

# MICE & more

GLOBAL

Summer 2026



The history of travel in legendary hotels, venues and personal stories

Hong Kong 2026–2027: New destination opportunities for MICE

Global MICE overview from leading international experts

# EXPOFORUM INTERNATIONAL

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## AUGUST

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## SEPTEMBER

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International agroindustrial trade fair. Trade stalls. Entertainment programme for visitors. Trade fair of regional products
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- 16-18 GLOBAL FISHERY FORUM & SEAFOOD EXPO RUSSIA**
- 17-18 INTERNATIONAL RETAIL AND HORECA DAYS**  
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- 21-24 ST. PETERSBURG INTERNATIONAL CONTENT FORUM**  
Annual international forum of content industry
- KINO EXPO INTERNATIONAL**  
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- 23-25 RADEL: RADIO ELECTRONICS AND INSTRUMENTATION**  
Specialized exhibition of electronic components, printed circuit boards, materials, technologies, equipment, services, certification, service in radio electronics and instrumentation

## OCTOBER

- 06-09 ST. PETERSBURG INTERNATIONAL GAS FORUM**  
One of the largest specialized convention and exhibition events of the oil and gas industry  
**WITHIN THE FORUM:**  
**BOILERS & BURNERS**  
International specialized exhibition of heat-power engineering  
**ROS-GAS-EXPO**  
International specialized exhibition of natural gas industry and technology for gas facility  
**ENERGY-SAVING. POWER EFFICIENCY**  
International specialized exhibition
- 05-09 OMR**  
International exhibition and conference for shipbuilding and equipment and technologies for development of the Arctic and Continental Shelf
- 13-15 ST. PETERSBURG INTERNATIONAL HEALTH FORUM**  
Business programme for specialists. Medical Industry exhibition
- 22-23 PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**  
St. Petersburg congress
- 22-24 ST. PETERSBURG INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL SALON**  
Event aimed at demonstrating of the educational, research and innovation activities of educational organizations located on the territory of St. Petersburg
- 22-24 RUSSIAN INDUSTRIALIST**  
International forum exhibition
- NOVEMBER**
- 10-13 METAL-EXPO**  
International industrial exhibition
- 24-26 PETERFOOD**  
International food exhibition
- 24-26 PULPFOR**  
International exhibition of equipment and technologies for pulp and paper, converting, tissue and corrugated industries
- 24-26 SFITEX**  
International exhibition of security and fire protection equipment and products

## THE EDITOR'S WORD



I have been working in the tourism industry for 26 years. Is that a lot or a little, you might ask? In the grand scheme of things, it's a mere fraction of our universe's existence, but within the industry, it's a quarter of a century. This figure takes on a special significance when compared to the duration of tourism in certain countries. How long have you been working in this fascinating industry? Have you ever wondered when and why people started traveling? What were the first historical routes, and where did the first hotels open?

Where to stay to feel like Tchaikovsky or Monet? Where do the retro trains go? In which palaces and castles can you organize a conference or presentation today? What industry personalities have shaped it and how did their journey begin? We have included so much valuable, profound, and important information in this unique issue. The journey will be long, spanning centuries, but no less exciting and captivating for that.

What's more? This year, for the first time, we will present our global expert council and the opinions of experienced event organizers from 14 countries around the world. In this comprehensive article, they will discuss the current trends in the event industry in each destination.

Don't miss out on our global rating, which includes the best MICE hotels, the best incentive ideas, and the best gastronomic experiences. Each of the ranking participants deserves your attention and will undoubtedly inspire you to create a new project!

Lina Moskvina

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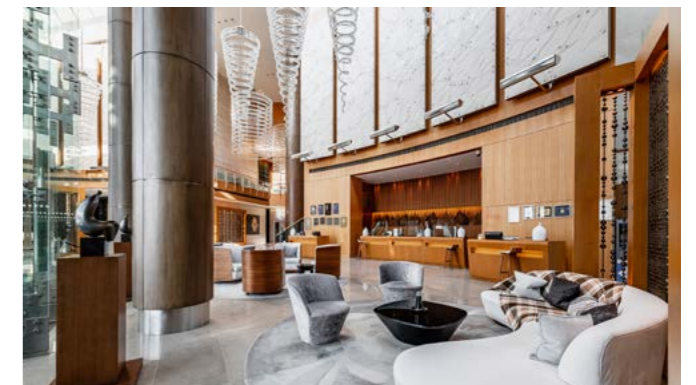
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## HOW THE FIRST TRAVELS BEGAN

Why do people travel? Why do you travel? Ask yourself this question: what makes you pack a suitcase or just grab your toothbrush on the impulse of buying a ticket for the first train or plane out of town and leaving your routine life for a while? Some will doubtless say that traveling is part of their job. But why did we choose this particular job? What pulls us from city to city, from country to country, from continent to continent? And how did it happen that people started traveling in the first place?

Many, many years ago, some people led a very domestic life — they built their homes, cultivated their land and didn't journey farther than a few kilometers from their own hearth. But others were nomadic, moving their flocks from pasture to pasture, pitching their tents wherever there was food for their animals, not imagining that they could live in just one place all their lives.

It is believed that even whole blood groups appeared depending solely on mankind's lifestyle. Thus, according to the Japanese theory of "Ketsueki-gata," blood type "O," the oldest, appeared when people were hunters and gatherers and lived all their lives in one place. Group "A" appeared a little later, when humanity began to develop agriculture. So, they didn't venture far from home either. But the "B" group appeared along with the nomadic lifestyle. It is believed that people with this blood type aren't attracted to comfort, but rather, are drawn to adventure and change. The "AB" group (the youngest) combines the features of farmers and nomads. So does this mean that it's people with blood types "B" and "AB" who travel the most, and precisely because they are genetically predisposed to doing so? Let's leave the research to the genetic scientists. And we'll focus on travel and its history.

As mentioned above, the first "travelers" were nomads for whom movement was a matter of survival. They drove their flocks from pasture to pasture, knowing no borders — particularly since back then, there were no such concepts as borders, customs control, passports or visas. "What a wonderful time!" you might say. Are you so sure about that? Travel on horse-, camel- or donkey-back, in the best case in a cart — or even on foot behind the cart. All of your worldly belongings — tent, furniture,

dishes, clothes, tools and weapons — had to be carried along with you. Pitching and packing the tent on your own, foraging for local food on your own, cooking it on your own on a fire that needed to be constantly provided with fuel, all while keeping an eye on the herd, protecting it from wild animals and hostile neighbors. Then rolling up the tent and moving on. All of it, over and over again. Yes, nowadays there are also people who go camping with tents, cook food over a campfire and carry everything in backpacks. But their trips only take up a small part of their lives. They buy a tent made of modern ergonomic materials in a store rather than sewing their own, they buy pre-packaged stay-fresh food in advance at the supermarket. They don't collect brushwood but take light, compact biofuels from specialty stores, as well as generators and batteries so they can have access to electricity even in the forest. Finally, after the hike, they return to civilization with all of its creature comforts.

But let's return to the past for a moment. What made people pack up when they learned how to build cities, form states, develop crafts and grow enough food in their fields, when they began raising animals without the constant roving? Trading! These were the merchants who took on the mission of expanding horizons not only for themselves, but also for their compatriots. By transporting their wares to neighboring and then distant lands, and bringing the fruits of foreign countries from there to their homeland, they unwittingly became bridges connecting civilizations, carriers and distributors of knowledge. But was the merchant really that free in his travels? Hardly. You had to go to places where you had a high chance of not only selling your wares for good money, but also of buying something that you could profitably sell at home. And you also had to consider the security factor — you could only travel accompanied or escorted by well-armed guards to obviously risky places or even unknown lands. And if there was no such opportunity, then the geography of travel was limited.

Perhaps one of the most famous traders of the Middle Ages was Ferdinand Magellan, who planned to reach the Moluccas, fill the holds of his ships with spices, and then sell them in Europe. As a result, he made his first trip around the world. Only one ship and 18 crewmen returned from his journey. But even the meager cargo that they managed to bring back to Spain sold for an eye-watering sum of money — enough not only to cover the costs of readying the expedition, but also to compensate for the damage caused by the loss of four ships. After his success, dozens of merchant ships headed to the Moluccas for spices.

Yet humanity still strove to open up fresh horizons. All the while thinking about how to make travel safer and less time-consuming.

And then the era of Great Geographical Discoveries began, when merchants tried to find short and convenient maritime routes to distant countries, where they had once only traveled by land or river. The result was the discovery of new continents with entirely different civilizations, climates, religions, foundations and traditions. And so it was that Christopher Columbus was just looking for a shortcut to India to speed up and reduce the cost of trade. And we all know how his journey ended — two new continents appeared on the geographical map.

Soon, the new lands became a haven for a huge number of Europeans fleeing disease, poverty and religious strife in search of a new life. It wasn't easy for them in their new home. But a person can do a lot with the right willpower. Continents that had only recently been discovered soon became full-fledged participants in human civilization. And there was a need for regular movement between them. Ships, followed by steamships, began operating regular voyages. And their passengers often weren't traveling one-way in search of a dream, but making visits to friends and relatives or traveling on business. And then they would return home. Of course, such trips were expensive and not affordable for everyone.

The first attempts to establish regular travel between the United States and Europe were made in the runup to the 1820s. But sailing ships, due to their dependence on wind power, weren't particularly reliable. Finding themselves in a calm, sailing ships could take weeks or even months to travel the distance from continent to continent as onboard food stores dwindled.

For this reason, the owners of shipping companies soon turned their attention to the then-newfangled steamships. The Sirius and Great Western race, which took place in April 1838, showed that steamships were quite capable of crossing the North Atlantic. The Sirius and Great Western ships were owned by competing companies, the British and American Steam Navigation Company and the Great Western Steamship Company. However, as sometimes happens, the winner was a third participant, whom no one had taken seriously. Canadian shipowner Samuel Cunard was engaged in mail delivery along the Canadian coast, whaling and fishing, tea imports and coal mining. In early 1840, the British and North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, which he founded, later renamed the Cunard Line, signed a contract with the British government to transport mail across the Atlantic for 60,000 pounds



"Travel can hardly prevent intolerance. But if, thanks thereto, a person sees that we are all crying, eating, laughing, worrying and dying, then he will understand that we are all alike, and that we can all become friends."

Maya Angelou, author



per year. And on February 5, 1840, the steamship *Britannia*, the company's "firstborn," was launched at the Greenock shipyard. The similarly-classed *Acadia*, *Caledonia* and *Columbia* were christened soon thereafter. These were ships with wooden hulls (made mostly of oak, as well as coniferous wood). Their underwater part was sheathed, per British Navy tradition, with copper in order to protect against woodworms and other marine rot. The steam on each liner was generated by four so-called "rectangular" boilers. Propulsion was provided by onboard paddle wheels with a diameter of almost 9 meters — the propeller wouldn't come into widespread use until later. The maximum number of passengers on this type of ship could reach up to 115 people. Thus began the era of regular transatlantic travel.

Meanwhile, travel within the same continent was still being conducted on foot, horseback or in various horse-drawn vehicles. Until the stacks of steam locomotives pulling cars along the railway began smoking at the beginning of the 19th century. And then, on July 5, 1841, Thomas Cook organized the world's first group trip. Five hundred smartly dressed passengers, accompanied by a brass band in uniform, filled the train carriages to make the 19 km journey from Leicester to Loughborough. Who were these people? Members of the Temperance Society. In Britain at that time, excessive alcohol consumption was becoming a problem. Cook believed that it was necessary to get people out of pubs. And to do this, they needed to be offered a real celebration without alcohol, something memorable that could attract everyone's attention. At the next meeting of the Temperance Society, he suggested that a mass excursion be timed to coincide with the Society's next convention... by train.

It was this day that became the birthday of tourism!

And it was tourism that would become the engine of travel development in the future, creating a huge industry encompassing vehicles, accommodation, catering, museums, entertainment venues, souvenir production and much, much more.

So how — and why — do you prefer to travel?

### INSERTS ABOUT THE HISTORICAL FIGURES:

**FERDINAND MAGELLAN**, or Fernão de Magalhães (in Portuguese), was a Portuguese and Spanish navigator with the title *adeladado*. He commanded the expedition that made the first trip around the world. He opened the strait from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, becoming the first European to pass through it. Magellan was born in Porto. His family belonged to the humble nobility. In his youth, Ferdinand served as a page for Queen Eleanor of Viseu, wife of John II. In 1498, the Portuguese opened a maritime route to India. And squadron after squadron began to set sail from Portugal to conquer the East. Magellan was in the service of the Portuguese king for many years. But when the king refused to support his planned voyage, he went to Spain, where he found investors and the support of the Spanish crown. On September 20, 1519, he embarked on what would become the first known circumnavigation of the globe. On October 21, 1520, the ships of his expedition entered the strait, later named after him. The journey through the strait took 38 days.

Magellan himself didn't plan to circumnavigate the globe — he merely wanted to find a western route to the Moluccas and return back. But conflicts with the islanders and threats of attack forced them to move westward. On April 21, 1521, the great explorer Magellan died on the island before he could personally complete the journey. On September 6, 1522, the ship *Victoria* from his expedition, under the command of Juan Sebastián de Elcano, reached Spain, thus becoming the only ship of Magellan's original flotilla to return victoriously to Seville. There were only eighteen survivors on the ship. That said, the cargo of spices delivered in the hold of the *Victoria* paid off the costs of the entire expedition.

**CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS** was a Spanish navigator of Genoese origin who discovered the New World for Europeans in 1492. Columbus was the first reliably-known traveler to cross the Atlantic Ocean in the subtropical and tropical belts of the Northern Hemisphere. He discovered South and Central America and initiated their exploration.

Columbus was born in Italy into a humble Genoese family. He studied at the University of Pavia. He lived in Genoa until 1472, and later in Savona. In the 1470s, he participated in maritime trading expeditions. And in 1476, Columbus moved to Portugal for nine years. All this time, he was considering an expedition to find a short sea route to India. But he found no support from either the Genoese

merchants or the Portuguese king. It was only after moving to Spain in 1485 and protracted negotiations with the local nobility and the royal couple that he received funding and support. In August 1492, Columbus embarked on his first expedition and on October 13 hoisted the Spanish flag on the island of San Salvador, thinking that he was somewhere near India. There were 4 expeditions in total. It ultimately became clear that the discovered lands were continents previously unknown to Europeans. But at first, his contemporaries didn't understand the significance of this discovery. This realization only dawned in the middle of the 16th century.

**SAMUEL CUNARD** was one of the leading shipowners of the 19th century, the founder of the Cunard Line cruise company.

The son of a Canadian timber merchant bought his first ship in 1808, the sailing schooner *White Oak*. He signed a contract with the British government to transport mail between Boston, Newfoundland and Halifax. By 1812, his company already owned a fleet of 40 ships. After achieving success in his homeland, Cunard went to England and in 1839, together with a number of associates, founded the British and North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. Soon, with the support of the British Postal Administration, in 1840, the voyage of the steamship *Britannia* from Liverpool to Boston marked the beginning of regular transatlantic cargo and passenger steamer service. In 1859, Cunard received the title of baronet from Queen Victoria for his services to the development of transatlantic shipping.

**THOMAS COOK** was a British entrepreneur. He became famous for inventing organized tourism and in 1841 opened the first-ever travel agency, Thomas Cook Group.

At the age of ten, Thomas Cook began working as a handyman for a gardener with a salary of 6 pence per week. At the age of 14, he became an apprentice to John Pegg and worked as a carpenter for five years. He was a devout Baptist and a member of the regional Temperance Society. In February 1826, he became a preacher, traveled extensively around the area distributing literature and occasionally worked as a carpenter. He published several pamphlets on temperance topics, and in 1828, became a Baptist minister. In 1833, he took a vow of sobriety. He was a fanatical fighter against drunkenness, which was widespread in England at that time, and in 1840 used the newly-opened railway in Derbyshire to transport members of the Temperance Society he had established to a convention in the town of Loughborough. By 1847, Thomas Cook had organized a tourist society, which was engaged in selling travel packages not only in England — but also abroad. Thomas Cook is believed to have been the first manager in the field of tourism. He developed routes to many European cities, and in 1865, he opened regular tourism to the New World for the British, and to the homeland of their ancestors for the Americans. Mark Twain became one of the firm's first American clients.

# 150 YEARS OF HISTORY AND HOSPITALITY AT THE GRAND HOTEL EUROPE

In 2025, the first luxury hotel in Russia, the Grand Hotel Europe celebrated its 150th anniversary. Since 1875, it has been a hallmark of St. Petersburg and a national symbol of hospitality. The hotel is located in the heart of the city, facing the Church of the Savior on the Spilled Blood, the Russian Museum and Mikhailovsky Theatre. Like a jewellery box, it contains true diamonds — high status, impeccable service, and precious moments in the lives of its guests.



Over more than a century and a half, the walls of the Grand Hotel Europe have hosted impromptu concerts by world-renowned artists, social receptions, fateful meetings, and served as a venue for international events, including the G8, the Economic Forum, and the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS. The hotel has also received accolades from World Travel Awards, Wine Spectator, and Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards.

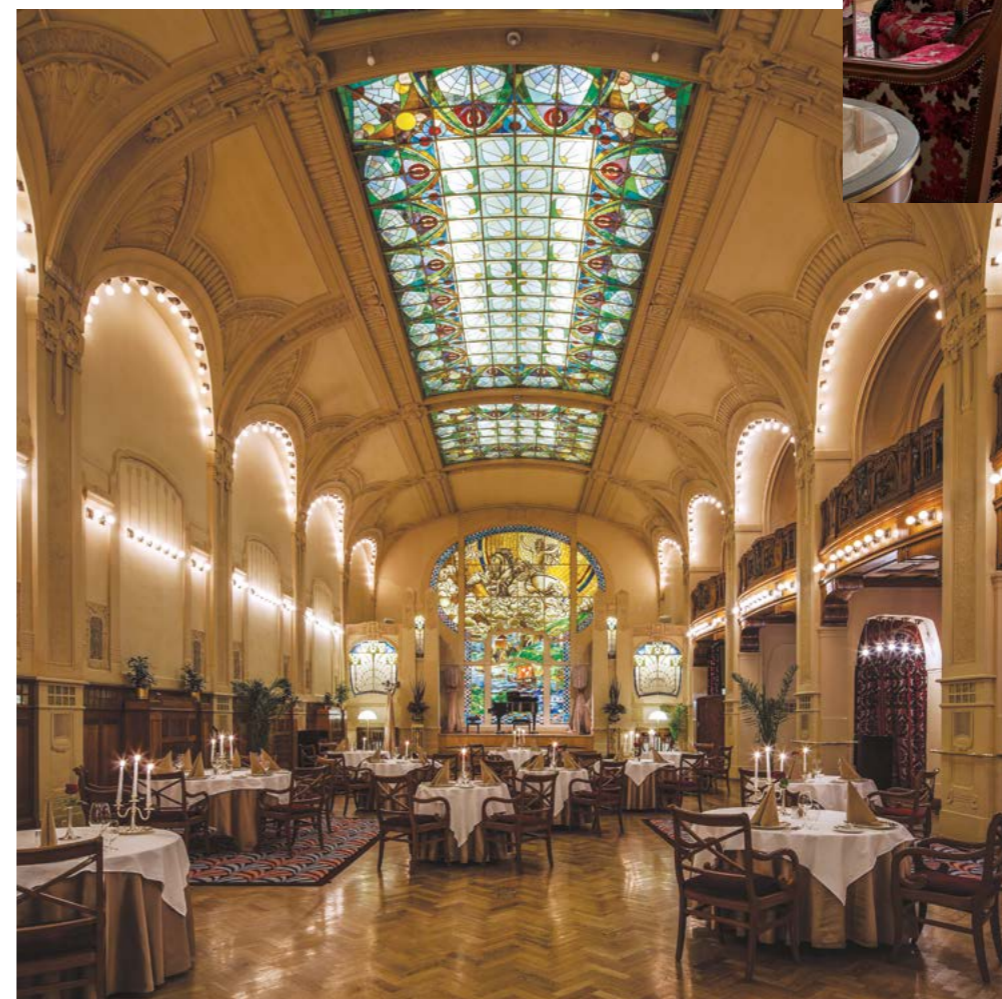
The Joint Stock Company of the Europe Hotel, established in 1872, set itself the ambitious goal of a complete reconstruction and the opening of a grand, fashionable hotel. The project was overseen by architect Ludwig Fontana, who completed the work in three years. On January 28, 1875, the St. Petersburg newspaper Golos reported: "The hotel's interior is distinguished by remarkable luxury in its finishes and facilities... Most of the rooms are equipped with pianos, and the floors are covered with carpets... On the opening day, all the hotel's salons were filled with the public eager to view its premises."

