch

efficiencies — the latter include state-of-the-art AV equipment, voice-and-data connectivity and a high-speed T-1 data line. While meeting, simply enjoy the captivating views of the Sonoran Desert and mountains during the hourly breaks and afternoon free time. Phone **800-234-DUDE (3833)** or **520-296-6275.**

Enchantment Resort, Sedona, Arizona: The red rock buttes and cliffs that adorn the New Age (and affluent) community of Sedona, a two-hour drive northwest of Phoenix, are awesome. And nestled in Boynton Canyon outside of the town is the aptly named Enchantment Resort, the kind of rustic yet modern getaway where you open the curtains of your cottage and stare in disbelief at the beauty of the sunlit walls of colored rocks in the near distance. And now, besides the main lodge and cluster of dozens of cottages, the

resort offers a major spa, Mi Amo, so sophisticated you can book a guestroom right in the new facility. Altogether, Enchantment has 12,000 square feet of flexible meeting space indoors and another 8,000 square feet outdoors, adaptable for brainstorming sessions, planning seminars, team building, theme parties and incentive recreations. The 5,000-square-foot ballroom can accommodate 375 to 500 people for classroom-style meetings, banquets and receptions with nine rooms next door for board meetings, executive lunches

and social events. And — not to be overlooked — the resort has long earned accolades from gourmet critics for its Southwest cuisine. Phone 928-282-2900.

Ojai Valley Inn & Spa, Ojai, California: Back in 1923 Edward Drummond Libbey, a millionaire glass manufacturer and idealist, set out to develop a harmonious community in Ojai and, for openers, built a rambling adobe hacienda as the inn and clubhouse for a golf course. He knew his real estate: The spectacular site for his venture sits beneath the Topa Topa mountain range and near Central Coast wineries about 40 miles east of Santa Barbara. The location was so alluring that Hollywood director Frank Capra turned to Libbey's Ojai Valley as the setting for *Shangri-La* in his 1937 film classic, *Shangri-*

La. Today, the 222-acre, 207-room Spanish Colonial oasis is a dreamy destination for spa lovers and meeting aficionados alike, as well as golf buffs who play the Ojai course, host to senior PGA tour events. There are 12 meeting rooms for groups from 15 to 475 with a full range of sports for off-hours when it's time to kayak, get a loofah scrub (at the 31,000-square-foot Spa Ojai), or play the championship golf course. Phone 800-678-8946 or 646-5511.

Bellagio Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas: It doesn't look like the Eiffel Tower or New York or Venice as its rivals do, but the recently minted 36-story Bellagio has a bit of Park Avenue class by way of Tuscany. Out front is a 10-acre lake with a ballet-like light show of a thousand fountains dancing in the evening, and inside are — ah,

Vegas is so mega — 3,005 rooms, easily blocked off for meetings, and two striking ballrooms if your group needs humongous space. The extras are outstanding, beginning with the cuisine offered in such standouts as Le Cirque of New York, Aqua from San Francisco, and one-of-a-kind Picasso (with some of his originals on the wall) and, for entertainment, the versatile, brilliant Cirque du Soleil. The pool scene is as splendiferous as *la dolce vita* in Roman times, and amidst 2,000 hand-blown glass flowers on the lobby ceiling and other vestiges of high-falutin' glitz, you can play your lucky numbers at the crap and roulette tables alongside other generally upscale Bellagio guests. Phone 888-987-7111 or 702-693-7111. **FF**



fly in, fly out

For quickie meetings, particularly a regional sales powwow to bring all the participants up-to-date on corporate marketing policies and new products, airport hotels are ideal — and beloved by budget slashers. Fly-in, fly-out on the same day cures most of their headaches: how to keep costs down and make the logistics simple. For instance,

most of the large hotels around Hartsfield, LAX and O'Hare are masters of the fast and efficient meeting, often with evening entertainment included if it's an overnight, two-day affair. And if the meeting is big, say trade-show big, consider the Hyatt Regency Orlando Airport, which boasts a sprawling 40,000 square feet of meeting space.

Regional UPDATE

New Airline Routes and Services, Airport Expansions, Hotel Upgrades and International Services by Jerome Greer Chandler & Norman Sklarewitz



WORLD

AIRLINES: The world is changing fast. **Aeroflot**, the Russian flag carrier, is making a bid to join the SkyTeam alliance...**Iberia** and **Mexicana** have inked a code-sharing deal. The pact gives Iberia's customers access to 30 Mexican destinations...Ever-innovative **Virgin Atlantic** is ready to roll out the planet's first inflight meditation program—at least the first formal program. Dubbed "Meditainment," it is on the audio selection list. Fliers can choose to visit spots as diverse as a desert island or a bright meadow. Meditainment and a nice glass of wine might go down smoothly.