In 1905, the L'Europe Restaurant became the first gastronomic establishment in Russia to feature electric light bulbs — symbolizing the new industrial society. Since the Silver Age, its interior has remained virtually unchanged, featuring a translucent dome made of coloured glass designed by Karl Brenzen, carved ornaments, and Art Nouveau stucco work by Karl Makkenzen, as well as a stained-glass window depicting Apollo on a Chariot, presumably based on a design by Leon Benois. In 1994 the restaurant team served a reception in honour of the Queen of Great Britain, Elizabeth II,

at the Mariinsky Palace. Having marked its 120th anniversary, the L'Europe Restaurant now opens a dazzling new chapter in its illustrious history. Legendary Sunday brunches unfold to the accompaniment of live music, while Tchaikovsky Nights offer elegant dinner-concerts with opera arias and ballet performances.

Between 1908 and 1914, the hotel's interiors were given a new look thanks to architect Fyodor Lidval, who designed the new Krysha Ballroom and decorated the modern Lobby Bar, the main staircase, and the lounge on the second floor in the Art Nouveau style. During difficult times, the hotel became part of the city's life — after the revolution, it housed a shelter for homeless children, during the siege it served as the largest hospital for the Leningrad Front, and from 1945 began operating as a hotel once more.

The hotel features 266 elegantly appointed rooms and suites, with its Bel Étage floor offering unparalleled butler service and a collection of Historic and Avant-Garde style suites.



Over the years, guests of the Grand Hotel Europe have included members of royalty, famous politicians, artists, musicians, and writers — such famous names as Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Johann Strauss, Maxim Gorky and Bernard Shaw, Anna Pavlova and Victor Dandr , Sergey Prokofiev and Dmitry Shostakovich, HM King of Sweden, HRH Prince of Japan and HM Queen Beatrix, Whitney Houston and Luciano Pavarotti, Sharon Stone and Leonardo DiCaprio. For 150 years, the Grand Hotel Europe has stood at the heart of Russia's cultural capital, a timeless destination for renowned artists, intellectuals, and travelers who cherish its historic charm.



[grandhoteleurope.com/en/](https://grandhoteleurope.com/en/)

# "THE DUST OF AGES." CONFESSIONS OF A MERITED TOURISM PROFESSIONAL

Vladimir Pozhidaev is our author and a professional traveler. For over 25 years, he has dedicated himself to the world of travel, evolving from a classic agent to an expert who crafts unique, complex journeys for the most discerning clients. He is not just an organizer. He is a storyteller. He travels to more than 70 countries. He is passionate about debunking myths and shattering stereotypes, finding living, authentic stories behind familiar facades. Today, Vladimir will tell you a fascinating story about the world's historical hotels...

I still remember that smell. A blend of old wood, tobacco, rain, and something else — something elusive and heavy. Once, in Switzerland, I was a young, wide-eyed travel agent just starting out. I stepped into the tiny lobby of my first historic hotel. A modest desk instead of a reception counter. Chunky keys on a fob, not compact magnetic cards. A creaky wooden staircase instead of an elevator. And the smell. Not a bad smell, exactly. But back then, I thought it was the smell of other people's lived-in lives, of sagging old sofas and hopeless melancholy. I called it, dismissively, "the dust of ages." I genuinely couldn't understand why places like this still existed in the brave new 21st century.

Now, twenty-five years later, with the title of "Merited Tourism Professional" behind me and thousands of hotel inspections under my belt, I'm ready to admit it: I was young and foolish. But youth has its own expiration date. And that foolishness was just part of the journey.

My background is in cultural studies. At twenty, I could tell you the difference between Monet and Manet and distinguish Rococo from Renaissance. But when it came to the hotels I had to stay in, all that knowledge flew straight out the window. God, was I wrong. I thought those historic walls were oppressive. That everything about them was deliberately solemn and pointlessly pompous. Too many portraits of bearded men staring down at me in judgment as I walked by in my orange jeans.

I didn't just like new hotels — I loved the next generation of hotels. Dubai was my first great love. The Burj Al Arab had just opened, and I stood on that artificial island, feeling the wind of the future slap my face. Skyscrapers punching through clouds. Floor-to-ceiling windows. Metal, glass, concrete. No elderly doormen in livery in the lobby — just young people in impeccable black suits who looked like investment bankers. They spoke to me in the language of progress. My language.

## RAFFLES HOTEL, SINGAPORE

Then it happened. I was sent to Singapore — a place that welcomed me with all things cutting-edge, ambitious, and grand, a true bright future. And... the Raffles Hotel, born in 1887. Of course, I knew about it. Kipling wrote Kim there. Somerset Maugham lived there for years. The Singapore Sling was invented there. On my way to the hotel, I was already resigned to my fate: sleeping in some "grandmother's trunk" stuffed with century-old rags.

I pulled up to the hotel on a sweltering afternoon and felt like I'd fallen down a rabbit hole. Everywhere: greenery, shade, coolness. White colonial architecture. Graceful columns. Ceiling fans. A reverent hush. No metal, no glass. I sat down in an armchair in the lobby, closed my eyes — and suddenly, it hit me. No smell of dust at all. But the smell of pedigree. I suddenly pictured it: right there, in that very chair, some planter from Sumatra sat sipping whiskey and deciding the fate of tons of rubber. In the corner, two British officers whispered about how to hold an empire together. And somewhere upstairs, a concierge was sorting out tickets for Kipling himself.

At the Long Bar, they brought me that famous Singapore Sling. And I — the man who hated "dust" — gleefully tossed peanut shells onto the floor, as tradition demands. For a hotel of this calibre, it felt so wrong. And yet so right! A rare liberty that seemed to say: "We've been living like this for over a hundred years!" I drank my cocktail and felt something inside me turn over. Not break — no, not break. Turn over, like a page.

Raffles is a parallel world. A colonial oasis in the heart of an ultramodern metropolis. It hasn't dissolved into the present, and the present hasn't crushed it or trampled it with its sheer force — it simply endures, beating in rhythm with Singapore. History was born here, and it continues to live — in the elegant murmur of beautiful English, in the clink of ice against glass,



in the rustle of silk worn by Asian beauties. And wealthy guests pay for that feeling of the "old money," where they can become part of a grand story. I certainly did!

## WORKING WITH VIP TRAVELERS

Working with VIP travellers completed the transformation. My clients are people who've already made it. They have everything. They don't need a walk-in closet the size of a separate room, or a marble bathtub in the middle of the bedroom. What they need is something money can't buy: a sense of belonging.

One regular client of mine—a man who owned factories, newspapers and ships—always stayed at the Savoy on every visit to London. I asked him once, "Why not the Shard, that has a much better view?" He looked at me as if I'd asked why he drove a Rolls-Royce instead of taking the Tube. "Vladimir," he said to me then, like a father, "at the Savoy, the concierge has known what tea I drink since 1998. The waiter remembers that my wife doesn't eat strawberries. And the elevator... who gives a damn about the elevator? I'm not in a hurry."

It was like a revelation. Yes, in new hotels, you're served by highly trained professionals. In historic hotels, you're welcomed by hosts—not owners, exactly. Custodians. In a historic hotel, you're not just another guest. You're a great figure—a writer, an artist, a statesman.

Historic hotels are as fascinating as they are complicated—you dust them carefully, but you don't hammer in a nail. Any change requires endless approvals, and day-to-day operations demand constant financial investment and physical effort from the staff. Working in a historic hotel is nothing like working in a new-generation hotel. And money alone isn't enough. Without people on the ground who are truly in love with the place and charged with its spirit, a historic hotel ceases to be one in any meaningful sense. The people who work there are heroes in their own way, and the hotel itself is a feat. Especially these days.

## NATIONAL HOTEL, MOSCOW

Elena Valeryevna Pozolotina— an employee who has devoted nearly thirty years of her life to Moscow's National Hotel— shared her enthusiasm with me as she showed me every hidden corner. Her excitement was contagious, and with it came a kind of secret knowledge. I walked through the corridors of time, where Rimsky-Korsakov, Lenin and Krupskaya, and Sophia Loren had all walked in their different eras. I lowered myself into an armchair where hoop skirts and fans once sat. I gazed into mirrors that had once reflected impossibly elaborate, towering hats in the dim light of burning candles. I was at the National!

Of course, I can't pretend every historic hotel is a fairy tale. Working with wealthy guests, I've heard complaints. And I've felt

my own moments of irritation. But what is it that people love about the "dust of ages?"

Silence. Meaningful silence. Historic hotels don't have that modern noise that screams, "Be successful! Consume! Keep moving! Show yourself off!" Instead, everything says, "Sit down. Savor the moment. You've already made it. Now just be."

Rituals. Good heavens, the rituals. When there's a dress code for breakfast, you can't show up dishevelled in shorts and slippers— because this isn't a restaurant, it's almost a theatre, and you're an actor onstage. With your permission, the waiter unfolds your napkin at just the right angle and lays it across your lap. Coffee pours from a heavy silver pot so quietly you can't hear a splash. Silence is part of the ritual. The guest should hear nothing but his own breath and the delicate clink of a cup meeting its saucer. Every gesture has been refined over centuries. The morning newspaper— sometimes laid out on a special wooden stand— is ironed flat so the printer's ink doesn't stain your fingers. When did you last turn the pages of a real newspaper? I do it regularly— in historic hotels!

Stability. In a world that changes by the day, a hotel that has stood for a hundred years or more is an anchor. You know that your children will stay in the same rooms you stayed in. That your granddaughter will sit in that same chair. It's about legacy—a luxury you can inherit.

## A GOLDEN SUSPENSION

In new hotels, the walls tell you about the interior designer. In old ones, they tell you about kings and queens, espionage, broken hearts, and the creators of world masterpieces. I haven't betrayed the new. I still adore hotels with concrete walls and elevators that shoot up at the speed of light. My perfect vacation right now would be a week in Tokyo in an ultramodern skyscraper, then a week in Kyoto in a traditional ryokan that's three hundred years old.

I've learned to combine. I've realised these two forms of hospitality aren't enemies. They're different answers to the same question: "What does it mean to be human in this world?" New hotels answer: "To be human is to look forward, to fly higher, to want more." Historic hotels answer: "To be human is to remember where you came from, to respect those who came before you, and to taste time itself."

I became a Merited Tourism Professional because I understood that tourism isn't about the number of stars. It's about the impression. And impressions aren't born from flying Wi-Fi. True luxury is when time stops. And wraps its arms around you.

The dust of ages? Now I know: it's not dust at all. It's like a golden suspension. And it's worth every minute you spend learning to see it.

# 10 HISTORICAL HOTELS AROUND THE WORLD WHERE THE PAST BECOMES PART OF THE JOURNEY

Historical hotels are not just places to stay. They are spaces where history is not lost, but accumulated. Writers and politicians have stayed here, agreements have been made, and legends have been created, all of which continue to influence the current atmosphere. Unlike modern hotels, where experiences are created from scratch, historical hotels have already recovered from their past. This is why they offer a different kind of experience: access to context. We have compiled a list of 10 hotels that have not only preserved their history, but have transformed it into a part of their guest experience.

## HOTEL NATIONAL MOSCOW *(Moscow, Russia)*

**WHEN OPENED:** 1903

**WHERE:** Opposite the Kremlin.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** Imperial architecture + direct view of Red Square.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** Lenin (lived after the revolution), world leaders and delegation.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** — Accommodation with a view of the Kremlin— Historical interiors with long elements— A sense of the center of Russia's political history.

Opened in 1903, the National Hotel occupies one of the most powerful locations in Moscow, opposite the Kremlin. After the revolution, it was home to representatives of the new government, including Lenin. This is a rare case where a hotel witnessed the change of eras not as an observer, but as a participant. Today, the key impression is the combination of historical interiors and a direct visual connection with the center of Russian history.



**RITZ PARIS** (Paris, France)

**WHEN OPENED:** 1898

**WHERE LOCATED:** Place Vendôme.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** Symbol of Parisian luxury and the "ritz-style" standard. One of the most iconic hotels in the world.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** Coco Chanel (lived here for years), Ernest Hemingway, Princess Diana (the last hours of her life).

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** — Hemingway Bar — The atmosphere of "eternal Paris" — The highest level of service as a cultural code.

Since its opening in 1898, the Ritz Paris has become synonymous with luxury as a standard, not an exception. It was the home of Coco Chanel, visited by Hemingway, and has become a household name. It is not just a place, but a definition of what luxury should be. Today, guests receive not just service, but access to a cultural code that has been shaped over a century.

**COPACABANA PALACE** (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

**WHEN OPENED:** 1923

**WHERE:** Copacabana Beach.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** Icon of South American glamour and resort culture. Historical events and guests: Fred Astaire, Brigitte Bardot, Rolling Stones.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** — Living on the oceanfront — A combination of luxury and carnival energy — An iconic pool and a social atmosphere.

In 1923, the Copacabana Palace defined Rio's image as a world-class resort. It was a favorite destination for movie and music stars, and the hotel itself became a symbol of Brazilian glamour. However, its atmosphere remains cool and slightly laid-back, reflecting the spirit of the city. Today, it offers an experience that combines luxury with the rhythm of the ocean and a cultural celebration.



**SAVOY** (London, UK)

**WHEN OPENED:** 1889

**WHERE:** On the banks of the Thames.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** London's first luxury hotel with electricity and elevators. Strong theatrical and musical connection.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** Frank Sinatra, Winston Churchill, Claude Monet.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** — Cocktails in a classic American Bar — View of the Thames — Classic British suite with Art Deco.

The Savoy Hotel opened in 1889 and became the first modern luxury hotel in London, with electricity, elevators, and its own service system. It quickly became a cultural center of life, with visits from Churchill, Monet, and Sinatra.

Today, the hotel maintains its connection to art and the stage, and its American Bar is regularly recognized as one of the best bars in the world. The main impression is the balance between a modern and vibrant urban atmosphere.



**HOTEL SACHER** (Vienna, Austria)

**WHEN OPENED:** 1876

**WHERE:** Vienna city center, opposite the Vienna Opera House.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** The house of the original Sacher Torte — a gastronomic symbol of Austria. The interiors are the standard of Viennese aristocratic luxury.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** The emperors of Austria-Hungary, Indira Gandhi, John Kennedy.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** — Tasting the original Sacher cake at the Sacher Café — Living in the "theatrical" atmosphere of old Vienna — Step-by-step accessibility to the main cultural venues.

The Sacher Hotel, opened in 1876 opposite the Vienna Opera, is an example of how gastronomy can become part of a hotel's identity. It is here that the original Sacher cake, a dessert that has become a symbol of Austria, is depicted. However, it is not just about the cake; the hotel retains the atmosphere of the Viennese aristocracy, where every element, from the textiles to the service, is designed to promote classic European hospitality. From emperors to world leaders, the hotel's guests have included a diverse range of individuals, and today, this context is not just a setting but a norm.



**THE PENINSULA HONG KONG** *(Hong Kong, China)*

**WHEN OPENED:** 1928

**WHERE:** Kowloon, opposite the islands of Hong Kong.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** "The Great Lady of the Far East." The signature fleet of Rolls-Royces and the highest service.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** Used during the Second World War; adhered to the elites of Asia and the West.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** — Rolls-Royce transfer — Afternoon tea as a ritual — A combination of colonial heritage and high-tech service.

The Peninsula, opened in 1928, is often referred to as "The Great Lady of the Far East." It has seen the colonial period, the war, and the transformation of Hong Kong into a global financial center. However, the hotel maintains its core value of excellent service and attention to detail. Today, it is one of the following hotels, where traditions (such as afternoon tea) coexist with high-tech services and even a branded Rolls-Royce fleet.

**TAJ MAHAL PALACE, MUMBAI** *(Mumbai, India)*

**WHEN OPENED:** 1903

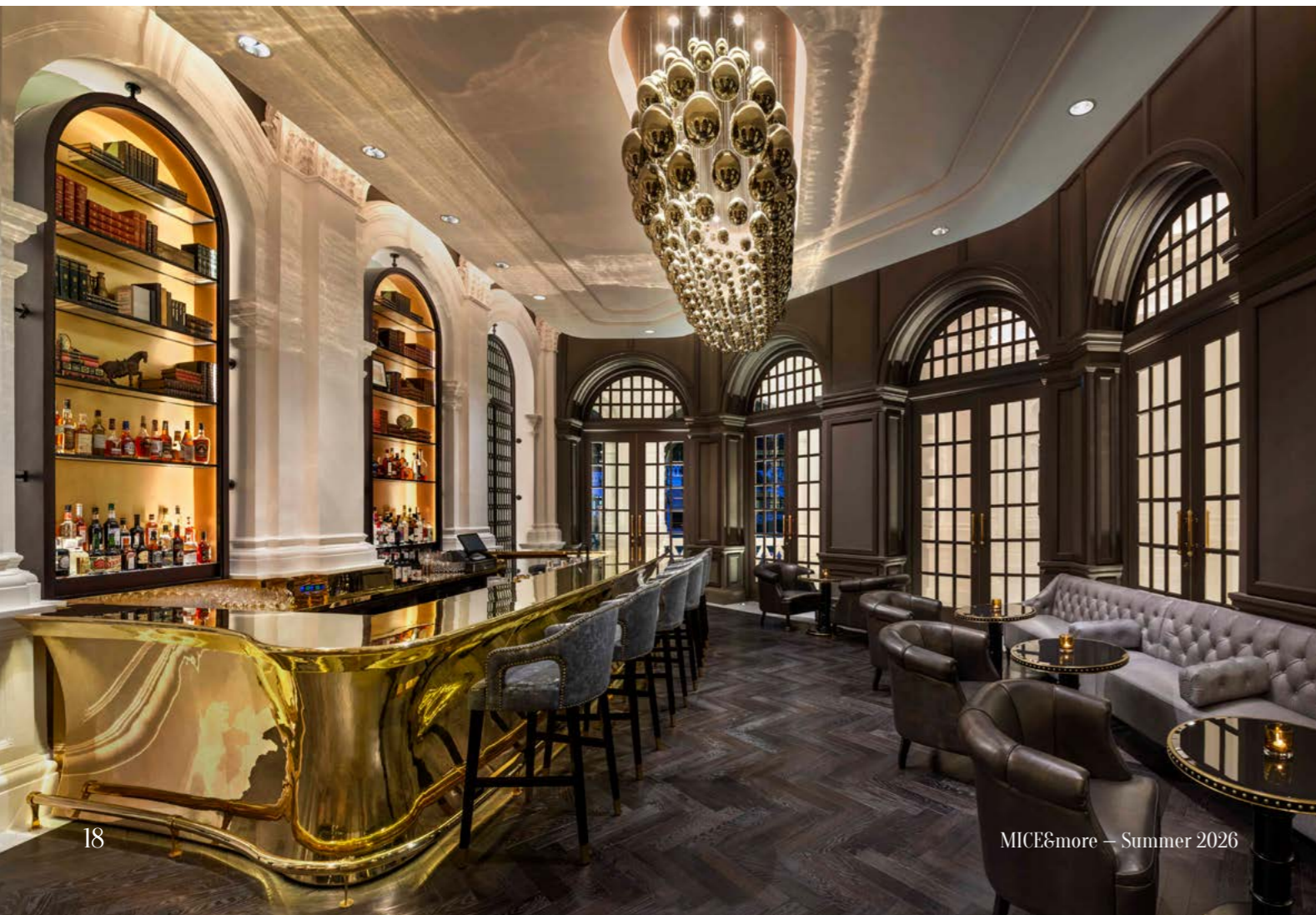
**WHERE:** At the Gateway of India, on the Arabian Sea.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** Icon of Indian hospitality and architecture.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** World leaders, celebrities; survived the 2008 terrorist attacks.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** A combination of Indian luxury and colonial style, with views of the ocean and the "Gates of India," and a strong emotional context and history.

Opened in 1903, the Taj Mahal Palace became a symbol of modern India even before its independence. The hotel hosted world leaders and survived the tragic events of 2008, after which it was restored and continued to operate. This history makes it more than just an architectural landmark; it is a part of the national identity. Today, it is a combination of Indian luxury, colonial heritage, and a strong emotional context.



**HOTEL DEL CORONADO** *(Coronado, USA)*

**WHEN OPENED:** 1888

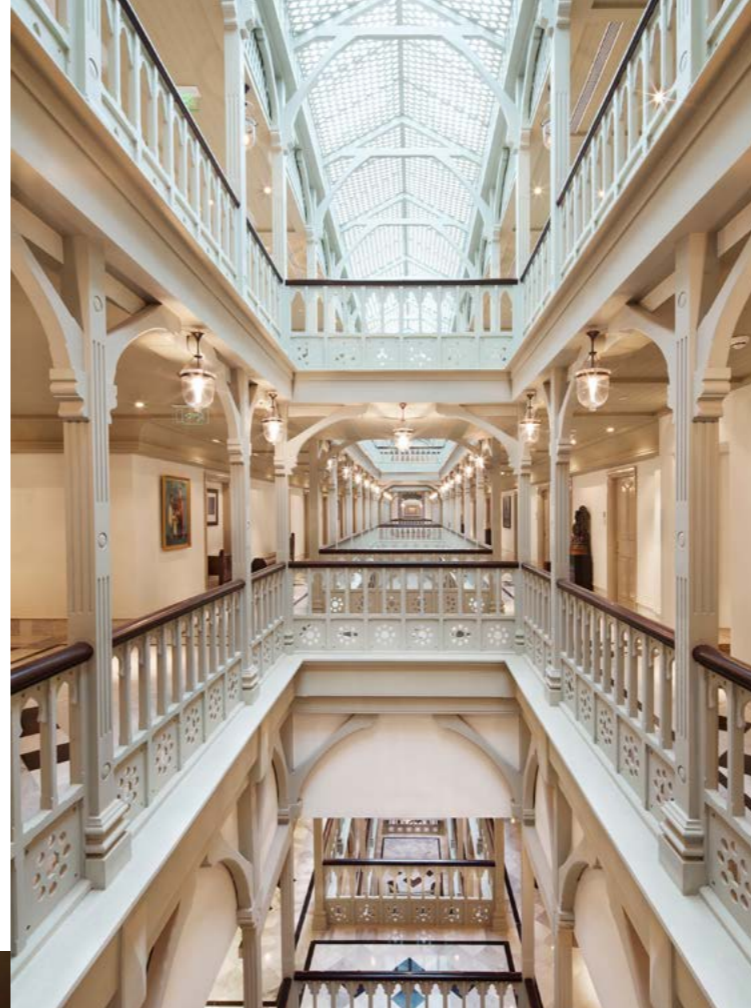
**WHERE:** Coronado Island, near San Diego.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** One of the oldest hotels in the world. Symbol of California resort style.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** Marilyn Monroe (filming "Some Like It Hot"), US presidents.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** Today, staying right on the ocean coast is a combination of Victorian architecture and relaxed beach luxury.

Built in 1888 on the California coast, the Hotel del Coronado is one of the oldest wooden hotels in the world. It is known not only for its architecture, but also for its cultural legacy, as it was the setting for the film "Some Like It Hot" with Marilyn Monroe. It is a place where Victorian aesthetics are unexpectedly combined with a relaxed beach lifestyle. Today, it is not a museum, but an active resort where you can literally live inside the American image of America.



**GRAND HOTEL EUROPE** *(Saint Petersburg, Russia)*

**WHEN OPENED:** 1875

**WHERE LOCATED:** Nevsky Prospekt, the center of St. Petersburg, near the Mikhailovsky Theatre and the Russian Museum.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** One of the oldest grand hotels in Russia with a legacy of humanity. Architecture and interiors — classic St. Petersburg Art Nouveau with preserved authenticity.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** Fyodor Dostoevsky, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Herbert Wells. During the Soviet era, it was one of the main hotels for foreign delegations.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** includes a live music dinner at the L'Europe Restaurant, a sense of "imperial St. Petersburg" without museum dust, and proximity to the city's cultural venues.

Opened in 1875 on Nevsky Prospekt, the Grand Hotel Europe has become part of St. Petersburg's cultural code. Originally conceived as a hotel for public events, it has retained this role to this day. Dostoevsky and Tchaikovsky stayed here, and in the 20th century, foreign delegations used it as a showcase hotel for the country. Today, its value lies not only in its location but also in its sense of continuity: the interiors, the L'Europe Restaurant with live music, its proximity to theaters, and the experience of a landscape where the city and the hotel are almost inseparable.

**RAFFLES HOTEL SINGAPORE** *(Singapore)*

**WHEN OPENED:** 1887

**WHERE:** Singapore city center.

**WHAT IS UNIQUE:** A colonial oasis in the midst of the metropolis. The Singapore Sling was created here.

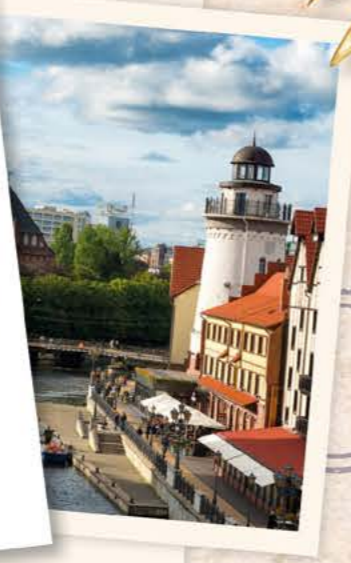
**HISTORICAL EVENTS AND GUESTS:** Rudyard Kipling, Charlie Chaplin, Elizabeth confirm.

**TODAY'S EXPERIENCE:** A cocktail at the Long Bar with the tradition of throwing peanuts on the floor — A combination of British colonial style and the tropics — A sense of the "old world" in an ultra-modern city.

Since 1887, Raffles has remained a rare colonial state that has not dissolved into the modernity of Singapore, existing in parallel with it. The Singapore Sling cocktail was created here, and the Long Bar still follows the rule of throwing the unusual arches peelings directly on the floor, a rare liberty for this level. The hotel, which was visited by Kipling and Chaplin, now offers an experience that combines a tropical climate, colonial architecture, and a sense of a "closed world" within a metropolis.



**MIKHAIL DRUTMAN,  
BALMA TOURS, FOUNDER AND  
GENERAL MANAGER**



**EUNICE CHUA,  
WORLD EXPRESS TRAVEL, BUSINESS  
ADVISOR, MICE**



I have been working in the industry for over 30 years. My journey reflects the development of tourism in Russia itself. We started as an incoming company working with foreign markets, receiving international tourists and cruise ships. In the early years, Kaliningrad had just opened after being a closed city, and there was strong demand, especially from German tourists. We worked with major partners, handled cruise liners, charters, and individual travelers. Over time, as the international flow decreased, we began to rethink our approach and discovered MICE. This led to the transformation into a DMC, first promoting Kaliningrad internationally, then expanding to the Baltic region, Eastern Europe, and beyond. Since the early 2000s, Kaliningrad has become an attractive destination for corporate and MICE events in Russia, and this is what we continue to develop today, now entering our 35th season in a challenging environment.

My professional journey began in a completely different field — I am a marine biologist by education. In a way, I was thrown into tourism like a lifebuoy into the ocean, without prior knowledge but with intuition and curiosity. I started from scratch as a guide in the Kaliningrad travel bureau. It was driven by a genuine fascination with the region's rich history. From there, I moved through different companies until eventually founding Baltma Tours.

There have been many memorable projects, but two stand out. One was in 2008, when we organized large-scale events in Cannes dedicated to the Kaliningrad region — charter flights, the Kruzenshtern sailing ship, thousands of guests, and a major evening at the Palais des Festivals. The second was the 2018 FIFA World Cup, where we serviced four matches in Kaliningrad, working with around 7,500 participants including official delegations and fans, and handling operations for FIFA. These were projects of a scale I would like to see again in Russia.

What inspires me most in this industry is discovery and what I would call a "vaccination" — the ability to make people fall in love with the world through travel. Travel opens the best that exists on Earth — nature, culture, history. I have always believed that there is nothing better than travel, except perhaps love. Even in my radio program, I speak about the best the world has to offer, because inspiring people to explore is one of the most meaningful parts of this profession.

My advice to young professionals is simple: do not be afraid to take risks. This is something I sometimes regret not doing enough. In my career, many "firsts" happened — the first charter flights from Kaliningrad, the first cruise ships, the first MICE groups — all required stepping into the unknown. You need to create new products, try things that may seem impossible, and move forward despite uncertainty. That is how this industry grows, and that is how you grow within it.

I have spent 28 years in the airline industry and 36 years in travel agencies. From 1962 to 1972, I worked as a flight stewardess with Malaysia-Singapore Airlines, where I was part of the first batch of Training Check Stewardesses. From 1972 to 1988, I joined Qantas Airways and was seconded to Qantas Holidays as Quality Control Manager for Asia/Pacific, where I set up standards for hotels and tour operators contracted to handle Qantas Holidays programs.

My professional journey began with modelling after leaving school, and I started my flying career at the age of 18.

My first role in tourism came in 1988, when I joined a travel agency to set up its Outbound Department, where I created holiday tour programs worldwide. From 1990 to 2004, I headed the MICE Department of a large travel agency, handling outbound incentive and convention groups, mainly for finance and insurance business events and incentives.

One of the most memorable experiences in my career was with a large pharmaceutical incentive group to Singapore, which was cancelled during SARS. Despite offers from the hotel and my company to postpone the group without penalty, the client chose to cancel. A few years later, I was invited by the Convention Bureau of Sri Lanka as a speaker for the MICE industry there, where I shared my experience of business lost during an unforeseen disaster. I then approached my UK client for permission to quote her group as a case study. This immediately sparked her interest in proposing to the same pharmaceutical incentive group to reconsider Singapore. Naturally, the client wanted to inspect Singapore and review the choice of DMCs. I managed to secure and handle this group successfully.

What I value most about this industry is the opportunity to build strong networks with partners and customers and to maintain long-term relationships. I am inspired by fellowship and friendship.

My advice to young professionals considering a career in tourism is simple: people are more important than places. Always aim to understand your clients and their needs. Be one step ahead — always anticipate the needs of others.



# HISTORICAL VENUES FOR HIGH-PROFILE EVENTS

We have collected 10 historical, architecturally expressive venues around the world (Europe, Asia, America, Africa, Oceania, the Middle East) that hosted landmark events of the 20th and 21st centuries — from the first meetings of the UN General Assembly and Olympic competitions to high-profile premieres, international summits, and the most significant cultural events. Let these locations inspire you to create new projects in their unique atmosphere.

## CAPE TOWN CITY HALL

*(Cape Town, South Africa)*

Cape Town City Hall demonstrates how civic architecture becomes a performative democratic interface: its balcony and forecourt operate as public address infrastructure, while the hall itself can temporarily substitute national parliamentary settings. The city's own precinct guide explicitly frames the building through heritage and event history.

## BEITEDDINE PALACE

*(Beiteddine, Lebanon)*

Beiteddine is a palace complex where "venuehood" is seasonal and infrastructural: the palace courtyards become a stage through festival logistics, turning heritage space into a contemporary cultural platform. This makes it a strong nonstadium example of how historic architecture is operationalized for modern international programming.

## SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

*(Sydney, Australia)*

While newer than most "classic" halls, the Sydney Opera House is historically consequential as a national architectural icon and UNESCO World Heritage site whose operational history includes multiple highprofile institutional (re) openings. These moments help track how a landmark adapts to contemporary performance needs without losing symbolic capital.



**TEATRO ALLA SCALA** *(Milan, Italy)*

La Scala is a paradigmatic "heritage opera house" where premieres can reset international cultural agendas, and where restoration politics visibly shape the institution's modern identity. Its postwar reopening and the 2004 restoration reopening are best read as symbolic statescale cultural events as much as performances.

**WIENER MUSIKVEREIN** *(Vienna, Austria)*

The Musikverein illustrates how a hall becomes a global ritual stage: the Vienna Philharmonic's New Year's Concert binds place, broadcast, and tradition. Institutional histories explicitly foreground the contested/complex origins (1939 vs. 1941 framing), which is crucial for rigorous cultural analysis rather than pure celebration.

**CARNEGIE HALL** *(New York, USA)*

Carnegie Hall functions as a civic memory device: performance history, ticket archives, and curated institutional narratives allow events to be treated as evidence. Its 1938 jazz landmark and post-9/11 remembrance programming show two different ways a hall can become historically iconic — through artistic innovation and through public mourning.



**TEATRO COLÓN** *(Buenos Aires, Argentina)*

Teatro Colón functions simultaneously as a municipal institution and a national diplomatic showcase. Its 2010 reopening and subsequent hosting of IOC ceremonial programming exemplify how opera houses can be redeployed as state symbolic global stages beyond performance.

**ROYAL ALBERT HALL** *(London, United Kingdom)*

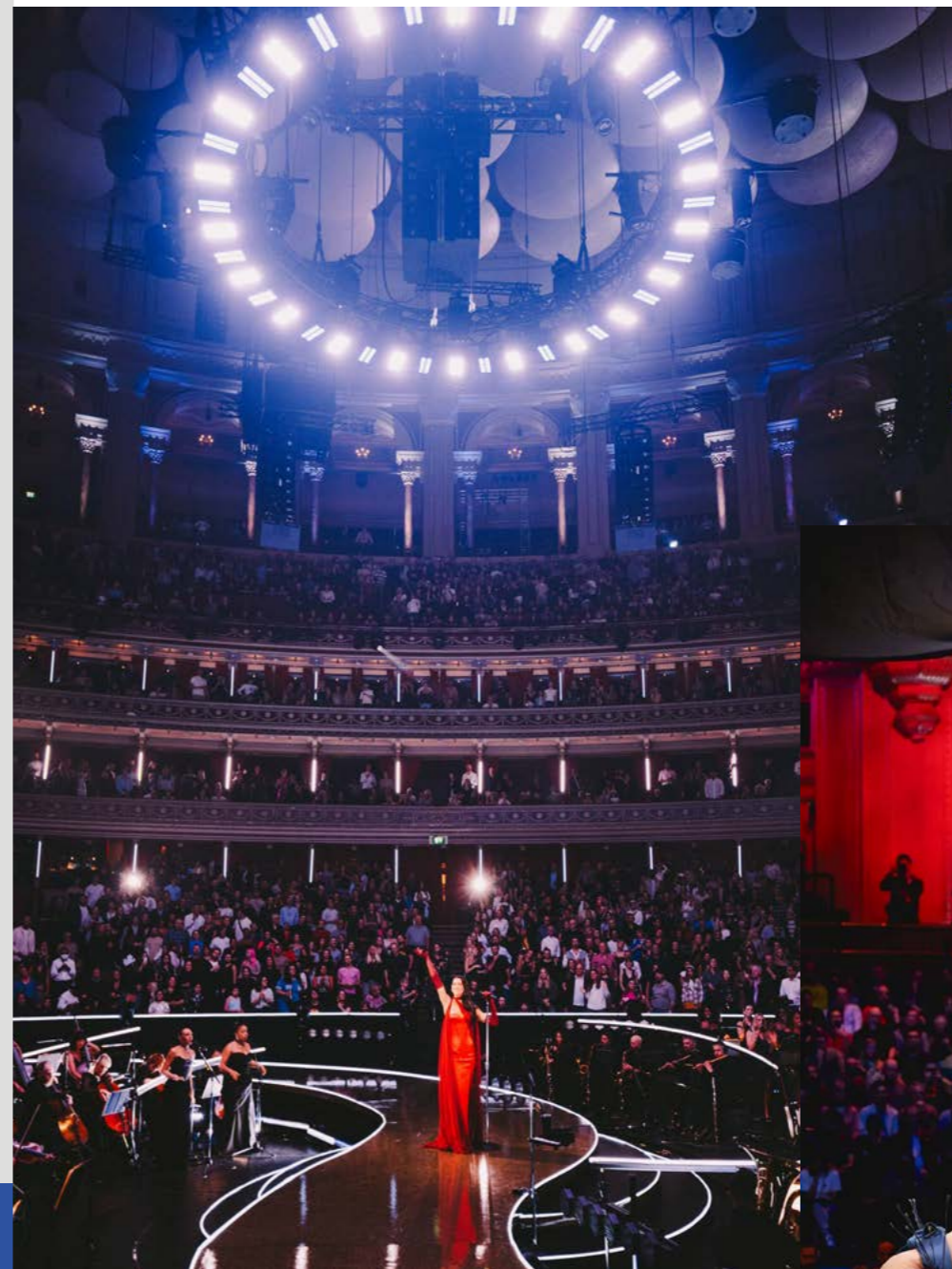
Royal Albert Hall is a national "multiregister" interior where elite music ritual, mass broadcast spectacle, and highprofile public entertainment cohabit in a single heritage venue. Its inhouse archive records enable unusually rigorous date verification for disparate event types.



**METHODIST CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER**

*(London, United Kingdom)*

Central Hall is a purpose-built events building with an explicit dual identity (worship + conference). Its internal timeline and brochure foreground the venue's role as a world stage — from UN diplomacy to major cultural and media events — making it unusually well documented for a nontheater heritage hall.



**NIPPON BUDOKAN** *(Tokyo, Japan)*

The Budokan is an Olympic legacy indoor venue that migrated into a global popculture symbol while retaining martialarts centrality. It is well suited for evidentiary research because it is documented across multiple institutional layers: the venue owner, Tokyo government, and Olympic sport federations.





**EMANUELE NASTI,**  
HTMS INTERNATIONAL,  
GENERAL MANAGER

The following night, a guest became critically ill. It was a complex situation, and despite all efforts, the guest passed away. But this time, the night porter didn't wake me up. I only found out the next morning. That episode stayed with me, because in that moment I realized something fundamental: people don't just follow procedures — they follow the signals you give them. Leadership is not about being in control of everything. It's about making sure your team knows when it's absolutely right to break the rules.

What I love most about this industry is the opportunity to connect with people from completely different cultures and backgrounds. It opens your mind in a way few other experiences can. Working in tourism forces you to look at the world from multiple perspectives, to understand different habits, values, and ways of thinking. I truly believe that if more people had the chance to work in this industry, we would live in a more understanding world — maybe even a more peaceful one.

This is not a career you choose for the money. It's a vocation. But vocation alone is not enough. It takes commitment, resilience, and talent. The industry can be demanding, unpredictable, and at times exhausting — but that's also what makes it so rewarding. There is also a common misconception that tourism education is a secondary path, somehow less "academic" or reserved for those who are more suited to practical roles. That's simply not true. Tourism is a complex industry that requires strategic thinking, cultural intelligence, commercial awareness, and strong operational skills. If you take it seriously, it can offer an incredibly dynamic and fulfilling career path.

I have been working in the industry for 39 years. I started my career in 1987, working in many hotels up until 2003, gradually growing from a position at reception to becoming a General Manager. Since 2003, I have been part of HTMS.

My professional journey began with a summer internship during my hotel school training. My first job in tourism was as a concierge assistant at Hotel Hassler \*\*\*\*\* in Rome.

One of the most defining moments in my career happened when I was 28, in my very first role as a hotel manager. The pace was relentless — 20-hour workdays, constant pressure, and the feeling that I had to control everything. One night, the night porter woke me up to ask if he could accept guests traveling with dogs. The next morning, I reacted badly. I was tired, stressed, and convinced that certain decisions didn't justify being woken up in the middle of the night.

# LOTTE HOTEL ST. PETERSBURG: WHERE EVENTS MEET ST. PETERSBURG ELEGANCE

Set within a grand 19th-century mansion on St. Isaac's Square, Lotte Hotel St. Petersburg offers a rare combination of historic architecture and contemporary sophistication. Behind its classical façade lies a carefully curated environment where aesthetics, service, and functionality converge — making the hotel a natural setting for both private celebrations and business events.

The 150 rooms reflect this same balance. Marble and natural wood, Italian furnishings and premium German textiles create a refined, tactile sense of comfort. The hotel subtly divides its accommodation into two moods: classical interiors on the lower floors and a more contemporary design above — a practical detail when hosting mixed groups, delegations, or event guests.

The Pushkin Ballroom brings together high ceilings, natural light, and views over the Moika River embankment. Its calm, elegant character extends into a spacious foyer designed for receptions and informal gatherings, while a private entrance ensures a sense of autonomy from the rest of the hotel.

In contrast, the Lounge is defined by scale and atmosphere. A stained-glass dome floods the space with daylight, creating a striking visual focus. The interior remains intentionally flexible, allowing the room to shift from formal dining to more dynamic event formats without losing coherence.