HOTELS: Berlin boasts a new Marriott on Potsdamer Platz. The 379-room **Berlin Marriott** is close to government buildings, the city's emerging embassy quarter, and within walking distance of the Tiergarten.

WEST

AIR ROUTES: Starting June 2, America West Airlines will begin daily nonstop service between **Anchorage International** and **Phoenix Sky Harbor International**. The run will be offered year-around. The 124-seat A319 with 12 in first and 112 in coach will be used...Come April 26, Alaska Airlines will launch twice-daily service between **Sea-Tac International** and **Chicago's**



O'Hare International. Service will be operated with the 737.

AIRPORTS: At more and more airports these days, finding a parking space has become a time-consuming and frustrating exercise. Enter **AirportParkingReservations** (888-960-PARK), a service (at \$3 per booking) that permits an off-airport lot spot to be reserved in advance and, in some cases, under the posted day rate. The outfit is at most western region airports.

SOUTHWEST



AIR ROUTES: American Airlines has begun twice-daily nonstop service from **Phoenix Sky Harbor International** to **New York JFK**. 757-200s make the run...Continental plans to link **Albuquerque** nonstop with its hub at **Newark Liberty International**. Start date is May 2. This is a once-weekly affair, operating on Saturdays only.

AIRPORTS: **Dallas/Fort Worth International's** venerable Airport Train no longer provides passenger connections among the megaport's terminals. The Terminal Link van service has taken over those duties—at least until the air-

port's next generation people mover debuts.

SOUTH

AIR ROUTES: American Airlines has begun nonstop regional jet service from **Richmond to Miami**. The



flight will help Virginia fliers connect to AA's extensive Latin American service out of MIA. A 37-seat ERJ-135 makes the trip...US Airways Express is replacing propjet flights from **Charlotte to Tallahassee** with Canadair Regional Jets. The switch occurs March 7, and there will be a trio of daily departures on the route.

AIRLINES: Low-fare carriers keep piling on the amenities. Latest evidence? **AirTran's** installation of XM Satellite Radio in its fleet. The carrier starts fitting the craft with the service this summer.

AIRPORTS: You'll spend less time waiting to pay for parking at **Miami International** now that the airport's new 13-lane Central Collection Plaza is up and running. There are both teller-manned and automated booths.

MIDWEST

AIR ROUTES: Alaska Airlines is reaching into the heart of the Midwest with new nonstop service to Seattle. April 26 is the projected launch date for twice-daily flights from **Chicago O'Hare to Seattle/Tacoma International**...Here's a long haul for a regional jet: **Cincinnati-Billings, Montana**. That's the seasonal route Delta Connection proposes to forge beginning April 1. There will be a pair of daily nonstops using 70-seat CRJ700s.

AIRLINES: Following in **AirTran's** flight path, low-fare **ATA** is poised to introduce a business-class product this August. Walk-up business-class fares will be capped at \$399, one-way...Here's

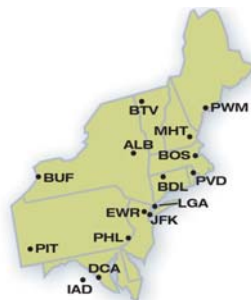


something new for high-end fliers. **United** is offering a new service called Ameniti. Among the perks: unlimited two-for-one tickets on the airline with the purchase of any full-fare ticket in any class of service for domestic travel in the United States. The same deal applies for United First or United Business for interna-

tional travel originating in the United States or Canada and ticketed through Ameniti.

NORTHEAST

AIR ROUTES: Ted, United's low-fare entry, is descending on Washington Dulles. Beginning April 7 the all-A320 carrier will start service from



IAD. There will be a quartet of cities—**Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Tampa and Las Vegas**. Flights will be phased in through mid May...Here's a sorely needed transcon. Continental plans to launch nonstop **Newark-Sacramento** service May 2. There will be a single daily flight, and it will run through September 7.

AIRLINES: **Independence Air**, the new incarnation of **Atlantic Coast Airlines**, will feature leather seating on its Canadair Regional Jets and Airbus aircraft. The low-fare carrier will be based at Washington Dulles, and plans to serve 50 destinations across the country. **FF**

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