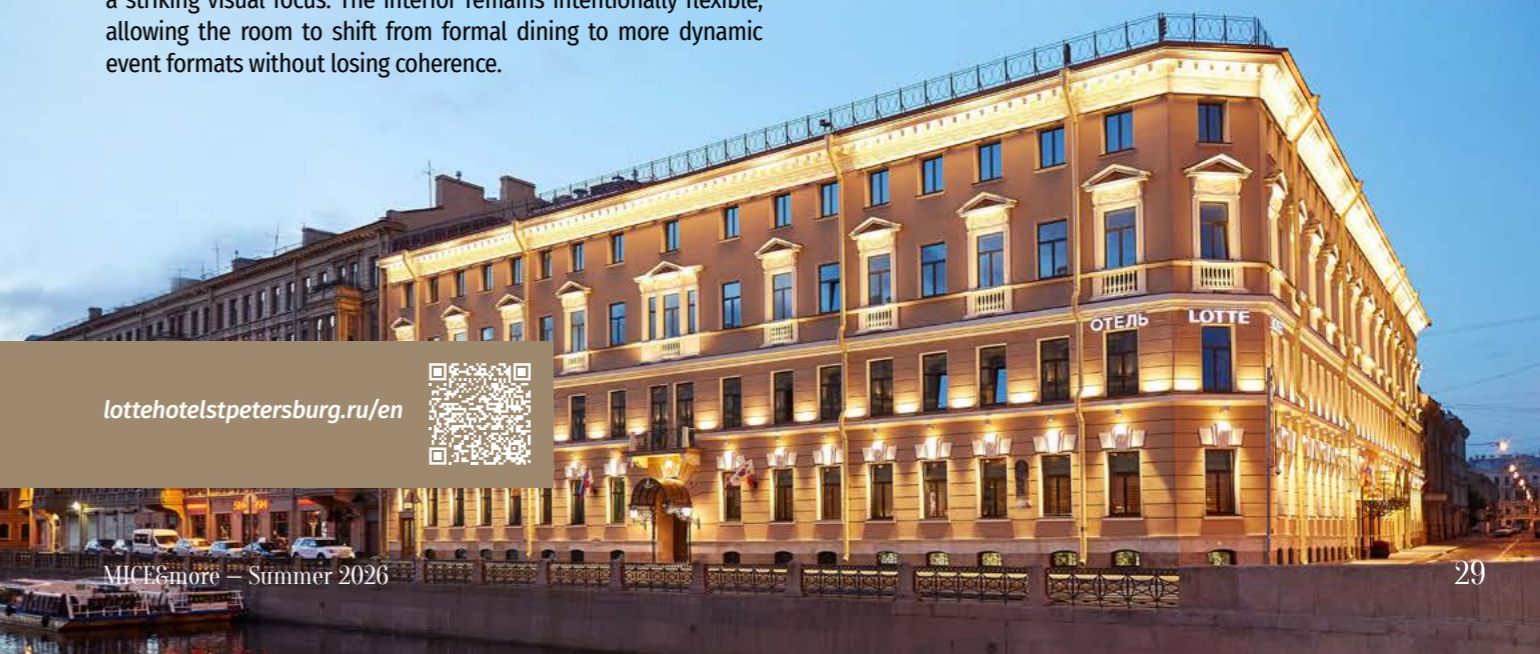
The Charlotte Room offers a restrained, elegant setting that can be reconfigured as needed — from a single salon to two separate meeting rooms. Its versatility makes it equally suited to strategic discussions and private gatherings.

One of the hotel's most memorable settings is L Terrasa, the rooftop terrace overlooking St. Isaac's Cathedral. Elevated above the city, it introduces a sense of openness and perspective — especially during the White Nights, when daylight lingers and the city takes on a softer rhythm. The space moves easily between social and business contexts, from informal meetings to celebratory occasions.

The Presidential Imperial Suite offers a different kind of experience — one defined by privacy and scale. With direct views of the cathedral, it functions as a self-contained setting for private dinners, negotiations, or small, high-level gatherings.

Another distinctive venue is MEGUmi, the hotel's contemporary Japanese restaurant. Its minimalist design and deep, muted palette create an atmosphere of quiet focus, while panoramic views of St. Isaac's Cathedral and Mariinsky Palace anchor the experience firmly in the city.

Lotte Hotel St. Petersburg operates not just as a venue, but as a setting with identity. Events held here are shaped not only by logistics, but by the surrounding architecture, light, and rhythm of the city. It is this combination — historic presence, contemporary comfort, and attention to detail — that gives each gathering its own distinct character.



[lottehotelstpetersburg.ru/en](http://lottehotelstpetersburg.ru/en)



# ST. PETERSBURG: THE ATMOSPHERE OF HISTORY IN EVERY BUSINESS EVENT

Spend a busy day at a forum in one of the best congress and exhibition centers, and an evening in a museum among the world's masterpieces. Meet with colleagues at a conference within the walls of an authentic building that is more than two centuries old. Or even organize a seminar in a real palace. This is only possible in St. Petersburg, where cultural and historical heritage is closely intertwined with modern infrastructure and dynamic life. This makes the city one of the leading MICE destinations in the world.



St. Petersburg has an important advantage: here, business tourism is never limited to the space of a convention center. The city itself becomes part of the event's scenario, infusing it with its unique atmosphere. Increasingly, business event organizers are choosing not only venues specially designed for congresses and forums but also unusual locations.

The historical center of St. Petersburg is one of the most striking architectural complexes. Many historical venues have been successfully adapted for various events. Their range is very wide: palaces, museums, theaters, fortifications, mansions, and estates. The halls that remember the emperors have become a place for discussing current business issues, conducting business negotiations, concluding contracts, and engaging in discussions with leading scientists, politicians, and public figures.

"St. Petersburg's historical venues are an important competitive advantage for the city in the business tourism market, as they offer truly unique experiences. We are seeing a growing interest in hosting international events such as congresses, forums, diplomatic meetings, VIP events, corporate receptions, and gala dinners in historical locations that combine business activities with cultural experiences," said Sergey Azarenkov, General Director of the St. Petersburg Convention Bureau.

The oldest place on the list of historical, cultural, and architectural attractions suitable for hosting business events is the Peter and Paul Fortress, where St. Petersburg was founded in 1703. In particular, the 14th Russian Business Travel & MICE Award ceremony was held here in December 2023.

The magnificent Mariinsky Palace, built in the mid-19th century, hosted the XXVII International Conference "East and West Meet in St. Petersburg" in 2022.

In the same year, the masterpiece of Russian classicism, the Marble Palace, welcomed delegates to the International Venous Forum. The Mariinsky Theatre's Concert Hall served as the venue for the opening ceremony of the World Rhinology Congress.

One of the most famous hotels in Russia, where the most known people have stayed, the Hotel Astoria, hosted the St. Petersburg



Ambassadors' Assembly in 2023. A year later, the Grand Hotel Europe took over the baton. The hotel also hosted the round table Petersburg Breakfast, a project aimed at promoting St. Petersburg's gastronomy.

A series of presentations on the creative aspects of St. Petersburg's tourism potential was held in 2024 as part of the XII International Meeting of High-Level Representatives in charge of Security Issues, which took place in the magnificent interiors of the Catherine Palace in Pushkin.

The Russian Ethnographic Museum has repeatedly served as a venue for important ceremonies in the field of business tourism. In particular, it has hosted the WHERETOEAT International Restaurant Award and the WHERETOTRAVEL All-Russian Hotel Award since 2023.

And, of course, one of the main tourist events in St. Petersburg, the St. Petersburg International Tourism Forum "Travel Hub. Welcome. Winter," traditionally takes place in historical buildings. The headquarters of the Russian Geographical Society, the Four Seasons Hotel, the Grand Hotel Moika 22, and other attractions are used for its events.

These are just a few of the historical venues that are ready to host business events of various scales, showcasing the diversity, depth, and cultural richness of St. Petersburg to its visitors.

"In 2025, our city was visited by 1.4 million business tourists, which is 12% higher than in 2024. At the same time, the total contribution of business tourism to the economy of St. Petersburg increased by almost a third and amounted to more than 111 billion rubles. Currently, one in eight tourists visits our city for business purposes. It is no secret that the average check of such guests is higher than that of other categories of travelers. If tourists from Russia's regions spend 72,000 rubles during a business trip, then guests from far abroad spend 149,000 rubles. These figures are constantly growing. This is largely due to the increased duration of stay, which is also a very optimistic trend. The role of historical locations that attract business travelers is significant in this positive trend. It is clear that this destination has great potential for development," comments Sergey Azarenkov.

## MICE Destination

The growing popularity of non-standard venues is a global trend. At the same time, the share of combined trips is increasing, where the business part of the program is seamlessly integrated with the cultural and educational aspects. Moreover, customers are increasingly focusing on the uniqueness of the regional brand, along with the availability of suitable infrastructure.

In all these aspects, St. Petersburg is unrivaled. If the business event takes place on a historical site, the immersion in the atmosphere begins during the registration process. The city's congress and exhibition infrastructure allows for the best possible organization of events. For example, the events of the St. Petersburg International Tourism Forum "Travel Hub. Welcome. Winter" in 2025 were held at eight unique venues, most of which were located in the "golden triangle," in close proximity to key attractions of the city.

"St. Petersburg's historical sites are a strategic asset for the city. Their role goes beyond infrastructure; they are a marketing tool for the territory and a factor of competitiveness. The use of these unique locations for business events not only contributes to the development of tourism in general, but also strengthens the city's image as a business and cultural center of Russia," concludes Sergey Azarenkov.

The Convention Bureau plays a crucial role in promoting St. Petersburg as a center for business tourism and increasing tourist arrivals. Its activities are aimed at making business events as comfortable as possible, whether it is a corporate meeting or an international forum. There's always ready to help you find the perfect venue and create the optimal atmosphere here, from home comfort to royal luxury.



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# DREAM JOURNEY: A TRAVEL DIARY ABOARD THE ROVOS RAIL ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA

The indefatigable traveller Vladimir Pozhidaev travelled on the Pride of Africa train from Pretoria to Cape Town — diagonally across the entirety of South Africa. Below are his notes — how it all unfolded.

## VLADIMIR POZHIDAEV IS CURRENTLY HERE: ROVOS RAIL, PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA

What images does your imagination conjure at the mention of a train journey through Africa? Exactly — I had the same fantasies. Today, I shall immerse you completely in my adventure (and an adventure it is!) aboard the Pride of Africa, considered one of the world's most luxurious trains, operated by the private railway company Rovos Rail. Their route network stretches across half the continent, from Cape Town to Dar es Salaam — the capital of Tanzania. As for me, at the editorial board's request, I travelled in three days from Pretoria to Cape Town, diagonally across the whole of South Africa. Make yourselves comfortable. We are about to begin!

It is important to note that the Rovos Rail trains recreate the atmosphere of the romantic Edwardian era of the 20th century. Not only are there no televisions, radios, or Wi-Fi — and never will be — but passengers are also strongly requested not to

use phones or laptops in public areas, except within their own compartment-suites, so as to adhere fully to the concept of a retro journey. However, I had an exclusive. I was permitted — with all due deference and careful discretion — to capture what no single person had ever managed to document throughout the entire existence of the Rovos Rail company.

And so, we begin with our arrival at the private railway station, from which only Rovos trains depart. We await boarding in an utterly charming lounge, where attendants already circulate with canapés and beverages, offering visits to the museum, the souvenir shop, and even the workshops where those famous carriages are born.

In truth, a live steam locomotive — with genuine steam, smoke, and a resonant whistle — pulls the Rovos Rail consist only at the start of the journey. After a few hours, it is replaced by a modern electric or diesel locomotive, depending on the section. However, every single carriage in the train is vintage, dating from 1911 to 1956. Of course, they have been impeccably redesigned and restored.

The beautiful landscapes slowly drifting past the window, combined with the gentle rhythm of the wheels, certainly create a unique atmosphere — one found only on trains, even on a hard-sleeper carriage between Saint Petersburg and Moscow, like

those we used to take as students. But when it is a train between Pretoria and Cape Town, the landscapes outside are one hundred per cent South African, and the atmosphere embodies all the spirit and character of aristocratic railway travel from the early 20th century — experienced in the early 21st. I have heard that on the retro train running from London to Venice route, there is no shower in the compartments, so passengers must use a dedicated carriage with shower facilities. To me, that is too high a price to pay for historical authenticity.

In my antique compartment, there is a silent air conditioner with individual controls, as well as a private bathroom with a sink and a hot shower featuring excellent water pressure. Some compartments — those combining a bedroom and living room — even boast a full bathtub. And this is in addition to the brass nameplate bearing my name on the door of what is not merely a compartment, but a suite!

I had never travelled on a train with a shower and toilet in the compartment before. On such a train, one could easily spend weeks instead of just a couple of nights. Moreover, the journey is enhanced by exceptional cuisine and the finest wines of South Africa. They flow 24 hours a day. Everything is included — even the cleaning and pressing of clothes and shoes. Excursions, too.

Dinner in the Rovos Rail dining car. The dress code is formal. It means women in full-length evening gowns and men in jackets and ties. I had been trained from pre-school age to dine in restaurant cars and to handle a knife and fork properly — my parents, both travellers, saw to that. They were just as restless then as I am now. Only they travelled across the Trans-Siberian Railway with three children, and those children would grimace if lunch was served in the compartment. I still remember the scent of that restaurant on wheels — it smelled of heated coal, wood, leather, nickel-silver utensils, black caviar, and vodka. Here, it is entirely different.

Good morning, Africa! The last carriage of the Pride of Africa is an open terrace called the observation car. You ride along, and the whole of Africa recedes behind you. It is a delightful place to have an espresso after breakfast and to have a drink before dinner.

Our Pride of Africa consists of 19 carriages and accommodates approximately 70 passengers in compartments of three classes: Pullman Suite (7 sq. m.), Deluxe Suite, like mine (10 sq. m.), Royal Suite (16 sq. m.), with a living room and a proper bathtub.

In addition to the passenger carriages, there are carriages for the staff and technical services (do remember, they clean and press clothes here!), two dining carriages, a separate carriage housing the kitchen, two lounge carriages, and a bar carriage with an open terrace at the rear of the train.



My carriage contains three compartments. My neighbours are four other people. At the beginning and end of each carriage are nameplates — you cannot miss your own. Each compartment has its own name, and on the door is another plate with the passengers' names, so you will not get lost.

I have already mentioned that the retro trains of the Rovos Rail company conceptually recreate the atmosphere of bygone railway travel and are styled after the 1930s, with corresponding luxury and elegance. The traditions observed throughout the journey are equally fitting. For example, afternoon tea is taken in the lounge car at low tables, seated comfortably on soft furnishings, never forgetting that one's posture at the table — even the tea table — is the primary indicator of class. I do not understand how one can be both comfortable and maintain proper posture. Moreover, I prefer to pour milk first and then tea, rather than the other way around, as would be proper. However, I do not insert my index finger through the handle of the cup — that is considered a sign of practicality bordering on vulgarity — nor do I foolishly extend my little finger while holding the cup, which is a sure sign of false manners. Enjoy!



**VLADIMIR POZHIDAEV IS CURRENTLY HERE: THE BIG HOLE. KIMBERLEY, SOUTH AFRICA**

And from the platform, they announce: you have arrived in the city of Kimberley! The Big Hole – it is a hole even in Africa, and a very, very big one at that. We are going to see the largest diamond quarry ever excavated by human hands without the use of machinery – by hands and picks alone. You will be astonished! Hopefully, you will not fall into the hole!

Allow me to dwell a little longer on the excursions during this journey across South Africa on the Rovos Rail train, for they too are included in the price of the route. Besides, there is much to see beyond the window within this country. Thus, the train arrives at the station, passengers disembark and spontaneously divide into mini-groups of about eight to ten people. They are then transported by minibus to

the site of significance. Throughout the journey, passengers are accompanied by a local guides. To be sure, these guides speak only English. Moreover, the waiters so familiar from breakfast, lunch, and dinner – follow us everywhere, carrying a case of passengers' favourite beverages. Do not forget: here, everything is included!

– Ladies and gentlemen, before you lies the Kimberlite Pipe!

A name I had known since childhood from the game "What? Where? When?" – the remnant of very ancient volcanism, full of diamonds! What an exciting name for a child's ear. That very evening, I found this "pipe" somewhere within the apartheid borders of South Africa on a political world map from 1985, at a scale of one to one hundred thousand million.

Even though the Big Hole is no longer an active diamond mine, it remains the

largest quarry ever excavated by human hands without machinery. The bottom of this half-kilometer-wide, 240-meter-deep hole in the earth is now filled with 40 metres of beautifully coloured water. From 1866 to 1914, some 50,000 prospectors excavated this quarry using picks and shovels, extracting 2,722 kilograms of diamonds – that is 14.5 million carats. The 22.5 million tons of soil removed from the site lie right here as well! But what inspires even greater awe is the layer of dust that settled here over nearly fifty years of hellish labour – a layer as high as a multi-storey building. You can see it as the upper, orange-coloured stratum.

One would not travel to this wilderness specifically for the "pipe." I would not. Nor would I recommend it to my clients. True, there is an airport, hotels of all categories, and everything is beautifully stylized. Precisely – stylized. But active diamond mining operations are unlikely to admit tourists. Half an hour is quite sufficient to observe past grandeur if you happen to be passing by on a train. How I long to return to my Rovos Rail!

In case you did not know, the De Beers brothers – who lent their name to the future diamond market monopolist, De Beers – had nothing whatsoever to do with its founding. The brothers were herders on pastures where, in the second half of the 19th century, a diamond fever – indeed, an agony – ignited. The company was actually created by the cunning Cecil Rhodes, who, as is often the case, was the son of an English parish priest. He arrived in South Africa in 1870 for medical treatment. Having achieved no significant success in diamond hunting himself, Rhodes founded a service company for other prospectors, selling everything from tools and food to pumping water out of mines – for which purpose he acquired the region's only steam pump. He was paid in diamonds, shares, and profit shares. He named the company after those brothers.



I leave Kimberley without regret and return to my Rovos Rail, where, upon entering the railway station, returning passengers are handed cool, damp towels on the platform and offered a glass of icy sparkling wine. And then lunch awaits!

I have already begun to wonder: how will I ever live without this train?

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A Brief History. The Orient Express was truly the first in this regard. It was designed by a Belgian named Georges with the amusing surname Nagelmackers, who had borrowed the idea from Pullman trains during his travels in America. King Leopold II of Belgium and Georges's father, a banker, provided financial support for the project, and the Orient-Express company was founded accordingly.

The train departed on its first journey from Paris to Constantinople in 1889, covering 3,000 kilometers in 67 hours. That is roughly equivalent to travelling from Moscow to Novosibirsk today in less than two days, but in significantly more modest surroundings.

Thus, the great-great-great-grandfather of the Pride of Africa – the Orient Express – consisted of five carriages: two passenger carriages, a carriage for staff, a baggage car, and a dining car. The

compartments were decorated in Art Deco style. The lounges were upholstered in rare woods and plush, adorned with velvet curtains and Lalique crystal chandeliers, and equipped with both cold and hot running water. Paintings by renowned artists such as Delacroix and Fromentin were displayed everywhere. Unsurprisingly, the most popular place on the train was the dining car, styled after French Rococo from the time of Louis XV. There, impeccably dressed passengers – far from their usual travel attire – were treated for hours on end to exquisite wines and delicacies: oysters, turbot with green sauce, chicken à la chasseur, fillet of beef with château potatoes, chaud-froid of game, and a buffet of desserts. Onboard, a vibrant social life flourished – intrigues were woven in the compartments, million-dollar deals were struck in the dining car, and even matters of state importance were decided. Nor did detective stories escape the travelling monarchs, aristocrats, wealthy magnates, and adventurers – stories later retold in her own inimitable manner by Agatha Christie.

I should note that my aim here is not to describe the undeniable beauties of South Africa as seen from the train window. My goal is to present the Rovos Rail product from the inside and in detail. Nevertheless, one can observe certain animals while lying on the bed in one's compartment or sitting on the open terrace at the rear of the train, embraced by one glass, then a second, then a third – antelopes, ostriches, flamingos, and even lovely gazelles drift past.



It is important to remember that this is a retro train journey following all the conventions of the colonial era, so do not expect The Ritzes or Carltons on wheels. Antiques predominate, both in the furnishings and in the atmosphere. True, some suites have a bathtub, but in most compartments — if these rooms can be called that — there is a shower. This shower is not like the one at home. It is rather cramped, but the water pressure, both hot and cold, is flawless. When was the last time you travelled on a train with your own private toilet and shower?

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Ladies and gentlemen, what shall we indulge in and what shall we drink? Do not overdo it — this is merely afternoon "tea", dinner by candlelight lies ahead.

The Pride of Africa has two dining carriages with a total of 70 seats — exactly the number of passengers the train accommodates.

One dining carriage is in Art Deco style, the other — in Art Nouveau. Most of the service staff are Afrikaners — descendants of European settlers — and they are impeccable in their work. Even if we all arrive for breakfast at the same time, there will be no crowding. Breakfast is served from 7:00 to 10:00, by the way. There is no need to come simultaneously.

Lunch and dinner, however, are announced by a summons — but not by the sound of a gong. The approach of each meal is heralded by a lovely melody played on a metallophone by a specially trained person who passes from carriage to carriage throughout the entire train, so that no one can claim not to have heard. Tardiness is strongly discouraged, for this dinner is comparable to a performance. It begins at 7:00 PM.

Returning to my compartment after dinner by candlelight, I discovered a small bottle of sparkling wine from the minibar, with two glasses provocatively reclining on my bed. The little rascals did not know that I have not consumed alcohol for over six months. But you — you go ahead and drink!

**VLADIMIR POZHIDAEV IS CURRENTLY HERE: MATJIESFONTEIN TRANSPORT MUSEUM. MATJIESFONTEIN, SOUTH AFRICA**

I enjoyed this excursion very much. The train stopped, everyone was disembarked in the middle of South Africa, a direction was indicated, and we were shouted: "Go!" So, we went — and the train departed, saying they would be waiting for us somewhere far, far away, or perhaps not. Passengers over seventy need a shake-up too.

Abandoned to our fate in the African bush, I followed the tracks and reached the town of Matjiesfontein in an hour — a town forever frozen in its glorious past of 1884. At first glance, the town appears dead, but somewhere they must surely pour me a glass of sherry.

Trains were not manufactured in South Africa. They were built in Scotland. They were loaded, disassembled, onto ships and sent across seas and oceans to the other end of the world — essentially, to the middle of nowhere, though today we understand it more or less. In those days, the south of Africa was feverish not only over gold and diamonds. The British were pressing the Dutch and Germans, who retreated inland and pressed the Africans. In short, life was boiling over; people travelled by train often and frequently, and always for a purpose. Now, everything is the opposite.

**VLADIMIR POZHIDAEV IS CURRENTLY HERE: ROVOS RAIL. CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

Right now, to everyone who has read to the end, I make a wish (and everything good that I wish for comes true!): that soon you will set off on your own train journey!

All the waiters serving me at the moment are trained sommeliers by education. They are here to gain experience and toughen themselves. Unlike other passengers, I spoke with them at length about themselves — in the lounge, in the bar, while accompanying us on excursions. I was interested. I learned that one wants to become a winemaker, another dreams of owning his own restaurant, and a third wishes to continue the scientific study of wine. Imagine that! They are only twenty years old! I made a wish for them, too. Their wishes will also come true.

**P.S.**

I thought for a long time whether to tell this or not. I have decided to. About the most difficult thing that can happen on a train journey: when you travel through South Africa and sometimes see things you feel you should not see.

At first, I thought there was something terrible about this deliberate social inequality between black and white. Then I remembered in what black-and-white country we ourselves live. And I found my zen again.

The dining car is all aglow with the light of curved lamps, gleaming with cutlery, porcelain, and glass, the subtle scent of leather armchairs mingling with the fragrance of evening perfume. The muted hum of voices drowns in the relaxing rhythm of the wheels. For an aperitif, sparkling rosé flows, for the main course, ostrich is served. The train slows with the pleasant creak of romantic travel at a dimly lit wayside station. At that same moment, on the parallel track, another train — another life, other lights. The trains draw level, and my window is directly opposite another. Involuntarily, my gaze meets that of a dark-skinned woman. She is alone, on a wooden bench in a late-night suburban train, covered in the vague graffiti so typical of such places. I looked away involuntarily, but then forced myself to look back. She was not looking at the set table, at the food and drink. She was looking into my eyes. Not aggressively, not sadly. She was tired — the way we all are every evening, returning home from work. This woman was going home. Surely, children, a husband, her own happy life awaited her there.

Pretoria — Kimberley — Matjiesfontein — Cape Town

**WHERE ARE THE RETRO TRAINS GOING TODAY?**

**EUROPE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

- » Venice Simplon-Orient-Express — London — Venice / Paris / Istanbul
- » Belmond British Pullman — day trips from London
- » Royal Scotsman — round trips in Scotland
- » Jacobite Steam Train — Fort William — Mullagh (the famous Hogwarts Express)

**THE ALPS AND CENTRAL EUROPE**

- » Glacier Express — Zermatt — St. Moritz
- » Bernina Express — Chur — Tirano (Switzerland — Italy)
- » GoldenPass Belle Epoque — Montreux — Lucerne
- » Majestic Imperator — Vienna — Salzburg — Budapest

**INDIA**

- » Palace on Wheels — Delhi — Rajasthan (circular)
- » Maharajas Express — Delhi — Agra — Varanasi — Mumbai
- » Deccan Odyssey — Mumbai — Goa — Deccan
- » Golden Chariot — Bangalore — Hampi — Kerala

**JAPAN**

- » Seven Stars in Kyushu — Kyushu Island
- » Twilight Express Mizukaze — West of Japan (Kyoto — Simonoseki)
- » Train Suite Shiki-shima — Tohoku — Hokkaido

**USA**

- » Napa Valley Wine Train — wine tours
- » Grand Canyon Railway — Williams — Grand Canyon
- » Strasburg Rail Road — short retro trips
- » Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad — mountain routes

**CANADA**

- » Rocky Mountaineer — Vancouver — Banff
- » Royal Canadian Pacific — Alberta (rare tours)

**SOUTH AFRICA**

- » Rovos Rail — Pretoria — Cape Town / safari routes
- » Blue Train — Pretoria — Cape Town

**RUSSIA**

- » Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express — Moscow — Vladivostok
- » Ruskeala Express — Sortavala — Ruskeala
- » Russian Railways retro trains — seasonal steam train routes ("Golden Ring" around Moscow, Karelia, Siberia)

# WHY YOU SHOULD TRUST THE PREMIUM INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMPANY Z.BROTHERS

The story of how the Z.Brothers brand was created and evolved, its geographic footprint.



the business celebrates its origin: Z.Brothers – Zhukov Brothers. That's why, from the early beginning, all company members have been devoted to perfecting every customer experience details: from the dispatcher's friendly and accommodating tone on the phone, to airport pickups when the driver's attentiveness to the car's interior leaves the impression that it's been brought fresh from the dealership just for the client. Nothing should distract the passenger during their trip.

Evgeny and Anton Zhukov worked their way from being a personal driver in business- and premium-class cars and head of the operations department to the idea of creating and launching their own business where, instead of just imitating what's already on the market, they could set up premium-level standards that are normally only found at a 5-star hotel or Michelin-starred restaurant. From scratch, personal experience helped them find solutions to the most common mistakes to ensure the provision of high-level service.

**FROM 2013 TO 2015**, the brothers traveled all over Europe and visited the largest cities in the United States (the birthplace of chauffeur and limousine services), made "secret purchases," got acquainted with well-established chauffeur companies, exchanged experiences and learned from the best.

**BY 2015–2018**, ministers and top officials from Saudi Arabia, Germany and the United States, global star Justin Bieber, the Chanel and Bulgari brands were already trusting Z.Brothers with the provision of transportation services at international forums and exhibitions (St. Petersburg Economic Forum, INNOPROM, the FIFA World Cup, Formula 1) and official visits to Russia. More than 400 business- and premium-class cars (Mercedes Benz E-class, S-class, V-class, Sprinter) at a single event; the sheer scale allowed the company to gain a reputation for impeccable chauffeur service in Russia.

**IN 2019**, Z.Brothers entered the international market, effectively providing transport logistics to Russian business delegations abroad. Shareholders and presidents of major oil, gas, agro-industrial companies and banks have entrusted the company with their security during business trips to Europe, America and Asia (the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the United

States, Brazil, Singapore and Japan). The company provided more than 2,500 trips per year, over 50% of which were rendered outside Russia.

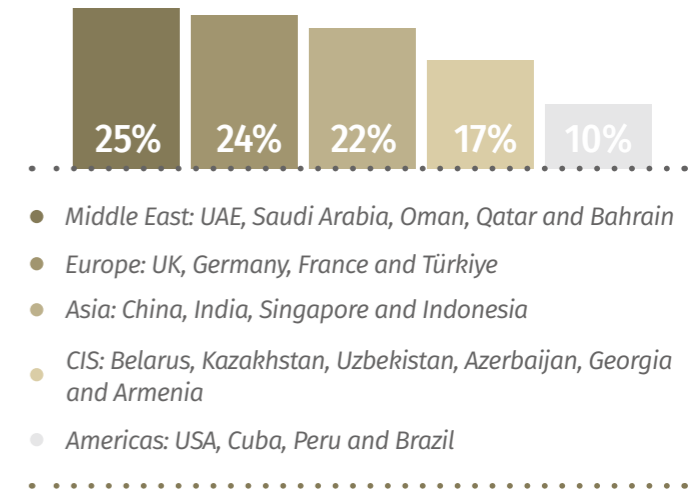
**IN 2020–2021**, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Z.Brothers managed not only to maintain its team, but also to preserve its financial performance. During this period, the company actively developed its service in CIS countries, as well as in neighboring states: the Republic of Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. The effective development of these service areas was facilitated by a complex case during the pandemic, when the borders between the countries were closed, and the only operating airport was in Belarus. Under these conditions, the Z.Brothers team provided transportation for more than 3,000 passengers in business class minivans and minibuses: in each of the countries, the company organized escorts to the border as well as situational monitoring with passengers' independent passage of customs procedures, meeting passengers at the border of neighboring states and transportation to their destination. Such well-coordinated work made it possible not only to find transport partners ready to work according to Z.Brothers' standards, but also to stress test the company's service in the most unusual and force majeure circumstances.

The experience of 2013–2021 allowed the company to create its own chauffeur service school. The school's primary objective is to raise driver-service level to first-class.

**IN 2022-23**, against the backdrop of political upheaval and the relocation of major international events, the company expanded its service geography and entered the transport-services market in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Prior to launching the servicing of government delegations at the SCO, BRICS, INNOPROM Astana (Kazakhstan), INNOPROM Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Climate Summit in Baku (Azerbaijan), the Z.Brothers team personally checked all transport partners ("secret purchase," standards training and personal fleet inspection). It's precisely this approach that makes it possible to head off complaints, since passenger expectations often differ from the real picture predicated on regional specifics. The task of the Z.Brothers Operations Department is to study the peculiarities of the given country and mentality, to advise and coordinate with guests as to what may fall beyond normal standards.

**FROM 2024 TO 2026**, the company emphasized active development in the Middle East and Asia. The team serviced the BRICS forums, various head-of-state meetings. Only a personal service check before concluding a contract on the spot, the selection of the best transport partners and the study of regional specificities have allowed Z.Brothers to maintain a complaint rate of less than 2% for more than 7 years running (no more than 2 potential errors per 100 trips).

**BY YEAR-END 2025**, Z.Brothers had provided services in 78 countries and 389 cities around the world:



**TODAY**, Z.Brothers isn't just a world-class brand but an expert in the premium transportation market, with the company providing more than 6,000 trips per year worldwide. From business tourists to government delegations not only from Russia, but also European citizens, the USA, China, India, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as African countries.

Over its years on the meetings and events market, Z.Brothers has established itself as a responsible partner that guarantees high standards of service, as is confirmed by the company's many awards and honorary certificates:

- » Finalist's certificate in the "Buying Business Travel Awards Russia & CIS" 2018, 2019, 2021 in the nominating category "Best Transport Company (Car Services with Driver);"
- » Winner's certificate in the "Buying Business Travel Awards Russia & CIS 2019" in the nominating category "Best Transfer Company. Business and Premium Class Category,"
- » Leader's certificate in the ranking of the "Most Influential People in MICE" in the nominating category "Transport Operator Representative" in 2021–2022.
- » Award at the XXI All-Russian MICE AWARD 2025 in the rating "Best Transport Operator" in the nominating category "Transport Services for Business Events."

**z.brothers**



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# HONG KONG 2026–2027: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR MICE

Hong Kong is known as the “World’s Meeting Place” and is an event planner’s dream. “Smart city for smart travel.” High-class hotels, high-tech halls for a business program, comfortable transportation, restaurants with delicious and diverse food, interesting cultural, educational and entertainment events, profitable shopping. Agree, it’s always nice to get all the components of your ideal event in one place, be sure of their quality and not overpay at the same time. If you agree, let’s go to Hong Kong to take your MICE events to new heights!

## HONG KONG: A STRATEGIC LOCATION IN THE VERY HEART OF ASIA

One of the most dynamic cities in the world provides convenient access to the region’s fast-growing markets:

- » About 140 airlines operate their flights to the city’s airport, connecting Hong Kong with 200 destinations.
- » You can easily reach Chinese Mainland by plane, car or train, this is the departure point for traveling on the Guangzhou – Shenzhen – Hong Kong high-speed railway.
- » Hong Kong offers the huge potential of the Greater Bay Area with its market of over 87 million people and the GDP of about USD 2 trillion.
- » Hong Kong provides visa-free entry for citizens from about 170 countries, as well as visa-free entry for foreign tourists to Guangdong Province for up to 144 hours.

Hong Kong is the gateway to Chinese Mainland and the Greater Bay Area (GBA). One of the leading Asian cities with the most stable trade policy. A comfortable city with a smart digital infrastructure and well-planned environmental initiatives. All this opens up a whole world of profitable opportunities for holding MICE events and developing business.

## NEW! HONG KONG: VENUES FOR EVENTS THAT WILL SURPRISE

Most of the magnificent hotels in Hong Kong can offer groups various modern conference halls for any event format, but it is much more interesting to choose a location in some unusual place, for example, in a museum. Here are just a few unusual places for events to be organized.

### THE M+ MUSEUM: ASIA'S FIRST GLOBAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY FINE ART

It occupies an area of about 65,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the iconic West Kowloon Cultural District and offers its visitors a magnificent panoramic view of Victoria Harbor. Events of any scale can be held here, from business meetings and conferences to gala dinners in the ballroom or receptions on Horizon Terrace overlooking the fascinating skyline of Hong Kong.

### THE HONG KONG PALACE MUSEUM: A HONG KONG LANDMARK

It is dedicated to studying and comprehending Chinese art and culture, as well as developing dialog between world civilizations. The museum offers a variety of event facilities, including a 400-seat auditorium, event rooms and an atrium with viewing platforms. Additionally, workshops can be held here to discover the richness of Chinese art and culture and see the fascinating combination of East and West cultures from a completely new perspective.

### HENDERSON CLOUD 39: THE MOST UNIQUE BALLROOM IN THE WORLD

It is located on the 39th floor in a tower designed by the famous architect Zaha Hadid and literally defies gravity. The unique glass hall embodies the branded energy of Hong Kong: it offers 270° panoramic views of the harbor. Here you can hold negotiations in the interiors of the designer Paolo Ferrari or make ceremonial presentations on the terrace. This space reconsiders Hong Kong’s business heritage, where architecture elevates collaboration as high as the skyline itself.

## KAI TAK SPORTS PARK: VARIOUS WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES

With an area of around 28 hectares, Kai Tak Sports Park anchors the redevelopment of the former airport site and offers a world-class destination for all interests. In particular, the Main Stadium holds 50,000 spectators and has a retractable roof and flexible pitch surface. Other large-scale spaces include an Indoor Sports Centre with 10,000 seats and a public sports ground with 5,000 seats.

To reinforce Hong Kong as a premier MICE destination and ensure a rewarding journey for MICE visitors, “Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong” (MEHK), a division of the Hong Kong Tourism Board is actively offering comprehensive and tailored support for MICE groups.

## NEW! THE FY2026/2027 HONG KONG REWARDS! PROGRAM FOR MICE PLANNERS

With the launch of FY2026/2027 Hong Kong Rewards! Program, MEHK has joined forces with industry partners to develop privileges and deals in town that take business events to new heights.

The new program features an expanded portfolio of partners, including Hong Kong Airlines, HK Express, and Dukling. In addition, a number of existing offers have been refreshed and enhanced, notably those from M+, the Hong Kong Palace Museum, Hong Kong Tramways and the Hong Kong Jockey Club. Full details of the updated program are available on website Hong Kong Rewards.

## NEW! EXCLUSIVE HOSPITALITY OFFER FOR PROSPECTIVE MEETINGS & INCENTIVE (M&I) GROUPS FROM RUSSIA

A special invitation is extended to M&I groups from Russia planning corporate meetings or incentive programs. From June 2026 onwards, groups of 10 delegates or more staying in Hong Kong for a minimum of two nights can look forward to enjoying one of the exclusive hospitality offers outlined below, subject to availability and applicable terms and conditions. Please contact [salesteam@travelmedia.company](mailto:salesteam@travelmedia.company) for details.



### 1. THE MACALLAN SENSORIAL JOURNEY

A premium whisky experience blending heritage, design and craftsmanship.

The Macallan House in Hong Kong is the world's largest retail flagship and experiential space, bringing to life the nature and culture of whisky-making mastery. The Macallan Sensorial Journey is a 45-minute poly-sensory tour that transports you to their distillery in Speyside, allowing you to learn more about the heritage and craftsmanship of whisky-making (included a set of tasting sample: Sherry Wine, Sherry Oak 12 years old and Double Cask 18 years old).

### 2. TWO MOONS DISTILLERY TOUR & TASTING

A distinctly local gin experience inspired by Hong Kong's flavours and wellness culture.

Founded in 2019, Two Moons is a Hong Kong — born craft gin brand that produces its spirits locally at its own licensed distillery. Rooted in a strong sense of place, the brand draws inspiration from Hong Kong's culinary heritage and wellness traditions, incorporating distinctive local ingredients such as Hong Kong-grown calamansi. This 60-minute guided experience offers you a behind-the-scenes look at one of the city's home-grown distilleries, combining brand storytelling with an immersive exploration of the craft behind gin making. The journey culminates in a curated tasting session, allowing you to savour multiple expressions that reflect Two Moons' signature style and local character.

### 3. THE PEAK MORNING DOCENT TOUR

An iconic Hong Kong experience featuring heritage, architecture and panoramic city views.

Available on weekday mornings, this 1.5-hour experience offers you a refined introduction to one of Hong Kong's most celebrated landmarks. The journey begins with a ride on the historic Peak Tram — Asia's first funicular railway — providing a uniquely dramatic ascent to Victoria Peak with sweeping views of the city below and its famed visual illusion. At the Sky Terrace 428, Hong Kong's highest viewing platform, you may enjoy unobstructed 360-degree vistas across the skyline and Victoria Harbour unfold. The experience is further enhanced by a docent-led service, offering engaging insights into the Peak's heritage, urban evolution and cultural significance.

### 4. 1-HOUR CHARTERED BIG BUS TOUR

A private sightseeing experience offering a relaxed and panoramic perspective of Hong Kong's cityscape.

Ideal for groups seeking a flexible and exclusive city overview, this one-hour private Big Bus charter delivers a comfortable sightseeing experience aboard an open-top bus. Accommodating up to 55 guests on the upper deck, the tour allows you to enjoy unobstructed views of Hong Kong's iconic streets, skyline and landmarks while travelling together in a single vehicle.

### 5. 2-HOUR CHARTERED PARTY TRAM

A nostalgic yet lively way to experience Hong Kong from the city's most iconic mode of transport.

This 2-hour private charter invites your group to travel aboard one of Hong Kong Tramways' distinctive trams. Operating since 1904 and affectionately known as the "Ding Ding," Hong Kong Tramways is the world's largest double-deck tram fleet still in service, offering a uniquely atmospheric journey through Hong Kong Island's neighbourhoods. Designed for small group gatherings, the experience combines heritage, urban scenery and a relaxed social setting.

### 6. ABERDEEN 1773 FISHING HERITAGE TOUR

A deeply immersive journey into Hong Kong's seafaring traditions and floating village culture.

Set in one of Hong Kong's most historic fishing districts, this 1.5-hour cultural experience offers a rare glimpse into the city's maritime heritage at Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter. Beginning with a leisurely sightseeing boat ride, guests pass traditional fishing vessels and houseboats that have shaped the area's character for generations. The journey continues with insights into fishermen's daily life, complemented by the enjoyment of classic boat noodles served in a tranquil harbour setting.

### 7. N.I.P DISTILLERY TOUR & TASTING

A bold, contemporary gin experience inspired by the flavours and rhythms of everyday Hong Kong.

Founded in 2019, N.I.P is one of Hong Kong's first locally owned and operated gin distilleries, established by local entrepreneurs and distilled entirely in the city. Drawing inspiration from Hong Kong's daily life and cultural traditions, N.I.P's creations feature distinctive local influences — from Chinese tea culture and dried tangerine peel to nostalgic references such as Yuen Yeung, the iconic coffee-tea blend found in traditional cha chaan tengs. This 60-minute guided experience takes you behind the scenes of the distillery, offering a deeper appreciation of the brand's origins, creative philosophy and the craftsmanship behind each bottle, before concluding with a relaxed tasting session.

### 8. PERFUME TREE GIN TASTING WORKSHOP

A sensorial exploration of Hong Kong's memories, heritage and cultural identity through gin.

This immersive tasting workshop introduces you to Perfume Tree Gin, a Hong Kong-founded craft brand launched in 2018 with the



vision of capturing the "story of Hong Kong in a bottle." Drawing on the city's collective memories and traditional flavours, the gins showcase signature botanicals deeply rooted in local culture, including white champaca — the iconic "perfume tree" flower once common along old Hong Kong streets — alongside aged tangerine peel and Longjing green tea sourced through long-established local tea houses. Guided by expert hosts, the experience blends storytelling, education and hands-on tasting, culminating in a demonstration of how to craft and appreciate a well-balanced Gin & Tonic.

## HONG KONG SPECIFICALLY FOR EVENT PLANNERS

MEHK has developed exclusive offers for event planners. These are new heights for your events! Take advantage of unique offers throughout your trip, from arrival at the airport to departure from Hong Kong.



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## EXPERT OPINIONS

### NATALIA AMOSOVA, DEMLINK ATLAS, MANAGER OF INTERNATIONAL MICE DEPARTMEN

Hong Kong as a MICE destination is a great option for the autumn, winter and spring seasons. Advantages for the Russian market, as I see them: 1. Aeroflot has year-round direct flights. 2. The neighborhood of Macau. 3. Top-class hotels with beautiful views. 4. There are many interesting and even unexpected venues for organizing big events (parks, museums, pavilions). 5. The authenticity of China, but closer to the European perception (understandable food that preserves the national flavor, extensive knowledge of English, lack of crowding and loud crowds). 6. A variety of attractions, both historical, natural, and modern technologies. I actively offer this destination to our clients.

### SVETLANA POPIKHINA, KMP GROUP, PROJECT TEAM LEADER, MICE DEPARTMENT

Hong Kong revealed itself as a true gastronomic mecca, where you can explore virtually any cuisine imaginable. From refined fine dining with breathtaking views at Skye Roofbar to authentic

traditional flavors at Kejia Ting, the city offers an exceptional culinary spectrum. If you find yourself missing European classics, Cantina is an outstanding choice — not just a restaurant, but a former Central Police Station, now transformed into a cultural hub and UNESCO heritage site.

Craving Peking duck? Peking Garden is a must. And if you're ready to go beyond tasting and try your hand at cooking, head to a culinary studio where you can learn to prepare milk tea and egg tarts, complete with step-by-step guidance and practical recipes.

The perfect finale was sampling authentic street food during a horse racing event — an experience that truly captured the spirit of the city. Taste Hong Kong in every sense.

### DMITRII TOPAL, UPJET, CEO

For me, Hong Kong is an outstanding incentive destination, where it's possible to design a rich and diverse program for any taste and budget. It can be as simple as a pleasant evening walk through the city or as unique as a panoramic tour paired with a fine dining experience aboard a private double-decker tram.

The range of activities is extensive, but I would especially recommend excursions to authentic local villages — they add depth and a genuine cultural dimension to any program.

### ALENA EYVEL, VIP SERVICE, MICE OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, CORPORATE BUSINESS

Our FAM trip to Hong Kong was extremely valuable as it highlighted a diverse range of venues highly relevant for MICE events. Site inspections at The Park Lane Hong Kong and Sheraton Hong Kong demonstrated excellent conference infrastructure and high service standards, making them ideal for meetings and incentive groups. The visit to Tai Kwun showcased a unique heritage venue perfectly suited for exclusive events, networking receptions, and cultural programs. In addition, experiences such as the Peak Tram, the Star Ferry cruise, and Happy Valley Racecourse illustrated how Hong Kong offers memorable and dynamic incentive activities with iconic city backdrops. The inspection of Spectrum of the Seas further emphasized strong potential for cruise-based events and large-scale corporate programs. Overall, the trip provided a clear understanding of how Hong Kong successfully combines world-class facilities, cultural heritage, and unique experiences, making it a highly competitive and attractive MICE destination.

## HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD PRESENTS EVENT CALENDAR JUNE — DECEMBER 2026

Hong Kong Pop Culture Festival 2026  
01 Apr 2026 – 30 Jun 2026

MTR Corporation Presents: "The Formless Way: Memorialising 85 years Since Bruce Lee's Birth"  
25 Nov 2025 – 30 Jun 2026

Chinese Culture Festival 2026  
01 Jun 2026 – 30 Sep 2026

Summer Series: Sha Tin Racecourse  
07 Jun 2026 – 12 Jul 2026

2026 Sun Life Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races  
27 Jun 2026 – 28 Jun 2026

Jesus Christ Superstar  
08 Jul 2026 – 01 Aug 2026

Season Finale: Sha Tin Racecourse  
12 Jul 2026 – 15 Jul 2026

Ancient Egypt Unveiled: Treasures from Egyptian Museums  
20 Nov 2025 – 31 Aug 2026

CATS — The Musical  
06 Aug 2026 – 06 Sep 2026

CAVALLUNA Gate to the Otherworld (Passion for Horses)  
08 Sep 2026 – 13 Sep 2026

2026 Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival  
01 Oct 2026 – 31 Oct 2026

2026 Sun Hung Kai Properties Hong Kong Cyclothon  
01 Oct 2026 – 31 Oct 2026

Myths, Monsters, and Manga: The Art of Fantasy in Asia  
17 Oct 2026 – 04 Apr 2027

Windows into Heaven: Religious Art Treasures from the State Tretyakov Gallery (working title)  
21 Oct 2026 – 26 Mar 2027



Full version  
of the Events Calendar in Hong Kong

salesteam@travelmedia.company

# THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY IN MICE: HOW TO MONETIZE CLIENT EMOTIONS?

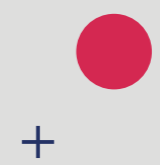
The experience economy is a trend focused on selling emotions and delivering unique experiences. In a highly competitive environment, customers of the MICE industry want more than just a high-quality event; they want meaningful experiences and personal involvement. Combining this concept with a sound financial strategy enables companies to go beyond material benefits. By creating emotionally meaningful events, companies foster deep customer loyalty and open new avenues for growth and increased profitability.

At the end of December, a panel discussion was held at the Meet Global MICE Congress 2025, where leading global experts discussed this topic in more detail and shared their perspectives. Participants included: Anam Ahmad, Founder and Chief Creative Officer, The Hanging House (UAE), Viktoria Grigoreva, Deputy Director Congress & Exhibition Department VDNH (Russia), Managing Partner, Ahmet Shahn, Blue MICE DMC (Türkiye), Olga Stepanenko, MICE Director, IBC Corporate Travel (Russia), and Fedor Elyutin, Founder and CEO, Impresario Theatrical Production Company (Russia). Moderator – Lina Moskvina, Editor-in-chief of MICE&more GLOBAL.

TODAY, WE WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU KEY INSIGHTS AND EXPERT QUOTES:

**ANAM AHMAD, FOUNDER AND CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, THE HANGING HOUSE (UAE)**

"At The Hanging House, we don't treat experiences as add-ons to communication – they are the product. We design environments, journeys, and moments that people actively participate in, where meaning, emotion, and memory are intentionally engineered. Our work focuses on how an experience makes someone feel, what it unlocks for them, and how it stays with them beyond the event itself.



The experience economy helps brands cut through saturation, build deeper emotional connection, and create relevance in a world where attention is scarce. It shifts the conversation from visibility to value – from impressions to impact. This approach gives us a competitive edge because we design for long-term resonance, not short-term spectacle.

A strong example is the global launch of the All-New Nissan Patrol NISMO. Instead of a traditional launch event,

we designed an immersive, story-driven experience that placed the audience inside the brand's performance philosophy and emotional world. With rules and brand lore, the experience extended far beyond a single night. It built sustained brand momentum, activated a global community of enthusiasts, and generated content that continued to live across markets. It reframed the launch from a moment of announcement into a platform for long-term engagement."

**OLGA STEPANENKO, MICE DIRECTOR, IBC CORPORATE TRAVEL (RUSSIA)**

"Today, the term "experience economy" refers to a clear competitive advantage. Events that focus on emotions and

experiences are difficult, if not impossible, to replicate. This is what makes it unique. When it comes to the term itself, it's not just a fancy phrase for a short-lived trend. The experience economy is a reality that we are already living in, and it will be with us for a long time.

Data and content are no longer at the top of the MICE industry. Emotions and experiences are the main focus of event planning, whether it's for entertainment events or special business events. Some may argue that this is a paradigm shift in MICE. However, we believe that this has always been the case. Emotional engagement is the most important factor in our clients' choices, whether it's selecting a concept, venue, show program, or even inviting specific guests to an event.



The main goal is to achieve an economic effect. In the process of achieving this goal, various tasks can be set (and successfully completed): to be remembered, to stand out, to break patterns, to create an image, to emphasize status, and to create a sense of novelty, surprise, and engagement.

By the end of 2025, many media outlets were mocking the mass return of corporate events such as "kapustnik" (an amateur humorous event organized by the participants themselves) parties. It was noted that this format was once again popular due to budget cuts and a reluctance to spend money on hiring entertainers, hosts, organizers, etc. However, beneath the humorous name lies a serious mechanism for managing the emotions of event participants. Increasing engagement, becoming co-creators, and sharing the organizer's responsibility are all part of the process that leads to brand loyalty, which in turn contributes to economic success."

**AHMET SHAHIN, BLUE MICE DMC (TÜRKIYE)**

"In a service-based business, you focus on efficiency. In an experience-based business, you focus on engagement and duration. To implement this, businesses shift their focus from what the customer receives to how the customer feels.

- » Theatrical Staging: Treating the event space as a stage and staff as "cast members." Every touchpoint — from the invitation to the post-event follow-up — is part of a scripted narrative.
- » Personalization through Data: Using attendee preferences to create "micro-moments." For example, instead of a buffet, providing a personalized tasting menu based on a guest's previous travel history or culinary interests.
- » Active Participation: Moving from passive listening to active "co-

creation." This involves workshops, gamification, and interactive technology where the attendee influences the outcome of the event.

The Experience Economy is a powerful tool for solving modern market saturation issues. Challenges it helps solve:

- » Commoditization: When every agency offers similar hotels and transport, price becomes the only differentiator. Experiences prevent this "race to the bottom."
- » Digital Fatigue: In a world of Zoom calls, people crave sensory stimulation. Physical experiences solve the lack of emotional connection in digital business.
- » Brand Loyalty: Customers may forget a good service, but they never forget how an event made them feel. This builds long-term advocacy.

The Competitive Edge: It creates High Barriers to Entry. Any company can book a flight or a hotel. However, not every company can design a narrative that changes a participant's perspective. This shifts the relationship from "vendor" to "strategic partner," allowing for higher margins because you are selling a "result" (employee motivation, client trust) rather than a "unit" (a hotel room).

The Challenge: A high-profile client required a venue for a massive 3,000-person event. Within the industry, there was a consensus that no existing venue could accommodate such a scale while maintaining a sense of prestige and uniqueness. Competitors were unable to offer any viable alternatives beyond standard convention centers.

The Solution: Leveraging our deep-rooted industry influence and high-level strategic contacts, we secured exclusive access to a historically significant landmark that is normally strictly closed to the public and private events. Beyond



merely securing the site, we managed the complex logistics of transforming a heritage location into a world-class event space. We curated an immersive experience featuring high-end catering and bespoke theatrical performances that integrated seamlessly with the historical atmosphere of the venue.

**THE IMPACT:**

- » Demonstration of Capability: The event served as a definitive display of our operational power and "clout." It proved to the client that we could achieve the "impossible" through our network and logistical expertise.

» Unrivaled Client Loyalty: As a direct result of this success, the client ceased all tenders with other agencies and became a dedicated, long-term partner, trusting us exclusively with their subsequent portfolio of events.

» Market Influence & Lead Generation: Given the client's status as a major industry leader in their home country, the event generated significant buzz. Their competitors, recognizing the unprecedented nature of the venue and execution, contacted us specifically to replicate that level of exclusivity and success."



# GLOBAL MICE OVERVIEW FROM EXPERTS

In the last few years, the business tourism industry has been changing so rapidly that it has become extremely difficult to keep track of all the trends, even in your own country, let alone around the world. Together with MICE&more GLOBAL experts, we have prepared a review of the different MICE markets and key trends. Let's take a look at what's happening in the global industry.



**AZZA ZAGHLOUL, CEO OF MELC TRAVEL GROUP EGYPT**

"Egypt is no longer only a cultural icon — it is now positioning itself as a premium, production-ready, luxury-driven business hub capable of hosting world-class conferences, incentives, and executive programs.

Cairo leads this transformation. The New Administrative Capital is emerging as a modern center of government and corporate activity, with new hotels, embassies, smart districts, and purpose-built event facilities. Meanwhile, Downtown Cairo is experiencing a renaissance, as historic buildings are being converted into boutique hotels, creative workspaces, and heritage-rich venues ideal for leadership meetings and incentive groups. Along the Nile, international five-star hotels continue to anchor Egypt's conferencing capacity with strong AV systems, versatile ballrooms, and polished executive services.

Enhanced air access strengthens Egypt's regional competitiveness. Cairo International Airport is expanding with a new terminal designed to increase capacity and streamline the arrival experience for large delegations. New airport developments along the North Coast, Ras El Hekma, and the Red Sea

are creating direct gateways to emerging business and incentive destinations, shortening transfer times and easing logistics for planners.

The North Coast is becoming Egypt's newest MICE frontier. New Alamein and El Alamein already host international conferences, supported by modern resorts, high-quality dining, and year-round infrastructure. Ras El Hekma, backed by major global investment, is poised to become a Mediterranean luxury hub offering premium resorts, branded residences, and spacious venues suitable for executive retreats and incentive travel."



**KSENIYA BAKHTIOZINA, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR OF CTM TRAVEL UZBEKISTAN**

"One of the key factors in Uzbekistan's attractiveness for MICE events is its unique blend of business and culture. The historic Silk Road cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva create a unique backdrop for business events, allowing them to combine the official program with a rich cultural experience.

Modern conference centers, international hotel chains, high-quality transportation infrastructure, and a well-developed service sector ensure a high level of comfort for event participants. The

country's geographic location — at the crossroads of Europe and Asia — also plays a significant role, making Uzbekistan a convenient logistics hub for international meetings.

Additional advantages include hospitality, safety, and competitive pricing, which are especially important for organizers of large corporate and incentive programs.

Today, Uzbekistan successfully hosts a variety of MICE event formats: business meetings and negotiations, international conferences and industry forums, exhibitions, corporate events, and incentive tours. Incentive programs often incorporate elements of national culture, gastronomy, crafts, and outdoor activities, enhancing the emotional value of the trips and increasing their effectiveness for business.

A comprehensive approach to organization from concept to technical support and post-sales support allows the country to compete with more traditional MICE destinations."



**MAFAZ HUSSAIN, CEO OF 84 TOURS PVT LTD SRI LANKA**

"The Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB), in alignment with the national Tourism Master Plan 2035, has unveiled a roadmap that sets bold targets: by 2026, the country aims to secure 20% of total tourist arrivals through MICE activities, generating an

estimated USD 1.36 billion in revenue. This marks a decisive shift from incremental growth to a transformative agenda that integrates infrastructure, sustainability, and global positioning.

One of the most notable developments is the unprecedented collaboration between public and private stakeholders. Government agencies, industry leaders, and international partners are working in tandem to ensure Sri Lanka's offerings meet global standards. This synergy is evident in initiatives such as the Jaffna Expo, which underscores the country's commitment to decentralizing MICE activities beyond Colombo and tapping into regional potential. By extending the industry's footprint into emerging cities, Sri Lanka is not only diversifying its event portfolio but also strengthening diaspora engagement and regional economic development.

Infrastructure upgrades are another cornerstone of the 2026 strategy. Convention centers, hotels, and transport networks are being modernized to accommodate large-scale international events. At the same time, technology integration has become a defining feature of the industry's evolution. Hybrid conferencing platforms, AI-driven event management tools, and smart venue solutions are now standard, ensuring Sri Lanka remains competitive in a digital-first global market. This technological leap is complemented by a strong emphasis on sustainability, with eco-conscious event planning and green certifications becoming integral to the country's MICE identity.

Equally important is the cultural dimension. Sri Lanka is leveraging its rich heritage and natural beauty to create incentive travel packages that blend business with authentic experiences. Delegates are offered curated journeys into the island's traditions, cuisine, and landscapes, adding a distinctive value proposition that sets Sri Lanka apart from

established Asian hubs such as Singapore and Thailand. This fusion of professional excellence with cultural immersion is fast becoming the hallmark of the Sri Lanka MICE brand."



**HABIB EL FASSI, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF VISIT MOROCCO TRAVEL & EVENTS MOROCCO**

"Morocco continues to shine as one of the most dynamic destinations for MICE. Accessibility is improving at record speed. 2025 year marked the launch of the first-ever direct flight between New York and Marrakech, making Morocco significantly easier to reach for US travelers. At the same time, Royal Air Maroc is increasing frequencies on strategic long-haul routes such as Casablanca-Miami, Washington, Dubai, and São Paulo, reinforcing Morocco's role as a global gateway for business events. These expanded air routes are complemented by growing flight options from Russia and Eastern Europe, driven by greater demand and seasonal schedules that cater to both leisure and corporate travelers.

Morocco's role as host of AFCON 2025 and future co-host of the FIFA World Cup 2030 (with Spain and Portugal) has accelerated national investments in transport, airports, stadiums and event facilities, boosting logistical efficiency and international appeal for global conferences and corporate events.

Morocco's luxury hotel landscape has been increasingly recognized on the global stage, with iconic properties such as Royal Mansour Marrakech and other top hotels continually featured in prestigious travel and hospitality rankings. This level of service attracts high-end corporate groups looking for premium lodging and event experiences.

Moroccan cuisine, long celebrated for its depth, flavor and diversity, has also been widely praised by international chefs and food experts, making gastronomy a key component of incentive travel and business itineraries."



**MARÍA SOLEDAD PIÑEIRO, FOUNDER & DIRECTOR OF ACERCAR VIAJES DMC ARGENTINA**

"Argentina has transitioned from being a bucket-list destination to a strategic powerhouse for high-impact incentive travel. As we look toward 2026, the country is leveraging its unparalleled cultural depth and diverse geography to offer Radical Authenticity to the global corporate elite.

Throughout 2025, Argentina's receptivity for international MICE grew by focusing on exclusivity and behind-the-scenes access.

The Gastronomic Evolution: Beyond the traditional steakhouse, 2025 saw a surge in Vineyard to Table experiences.

International groups from the US and Europe prioritized private meetings with world-renowned winemakers in Mendoza and Salta.

Urban Sophistication: Buenos Aires re-emerged as the Paris of the South but with a modern twist, utilizing its refurbished docklands and historic mansions for closed-door cultural events.

The projection for 2026 indicates a move away from passive sightseeing toward active, transformative engagement.

The 2026 traveler seeks more than a photo; they seek a story. Argentina is responding with programs that offer private access to the country's living legends. From private polo clinics with handicap-10 players to art workshops in the private studios of San Telmo's masters.

In Argentina, 2026 will be defined by the concept of belonging. We have moved beyond the era of seeing to the era of pertenecer. Today's global incentive traveler is seeking a profound connection with the destinations soul."



**EMY ZHENG, INBOUND MANAGER OF VILUXUR HOLIDAYS CHINA**

"China is undergoing a transformative period, strengthening its position as a leading global destination for business travel (MICE). The combination of strategic government initiatives,

unprecedented growth in transportation accessibility, and unique cultural capital creates a powerful foundation for attracting international events.

The primary driver for the Russian and international markets has been the trial visa-free regime, valid until September 14, 2026. It has fundamentally simplified the organization of short-term business trips, conferences, and incentive programs. This move has been reinforced by an unprecedented expansion of air travel.

China is implementing a large-scale strategy to develop its MICE industry, focusing on creating modern, multifunctional spaces. The emphasis is shifting from simply building venues to creating integrated environments. Authorities are actively reconstructing historic districts in major cities, transforming them into unique event locations where modern infrastructure meets an authentic atmosphere. Furthermore, nearly every major city now offers grand theatrical shows with national flair, specifically designed for international audiences and capable of becoming the highlight of any corporate event.

The main narrative of modern China that captivates the global business community is its unprecedented pace of economic development. The demand from foreign delegations is shifting from exclusively historical tourism to a desire to witness the economic miracle firsthand. This interest directly influences the formation of MICE programs: organizers are increasingly combining visits to traditional attractions (like in Beijing or Xian) with immersion into the ultra-modern technological and business clusters of metropolises such as Shanghai, Shenzhen, or Hangzhou. The ability to showcase the contrast and scale of the country's transformation is becoming a unique advantage for China as a destination."



**MOHAMMED FIRAS AL OBISI, CEO OF DOHA MAGIC ADVENTURES DMC QATAR**

"Qatar National Vision 2030 places economic diversification and service excellence at the center of national development. Within this framework, business events serve as a strategic pillar rather than a supporting segment. Today, MICE represents one of the key engines of tourism growth in Qatar.

The precision honed in managing multi-agency coordination during the World Cup and other events now ensures flawless execution for conference transfers across Doha's traffic-optimized landscape. The hotel allocation algorithms developed for 1.4 million visitors now enable dynamic room-block management for incentive groups. The relationships cultivated with venue operators, F&B suppliers, security firms, and cultural partners during events like Web Summit Qatar (2024-2025), DIMDEX defense exhibitions, WISH global health summits, Milipol Qatar security expos, and the MENA Fintech Festival have matured into a deeply integrated supply chain where DMCs like ours Doha Magic Adventures can activate world-class resources within hours.

This operational maturity is accelerating Qatar's ascent in global business tourism. In 2025 alone, the country welcomed over one million international MICE visitors and secured 14 major international event bids for 2026-2027. These figures reflect not only the state of the infrastructure,

but also indicate the level of confidence in the country, in its predictability in the positive sense of the word.

Qatar has moved beyond basic hybrid setups to immersive event experiences powered by AI-driven registration platforms, real-time translation services, and augmented reality venue navigation. This digital layer not only expands global reach but also elevates security protocols, advances sustainability goals, and deepens participant engagement addressing the evolving priorities of today's discerning event planners."



**EMMA BELL, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MANAGER OF VILUXUR HOLIDAYS MALDIVES**

"Following a period of post-pandemic reassessment, the Maldives is experiencing a dynamic evolution within its MICE segment. While not positioned for large-scale congresses, the archipelago is successfully carving out a high-value niche in the premium incentive and strategic retreat market. Strong growth of 25% is reported for 2025, driven by demand for exclusive, experience-focused programs. However, systemic logistical constraints and intense competition for resources pose significant challenges for the continued scaling of this segment in 2026.

A key trend is the adaptive use of existing resort infrastructure. While dedicated complexes like Crossroads (featuring

Sii Lagoon and Hard Rock Hotel with The Marina venue) are emerging, many successful MICE programs utilize transformed spaces — private villas, beachfront restaurants, or luxury yachts — as impromptu meeting and event venues, offering unmatched ambiance.

The market is seeing diversified demand. China leads in volume for serial group tourism. The core corporate segment comes from Southeast Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand). Europe remains the highest-spending market, while emerging interest is noted from India, Bangladesh, and specific large-group demand from Russia, often with longer stays and a focus on value.

Group demand is heavily skewed towards the May-November period, coinciding with lower seasonal rates. Booking lead times vary drastically by market, from over a year for US groups to very last-minute for Chinese bookings, creating operational complexity."



**NATALIE ZAKHAROVA TOBIA, CEO OF DMC AMENITE ITALIA**

"Italy's appeal as a global events hub is further strengthened by high-profile international events, such as the Olympic Games Milano Cortina 2026 and the America's Cup 2027 in Naples, which showcase the country's ability to host large-scale, world-class gatherings and attract global attention.

A key driver of Italy's competitiveness is the PNRR (Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza), Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, developed within the European Union's NextGenerationEU program. The PNRR supports long-term growth through investments in infrastructure, mobility, digitalization, sustainability, and tourism.

PNRR funds are being used to modernize transport systems, improve accessibility, and enhance cultural heritage, directly benefiting business travel and MICE.

Rome offers a flagship example: the new Colosseo metro station is designed not only as a transport hub but also as an underground museum, integrating archaeological remains into the passenger experience. This project shows how infrastructure, innovation, and heritage can coexist, enhancing both mobility and tourism appeal.

A growing number of international luxury hospitality brands are opening or expanding their presence in Italy, responding to demand for high-end accommodation for business travelers and international events. Recent and upcoming developments include Nobu Hotel Roma, The Carlton Milan by Rocco Forte, Danieli, A Four Seasons Hotel in Venice, Orient Express properties such as La Minerva in Rome and Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice, as well as The Lake Como EDITION. These openings reflect Italy's growing appeal for luxury stays that combine culture, design, gastronomy, and exclusive experiences, supporting the expansion of the MICE and business travel sector."

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EXPERTS



**MAXI LOVERA, CO-FOUNDER & CEO OF SOUTH AMERICA DMC, CHILE**

"Chile is no longer just a nature destination; it is a laboratory for the future of the MICE industry. By 2026, Chile will be the world's leading destination for "Scientific and Regenerative Incentives," offering safety, stability, and radical exploration.

**1. 2025 Retrospective: The Consolidation of "Unplugged Luxury"**

- » In 2025, Chile successfully captured the "Wellness" segment of the global incentive market.
- » The Atacama Sanctuary: The northern desert became a hub for high-level corporate retreats. Programs focused on "Deep Work" and mental health, utilizing the silence of the desert.
- » Sustainability as Standard: By the end of 2025, over 60% of top-tier MICE suppliers in Chile obtained international carbon-neutral certifications.

**2. 2026 Projections: Resilience, Wellness, and High-Tech Nature**

**2.1 Ancestral Wisdom & Modern Wellbeing**  
The 2026 trend focuses on "Ancestral Wellness." In the Lake District and Chiloé, incentive programs are integrating Mapuche healing traditions and forest bathing (Shinrin-yoku) into corporate itineraries.

**2.2 Scientific Exclusivity: The New Luxury**  
» Chile is leveraging its status as a global scientific hub. For 2026, exclusive

- incentive programs include:
- » Citizen Science in the Fjords: Participants join maritime expeditions to collect data on whale migrations or glacier retreat.
  - » Astrophotography Masterclasses: Private nights at the world's most advanced observatories.

**3. Emerging Destinations for 2026**

- » Chiloé Archipelago: A mystical island group where luxury "stilt" hotels and wooden cathedrals provide a unique setting for "Slow MICE."
- » Valparaíso & Casablanca Valley: Positioned as the "Sustainable Coast," attracting groups interested in zero-emission vineyards and bohemian urban-art spirit."

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**SVETLANA TARANINA, FOUNDER & CEO OF DMC LUXEME TRAVEL, SPAIN**

"Spain retains its place in the top 3 global destinations for business tourism (together with the USA and Germany).

**Trends 2025 – 2026:**

**1. Unconventional locations:** Moving from halls to museums, wineries, industrial spaces, rooftops (Rooftop events), abandoned factories, castles, or catamaran decks.

**2. Technology:** Immersive 360° halls, real-time AI translation, and AR/VR integrations.

**3. Experience-driven:** Programs are built around Michelin gastronomy and local culture (flamenco, traditions).

**4. ESG and sustainability:** Environmental certification of venues and zero resource consumption are becoming a mandatory requirement for customers.

Result: By 2026, Spain will secure the status of the most innovative MICE market in Europe, where the key product is the unique experience of the participant.

Where the main trend is: Decentralization and the transition from mass forums to exclusive boutique formats."

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**LINDA BOODHNA, CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER OF EMOTIONS DMC, MAURITIUS**

"Mauritius remains one of the leading MICE destinations in the Indian Ocean, offering a powerful combination of accessibility, infrastructure, safety, and unforgettable experiences.

**2026 Trend:**

- 1. Accessibility & Connectivity**
- » Direct international flights from Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.
  - » Efficient airport services at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport.
  - » Pleasant and smooth transfers to major hotels and conference venues.

**2. World-Class Hotels & Conference Facilities**

- » Wide selection of 4\* and 5\* beachfront resorts with modern meeting rooms
- » Large-capacity venues such as Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre.
- » Advanced AV equipment and experienced technical support teams
- » Dedicated event managers within resorts.

**3. Unique Incentive Experiences**

- » Catamaran cruises, dolphin watching, and luxury yacht charters.
- » Championship golf at Ile aux Cerfs Golf Club.
- » Team-building activities: quad biking, ziplining, water sports.
- » Cultural discovery in Port Louis and around the island.
- » Meaningful CSR activities on land or at sea."

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**ARUN RAJ, VICE PRESIDENT OF ZAHARA TOURS DMC OMAN**

"The MICE landscape in 2026 feels like it's in the middle of a reset. The usual destinations are still in play, still dominating conversations, but they're no longer the default in quite the same way. There's a pause happening. A reconsideration.

Planners are starting to look more closely at what actually delivers value. Not just infrastructure, but how easy a

destination feels, how flexible it is, and whether the experience holds together in a meaningful way.

From an on-ground perspective in Oman, that shift is already visible. Groups are getting smaller. Programs are tighter, more focused. There's less interest in layering experiences on top and more interest in making them feel like they belong."

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**LINA EL FASSI, MANAGING PARTNER, A SWEET SPOT EVENTS & DMC UAE**

"The UAE continues to position itself as one of the most dynamic MICE destinations globally, driven by world-class infrastructure, strong connectivity, and a constant ability to innovate. Dubai, in particular, stands out as a major global hub, with exceptional air connectivity linking it seamlessly to key markets across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. One of the key trends we are seeing is a shift towards more meaningful, experience-driven events, where content, storytelling, and human connection take precedence over scale alone. Clients are increasingly looking for venues that are not just functional, but that become part of the narrative and create a lasting impact. Sustainability is also gaining importance, with a focus on smarter logistics and more conscious event design. At the same time, agility has become essential, as companies navigate an evolving global context and need flexible, fast-adapting solutions."

# BEST INCENTIVE IDEAS WORLDWIDE

Today, the eco-system of impressions is shaping the global economy, and the MICE industry is no exception. Vibrant emotions, participant engagement, and unique experiences enhance the effectiveness of any project. A unique incentive idea can become a magnet for choosing a destination. We have decided to shorten this path and have selected the best incentive ideas in the world that can become the center of your unique events.



## ARCTIC FLOATING: AN EXPERIENCE TO REPEAT

In May 2025, we participated in a fam trip organized by Panarctic Star on the coast of the Barents Sea at the Whale Coast Hotel.

This trip coincided with the polar day and gave us unique memories and vivid impressions from exploring the nature of the Arctic, the hotel team and the unique atmosphere of this place, but the most striking element of the program was the floating in the Barents Sea in orange wetsuits. The participants enthusiastically donned these colorful spacesuits and, accompanied by an instructor, felt like astronauts exploring new dimensions of our universe. This experience provides a sense of freedom and excitement. The fresh air, new emotions, and friendly atmosphere made this activity an unforgettable experience.

MICE&more GLOBAL recommends this incentive format for your programs as a bold, original, and safe option.



### A NILE CRUISE OR A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON INCENTIVE IN EGYPT

You may think you know Egypt well and have seen everything there, but sometimes all it takes is a different perspective to discover new things. This is what the participants of the Melc Travel discovery fam trip did, embarking on a unique journey on a Nile River yacht.

We spent a day on a dahabiya. According to Wikipedia, "a dahabiya is a type of flat-bottomed, one-and-a-half-masted sailing and rowing vessel used for Nile River voyages by wealthy Europeans in the 1820s and 1920s." Since there is no engine on a dahabiya, we were towed by a tugboat, and we occasionally raised our sails. It was a peaceful and uninterrupted journey, with no Wi-Fi available. Later, we were connected to the internet, but we had already entered a digital detox phase. So, we didn't do anything at all. We just looked around, lay in the jacuzzi, swung in the hammocks, chatted, sunbathed, ate delicious food, drank a lot of wine, and in the evening enjoyed the performances of the artists who entertained us with music and dance (an interactive folk show). There were 10 twins and two suites with a balcony. It was an incredibly happy pause in our busy lives.



### SRI LANKA INCENTIVE EXPERIENCE THAT WILL CHANGE A TASTE OF YOUR TEA FOREVER

Sri Lanka is almost synonymous with the word "tea," but it's a case of "better to try it once than hear about it a hundred times." Even better is to participate in the tea-picking process and immerse yourself in this ancient culture. As part of the Sri Lanka MICE Expo, we visited the Rothschild Estate in the Kandy region, where tea has been produced at an altitude of over 1,200 meters since 1841. Here you can literally dissolve among the tea plantations with a basket for collecting tea leaves, breathe in their rich aroma, chat with employees who will tell you how to choose the right leaves, look into the workshop and observe the drying process, and then on a spacious sunny terrace enjoy the taste of the best drink, which will be served by beautiful girls in national clothes. This is a pleasure for all the senses, which we highly recommend to experience.



### FULL LIST OF BEST INCENTIVE IDEAS WORLDWIDE

- Kogalym: a trip to the reindeer herders in the Far North.
- Dubai's show of water, sand, and fire is a complete delight!
- Become a Formula 1 driver in Bahrain.
- An Arabian steed that can fly without wings in Qatar.
- Thai Bus Food Tour: delicious, exciting, informative.
- The most unusual theater experience in Phuket.



BEST IN MICE



**AZZA ZAGHOUL,**  
**MELC TRAVEL GROUP, CEO AND BOARD**  
**MEMBER / THE OWNER REPRESENTATIVE**  
**AND PROJECT MANAGER FOR CLEO**  
**DAHABEYA – "QUEEN OF THE NILE"**

for medical associations. In 2018, I joined Melc Travel Group as CEO, and following the launch of Cleo Dahabeya – one of my most meaningful milestones – I also took on the role of Owner Representative.

One of the most remarkable moments in my career came in July 2023, when the Board Members of Melc Travel Group approved my project and business plan to build Cleo Dahabeya. After 40 years in the industry, being part of creating something entirely from scratch – and seeing it come to life as a beautiful, authentic floating luxury home on the Nile – was deeply rewarding. The christening of Cleo – Queen of the Nile – marked a truly unforgettable milestone in my professional journey.

What I love most about this industry is that no two days are the same. You are not simply selling services or accommodation – you are helping people create memories. I am inspired by human connection, problem-solving, seeing guests happy, and the cultural exchange that tourism makes possible. It is a meaningful industry because it brings people together through shared experiences and hospitality.

My advice to young professionals is straightforward. First, learn the basics of service – communication is everything. Be flexible and remain calm under pressure, as tourism often involves unexpected challenges. Build strong product knowledge – destinations, logistics, pricing, and policies all matter. Pay attention to detail, because small things create lasting impressions. And most importantly, stay passionate. If you genuinely enjoy helping people, you will grow quickly. Tourism can be demanding, but it is one of the most rewarding industries when you are committed to service and continuous learning.

I have been working in the tourism industry for 40 years. Over this time, I have held several key positions: Managing Director and Shareholder at Harty Tours from 1986 to 2012, Managing Director and Shareholder at Travel Lounge from 2013 to 2017, and since 2018 I have been serving as CEO and Board Member of Melc Travel Group. This journey allowed me to grow from learning the fundamentals to developing strong expertise across customer service, operations, accounting, sales, travel planning, hospitality, logistics, luxury travel advisory, and business development.

My professional journey began with a dream. While studying at a German school, I always wanted to work in the airline and travel industry. After graduating from business school in 1980, I initially joined the import department at Misr International Bank in Alexandria. However, in 1985, with the support of my father, I decided to pursue that dream and co-founded a travel management company in Alexandria.

I started at the ticketing counter, gaining hands-on experience in customer service. Over time, I became a Ticketing Counter Manager and also contributed strategically within the accounting department, where I helped develop one of the first ticketing program analyses in the TMC field together with our finance team. Later, I founded the first MICE department within a travel management company in Alexandria and organized major events, including the Euro-Med Foundation launch at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in 2003, along with numerous successful projects



# SAIL THE NILE. OWN THE MOMENT.

*A journey where timeless elegance meets modern luxury*



## WELCOME TO CLEO DAHABIYA

Sail the Nile aboard Cleo Dahabiya – where luxury meets timeless beauty. From Luxor to Aswan, experience Egypt in its most intimate form, with serene landscapes, curated moments, and personalized service. With limited cabins and refined elegance, Cleo offers a journey that is both exclusive and unforgettable.

**FOR RESERVATION:**

- [www.cleodahabeya.com](http://www.cleodahabeya.com)
- [reservation@cleodahabeya.com](mailto:reservation@cleodahabeya.com) \ [info@cleodahabeya.com](mailto:info@cleodahabeya.com)
- +20 120 300 9999

SCAN TO DISCOVER  
 the Cleo experience



# SWISSÔTEL KRASNYE HOLMY MOSCOW: DIFFERENT FACETS OF THE JOURNEY

Start your journey to Russia with Swissôtel Krasnye Holmy Moscow. After all, it's no coincidence that the Swissôtel slogan immediately invokes your unforgettable Swiss quality journey: Life is a journey. Live it well!



Swissôtel Krasnye Holmy Moscow is one of the most renowned hotels in the capital and the only representative of the Swiss hospitality brand in Moscow. The hotel welcomed its first guests 20 years ago and continues to be a point of attraction for both Muscovites and city visitors. Its modern, minimalist building rises 150 meters high and is rightfully considered the best panoramic hotel in Moscow.

## A JOURNEY FROM HISTORY TO MODERNITY

The hotel was built as part of the Theatrical Architects Partnership project under the leadership of Russian Honored Architect Yuri Gnedovsky. It was designed as the dominant feature of the Riverside business complex, which includes the Moscow International House of Music, as well as business and conference centers.

Thanks to its location at the tip of Kremlin Island, where the Moskva River meets the Vodootvodny Canal, the concept resembles a fortress: with defensive walls and towers (Riverside Towers), a central "temple" (the House of Music), and a main "bell tower" (the Swissôtel Krasnye Holmy hotel). The result is a unique and harmonious blend of traditional Old Russian urban planning, modern architecture, and Swiss design standards. At the time of its completion in 2005, Swissôtel Krasnye Holmy became the tallest hotel in Moscow.

## A JOURNEY INTO ART

The first thing you notice upon entering the hotel is its design, which remains timeless to this day. The interiors were created by the American company BBGM Architects & Interiors, a specialist in high-end hospitality design.

Swiss luxury is defined by restraint and quality. Open spaces, clean lines, a sense of airiness, unexpected accents, premium materials, and thoughtful details create an unforgettable atmosphere in one of the capital's most striking hotels.

Reflecting the hotel's design concept and its surroundings, you will find numerous works of art by renowned artists, sculptors, and photographers throughout the property. One of the most eye-catching pieces is the bronze sculpture Moscow River by artist and sculptor Taras Levko, which has been part of the hotel's permanent exhibition since 2006. His works can also be seen in the lobby elevator hall, the Swiss Executive Lounge, and the Presidential Suite. Beyond the hotel, his sculptures are featured throughout the Krasnye Holmy complex, supporting the unified artistic concept of the Riverside location.

The hotel also hosts a permanent exhibition by the acclaimed photographer Vladimir Klavikho-Telepnev. He has participated in numerous exhibitions, including solo shows, in prestigious galleries both in Russia and abroad. He is the creator of the unique photographic technique "églomisé," which combines photographic prints with aged mirrored surfaces.

The hotel showcases his works from collections of landscapes, Stalinist architecture, still lifes, portraits, and more, which adorn the interiors of spacious guest areas and hold a prominent place in the permanent exhibition.

## A JOURNEY ABOVE THE CITY

The guest rooms deserve special attention: from their windows, you can practically conduct sightseeing tours of Moscow. You can see everything: the Kremlin, Moscow City, the Seven Stalinist skyscrapers, the Ostankino Tower — thanks to the hotel's 360-degree views.

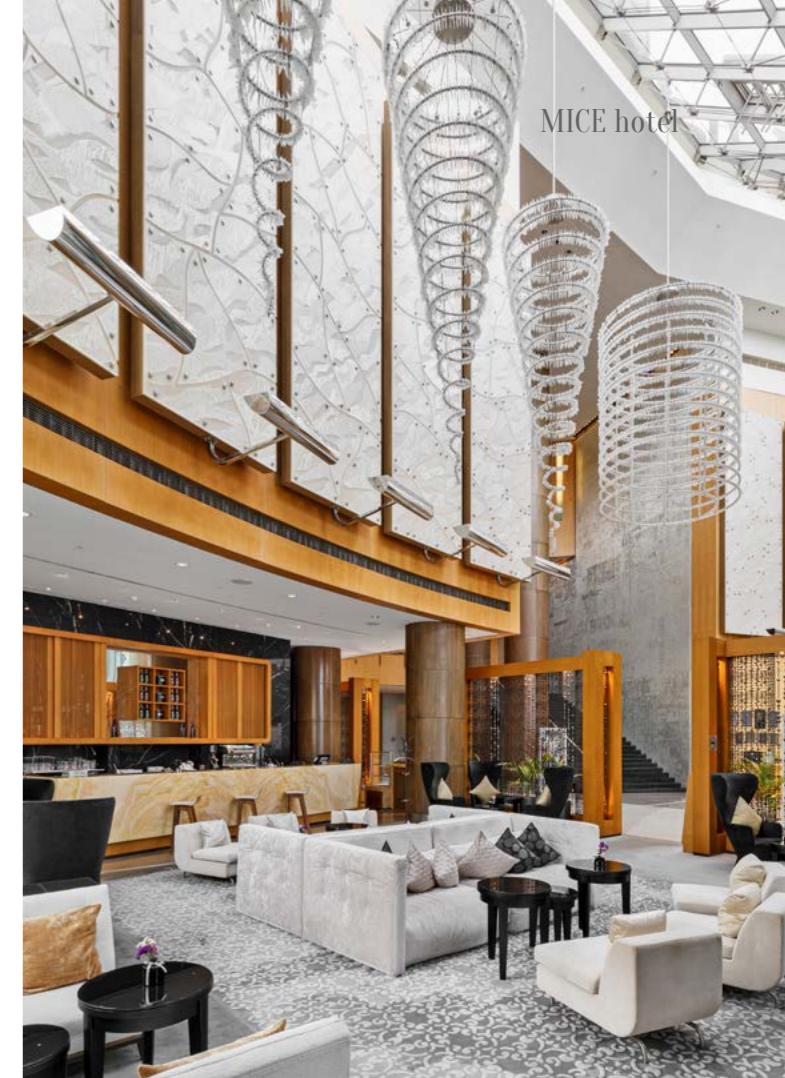
The hotel offers 233 comfortable, light-filled rooms of various categories, from spacious Classic Rooms (starting at 35 sq. m) to the Presidential Suite (156 sq. m). The main highlight of each is, of course, the breathtaking views of the city center, the Moskva River, and its embankments.

## A GASTRONOMIC JOURNEY

Another compelling reason to visit is the hotel's restaurants.

LIGHTBAR, spacious and bright, located in the lobby, offers drinks, snacks, and homemade desserts from the pastry chef. One floor above is the hotel's main restaurant, Acapella. Elegant and cozy, with a diverse menu and a relaxed atmosphere, it sets the perfect mood at any time of day.

And of course, the panoramic City Space Bar on the 34th floor — a true Moscow legend. One of the highest panoramic bars in the city (at 140 meters), it offers breathtaking 360-degree views of Moscow. All restaurants serve halal dishes.



## A JOURNEY TO YOURSELF

Creating the perfect conditions for complete relaxation, the hotel's Pürovel Spa offers a full range of services for rejuvenation and restoring energy.

Translated from Romansh, one of Switzerland's national languages, Pürovel means "gentle mountain stream," symbolizing the freshness and beauty of the Alpine mountains. A daylight-filled pool, saunas, a spacious fitness area, updated spa treatments, and massages all reflect a unique wellness approach inspired by Alpine seasons and created by Swissôtel.

At Swissôtel Krasnye Holmy, you will find a unique combination of quality, service, and safety that are synonymous with Swiss hospitality.



[swissotelmoscow.ru/en/](https://swissotelmoscow.ru/en/)

# BEST MICE HOTELS WORLDWIDE

We continue to travel around the world, take an active part in press tours, organize events and fam trips, and, of course, inspect hotels. All of this practical knowledge allows us to choose the best and most experienced options for you. We would like to introduce you to the participants of our global review.

## SOLUXE HOTEL MOSCOW: YOUR EVENT WILL BE FENG SHUI-FRIENDLY HERE

The five-star premium hotel, which is part of the multifunctional complex of the Huamin Park Chinese Business Center, opened not in Beijing, but in Moscow.

Soluxe Hotel Moscow is the first hotel in Moscow, designed and built with the intricacies of design and the style of the philosophy of Feng Shui. One of the main features of the hotel

is a unique lobby with 11-meter ceilings and a glass roof that allows daylight to pass through.

340 rooms, 39 suites, 15 halls, 2 ballrooms, 4,600 sq. meters of total conference area, more than 800 events held since the opening on September 30, 2022!

Soluxe Hotel is the only hotel in Moscow that offers guests two ballrooms at once: the Beijing Hall — 890 sq. m and the Shanghai Hall — 433 sq. m.



On the territory of the Chinese Business Center, in front of the Soluxe Hotel Moscow, there is the largest unique authentic traditional Chinese-style park outside of China (50,000 sq. m).

Do you want your projects to be successful and lucky? Consider the Soluxe Hotel Moscow for your next event.

### DELANO DUBAI: QUIET LUXURY FOR INSIDERS

The abundance of luxury hotels in Dubai can sometimes make it difficult for event planners to choose, so we want to make your task easier by sharing our experience with Delano Dubai.

The luxurious and elegant resort is located on the shores of the 250-meter Bluewaters Dubai private beach — the only beach of its kind in the city. The rooms and suites at Delano Dubai are designed to awaken and soothe the senses at once. Stillness. Twilight. A snow-white Art Deco interior, subdued lighting and the scent of expensive perfume wafting through the lobby. Six unique restaurants and bars allow guests to travel from Miami to the Cote d'Azur and from Istanbul to China without ever leaving the hotel. Those homesick for Russian cuisine can enjoy a meal at Maison Rev, a French restaurant with a Russian soul.

For organizing and hosting events, Delano Dubai offers Forum Hall spanning an area of 750 sq. meters, facing the sea and accommodating up to 500 guests. In addition to the ballroom, guests can use three 30-seat conference rooms connected by a common garden terrace, and three more intimate meeting rooms seating eight people each.



### CINNAMON LIFE — A MODERN PERSPECTIVE FOR MICE IN SRI LANKA

In September 2025, the MICE&more team participated in the Sri Lanka MICE Expo organized by the Convention Bureau.

The main business program, workshop, and accommodation for participants were held at the brand-new Cinnamon Life Hotel, allowing us to experience the hospitality, service, design, gastronomy, and operational excellence of the hotel team during the event. We highly recommend this venue for your next event in Colombo.

City of Dreams Sri Lanka is set to redefine luxury hospitality in South Asia, transforming Colombo into a premier global destination with its iconic Cecil Balmond-designed architecture, 800 elegant hotel rooms, a world-class casino in partnership with Melco Resorts & Entertainment, diverse dining, upscale wellness, luxury retail, in a sprawling 4.5 million square foot complex.

Seamlessly blending business and leisure, the resort offers sweeping views of the Indian Ocean and Colombo skyline, refined accommodations adorned with Sri Lankan art, and the region's largest and most sophisticated meeting and event facilities, including striking cantilevered ballrooms.

By integrating culture, art, music, and world-class performances, City of Dreams Sri Lanka creates a vibrant entertainment hub and sets a new benchmark for luxury tourism across South Asia.

### FULL LIST OF BEST MICE HOTELS WORLDWIDE

Atlantis The Royal, Dubai: the concept of water in all its forms.

W Bangkok 5\*: a hotel that causes a WOW effect.

Four Seasons Bahrain Bay 5\*: Bahrain's most iconic hotel.

If you need the best MICE resort in Oman: Hilton Barr Al Jissah, Muscat.

Marsa Malaz Kempinski The Pearl — Doha 5\* Deluxe: add this "pearl" to your hotel collection.

Hilton Dead Sea Resort & Spa: Jordan's MICE business card.

SAii Lagoon Maldives 5\*: designed specifically for MICE.

Banyan Tree Phuket 5\*: a leader in the Thai hospitality industry.



BEST IN MICE

# SO/ ST. PETERSBURG: WHERE CONTEMPORARY LUXURY INTERTWINES WITH HISTORY AND ART

SO/ St. Petersburg is an exclusive lifestyle hotel located in the very heart of St. Petersburg, few steps away from St. Isaac's Cathedral. It is a space where contemporary luxury intertwines with history and art, and where every detail of interior tells its own story.



In 2011, **SO/ St. Petersburg** was opened based on a building laid down in 1764. Its facade was carefully restored according to historical documents. The hotel was designed by an Italian architect Antonio Citterio. Among his landmark achievements is the restoration of Milan's Brera Gallery. For this project, Citterio drew inspiration from the legacy of Carl Fabergé, the Imperial Court jeweler and creator of the iconic Fabergé eggs.

The Fabergé egg serves as the conceptual foundation of the hotel's interiors. Like an exquisite jewel box, the space reveals itself gradually: behind a restrained façade lies a sophisticated interplay of textures, light, and form. Diamond-pattern geometry echoes gemstone cuts, while Orten'zia Very Very Gold lamps by Terzani, crafted in 24-karat gold, resemble fine jewelry inlays. This narrative is further enhanced by a striking "frozen" acrylic installation by artist and sculptor Jacopo Foggini, evoking a sense of fragile, almost magical luxury — like the hidden secret within a Fabergé egg.

The hotel features **137 rooms** and suites, each designed as an individual work of art — from the intimate SO Cozy rooms to the attic-style SO Lofty spaces and the exceptional SO VVIP apartments, complete with a fireplace and a double bathtub overlooking St. Isaac's Cathedral. Every detail is carefully considered, including Acqua di Parma amenities, a complimentary minibar, and a personalized sleep menu offering a choice of pillows, sleep masks, and relaxing bath preparations.

On the rooftop, **HI-SO Terrace** is one of the city's most atmospheric dining destinations. In spring and summer, it becomes the perfect setting to enjoy the White Nights and endless sunsets, with panoramic views of St. Isaac's Cathedral and the Admiralty. The menu highlights the finest seasonal ingredients, while the chefs deliver refined cuisine with expressive presentation. Signature dishes, attentive service, and open-air cocktails create an ideal setting for both romantic dinners and intimate gatherings.

The **24/7 MIXO lobby-bar**, with its panoramic windows and designer furnishings, offers a sophisticated space for relaxation, meetings, and social life. The menu features European cuisine, complemented by a carefully curated wine list. Each morning, guests are served signature five-star breakfasts, while throughout the day and evening the space transforms into a cultural and social hub, hosting pop-up exhibitions, public talks, and pre-dinner gatherings.

For business events and private celebrations, the **SO Lounge** provides a fully equipped 100 sq. m venue with outstanding panoramic views of St. Isaac's Cathedral and the Admiralty. The space features advanced audiovisual systems, flexible lighting scenarios, and catering services. It accommodates up to 90 guests in a theater setup or 60 for banquets, making it ideal for everything from business breakfasts and seminars to weddings and private celebrations.

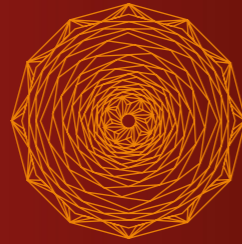


For relaxation, the newly renovated **SO SPA** offers an extensive range of face and body treatments using premium European cosmetics. The 500 sq. m wellness space includes a modern aqua zone with a pool, jacuzzi, sauna, and hammam, as well as relaxation areas and treatment rooms. A highlight is the new double treatment room designed for simultaneous couple massages. A team of expert therapists and cosmetologists delivers everything from restorative massages and comprehensive spa programs to advanced beauty rituals. The experience is complemented by a 24-hour fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment and a beauty salon offering hairstyling and nail services.

**SO/ St. Petersburg** is more than a hotel with a historical heritage — it is a destination where every detail reflects a deep appreciation for art and beauty. An immersive experience of refined luxury, thoughtfully created for its guests.



Sincerely yours,  
SO/ St. Petersburg  
social media @sostpetersburg



MMA  
CONSALTING

# SOLID DRIVING FORCE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

MMA Consulting is the Sales, Marketing & PR representation company within a travel industry in Russia, Belorussia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Georgia.



We are the team of the professionals in travel industry with total experience over 30 years.



We combine Sales, Marketing and PR tools to achieve our goals and increase bookings.



We worked as representatives with best travel brands all over the world, including hotels and resorts, spas, clinics, DMCs, online booking services, tourism boards and shopping outlets.



We put together the base of over 7,500 real contacts, including luxury travel agencies, FIT tour operators, concierge companies, airlines, private jets brokers, DMCs, media and bloggers.

## IN OUR HANDS CONNECTIONS IN ALL SEGMENTS OF THE MARKET

THE CHEDI  
MUSCAT, OMAN

LUXEme

emotions  
Destination Management

CREOLE  
TRAVEL SERVICES

ROBINSON

Hekaya  
Travels & Stories to Discover

EFRITO

FURAVERI  
MALDIVES



# SALES, MARKETING AND PR – THE THREE PILLARS OF MMA CONSULTING

## MILANA TONEVA, MMA CONSULTING, GENERAL MANAGER

I founded my own representation company, MMA Consulting, seven years ago, and I am very proud that we have managed to navigate multiple crises (starting with COVID), while preserving both our team and our principles. From the very beginning, I had a clear vision: to build a business based on honest, ethical relationships with partners, working only with those I trust and who trust me in return – and to deliver real value by helping their businesses grow.

People who are not familiar with the inner workings of the industry often ask why hotels need representatives in specific markets and whether this format is still relevant today. I would say: it is more relevant than ever – especially when the representative is trusted both by the market and by the client. We are constantly present in the market, personally visiting cities and building relationships with partners. We know who is reliable and who is not. Unfortunately, today's world is becoming increasingly unpredictable, and trust is the glue that helps hold it together. We are always ready to step in and resolve issues quickly.

Physically, hotel teams cannot be everywhere or know everything, including the legal frameworks and restrictions of different countries. At the same time, barriers between countries are growing rapidly, and without understanding these dynamics, it is impossible to do business effectively. As representatives, we take on this responsibility.

Our flexibility comes from experience, a strong focus on results, and constant curiosity. For example, during the most challenging period for the travel industry – at the height of the COVID crisis – we launched a series of live broadcasts with partners called MMA LIFE TALK. We discussed the most pressing issues, engaged with experts across various topics, and collectively searched for solutions. Thousands of industry professionals tuned in.

I also believe that the combination of services we offer – sales and marketing, PR, events, and social media – is optimal. Those we work with long-term consistently see the impact of our efforts. For example, we have increased sales for partners in Mauritius several times over. For a hotel chain in the Indian Ocean and Asia, we achieved the annual budget within the first four months of the year. For a resort in the Maldives, we ensured stable year-round occupancy from Russian-speaking guests and increased sales fivefold. For me, the most important thing is client trust – and that can only be built through honest communication and proven results. I believe this is exactly what defines the uniqueness of MMA Consulting.



[milana@mmaconsulting.company](mailto:milana@mmaconsulting.company)

# BEST GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCES WORLDWIDE

We continue our global rating and are happy to share new discoveries from the past 2025 year around the world. Let's start with the best gastronomic experience. It's not just about restaurants and chefs, but also about creative concepts and new formats for food organization, which can be implemented for both individual formats and your events. We can confidently say that this gastronomic experience will add a vibrant taste to your life.



## GASTRO THEATER OF WRF CATERING IN FABULOUS PERFORMANCE OF VLADIMIR MUKHIN

Imagine a summer garden with a variety of flowers and plants, which is already beautiful in itself. This is exactly the kind of garden in Tarusa, carefully restored by designer Zhenya Zhdanova, that the chef of the legendary White Rabbit Family chose for a special reception.

In Rakitsky's garden, guests were greeted by a samovar with champagne, accompanied by a guslar's music, and treated to a delicious summer feast made with the finest ingredients from nature. The crispy cucumbers with black caviar were simply irresistible, while the luscious lard melted on warm bread, begging for a second round. This was just the beginning, and later, Vladimir presented a real performance for the guests, where he told the story of each new dish in detail and showed the different stages of its preparation. By the end of the evening, the guests were satisfied with both the stories and the dishes, as well as the pleasant conversation. The presentation, the incredible combination of flavors, and the chef's charisma were also impressive. We highly recommend not only experiencing this gastronomic experience but also repeating it.



### GASTRONOMIC KALEIDOSCOPE AT THE NATIONAL HOTEL

This is a real secret place that you won't be able to find right away, but true gourmets and lovers of a special gastronomic experience have already paved the way there. To do this, just come to the very center of Moscow, go to the National Hotel, which is opposite the Kremlin. And then you will go on a journey to the most unique places in the world.

The "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World" program is more than just a dinner for 18 people. It features a unique multimedia projection, themed staff costumes, special lighting and a cozy atmosphere, as well as stunning tableware and food presentation. The two-hour "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World" theatrical show immerses guests in the legends of the past. Sitting at a round table, they embark on a journey from the majestic pyramids of Egypt to the mysterious Hanging Gardens of Babylon, experiencing each era through images, music, and taste. Seven exclusive gastronomic sets, inspired by the cuisines of ancient civilizations, complement each part of the show. We experienced the full effect of presence, allowing us to touch eternity and feel like explorers of ancient mysteries.

### ROZNA – OMAN'S GASTRONOMIC GATEWAY

Now, when you arrive in Oman, our first recommendation is to go not to a hotel, the Opera, or the beach, but to the Rozna restaurant. It is located a 10-minute drive from the airport and immediately immerses you in the cuisine, traditions, and history of Oman. It is impossible to imagine a more unique place! The building itself is already captivating with its architecture, and the idea of dining in a castle is truly inspiring. But what awaits you inside... It is a true magic! As soon as you sit down at the table, the local waiters in traditional costumes generously place Omani dishes on the table, and sometimes it's hard to tell what they are, but once you try them, you want more and more. The atmosphere inside is very atmospheric, with locals dining, a pleasant buzz of conversation, and an abundance of flavors, as the bread is baked right in the dining room. Additionally, there are separate teams for private company dinners, and of course, you can fully rent the place for your event.



### FULL LIST OF BEST GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCES WORLDWIDE

Gastronomic tour across the Qatar at Jiwan restaurant.

Immerse yourself in the Indian cuisine with a view of the Indian Ocean.

France in Dubai? Yes! At the newest BISOU restaurant.

Pathetic and non-pathetic Greece in the center of Moscow.

The world of fragrant Persian delights at Ariana's.

The legendary restaurant that remembers the Russian Tsar Nicholas II.



BEST IN MICE

# # AI IN MICE: FROM HYPE TO PRACTICAL ADVANTAGE

Artificial intelligence is no longer a futuristic concept for the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions industry. It is becoming a practical business tool that changes how events are designed, sold, experienced and scaled. For many companies in MICE, the real question is no longer whether AI matters, but where to start and how to apply it in a way that creates measurable value.

The industry has always been built on human connection. That is why some professionals still treat AI with caution, assuming it may weaken authenticity or replace the personal touch that makes live events so powerful. In reality, the most promising use of AI in MICE is not about replacing people. It is about removing friction, increasing relevance, and giving teams the ability to deliver better experiences with greater speed and precision.

Today, AI can already support the full event cycle: from audience acquisition and ticket sales to multilingual communication, personalized attendee journeys, networking, content production and post-event follow-up. For an industry under constant pressure to do more with limited time, limited budgets and rising client expectations, this is not a marginal improvement. It is a structural shift.

One of the most immediate and accessible applications is AI-powered communication. Event organizers can now launch chatbots that answer attendee questions, guide users through registration, recommend ticket types, help with agenda navigation and even support networking. What used to require a development team and long implementation cycles can now often be built in days using no-code or low-code tools. This dramatically lowers the entry barrier for agencies, conference organizers and venue teams that want to test AI without large technology investments.

This matters because speed has become a competitive advantage. In the past, digital event innovation often meant long planning, expensive vendors and complex integrations. AI changes that equation. A focused team can now prototype a working assistant for an event website, WhatsApp flow, Telegram bot or landing page

in a week. That makes experimentation possible not only for major global exhibitions, but also for smaller forums, niche conferences and regional business events.

The second major area of value is language. MICE is inherently international, but multilingual communication remains expensive and operationally difficult. AI is changing that fast. Audio and video can now be translated into multiple languages at scale, while subtitles, voiceovers and real-time interpretation are becoming more accessible and affordable. For international conferences, this is not just a convenience feature. It directly affects reach, inclusion and commercial potential.

A speaker session that previously had a language barrier can now be repurposed for different markets. A conference that was once limited to English-speaking or local-language audiences can now serve global participants more effectively. AI-powered interpretation also improves accessibility for hybrid and cross-border events, where content must travel beyond the room. In practical terms, this means organizers can increase the value of existing content while expanding audience reach without rebuilding the entire production model.

Another high-impact direction is personalization. Most events still offer roughly the same journey to every attendee: the same agenda page, the same recommendation logic, the same networking mechanics. Yet the expectations of modern participants are shaped by platforms that already personalize everything, from entertainment to e-commerce. AI creates a way for events to catch up.

Imagine an attendee answering a short set of questions before the event: industry, goals, role, interests, business priorities, preferred format, and key challenges.

Based on this input, AI can generate a personalized event track: which sessions to attend, whom to meet, what booths to visit, which side events to join, and even what type of follow-up content to receive afterward. This transforms the event from a generic program into a curated experience.

For organizers, the advantage is equally important. Better personalization means better engagement, higher perceived value, more relevant networking and stronger data on attendee intent. It also creates new value for sponsors and exhibitors, who are



increasingly looking for quality interactions rather than raw lead volume. In this sense, AI is not only improving the participant experience. It is making the commercial model of events smarter.

Content production is another area where AI is already reshaping the economics of MICE. Every event generates a huge amount of communication: invitations, landing pages, social media posts, speaker intros, email sequences, video scripts, summaries, press releases, post-event reports and sponsor materials. Traditionally, all of this has been time-consuming and resource-intensive. AI now allows teams to produce more content, adapt it faster and localize it for different audiences.

Design concepts, marketing copy, recaps, visual assets, short-form video edits, audio snippets and even music beds for teaser content can all be created or accelerated with AI tools. This does not eliminate the need for creative direction. On the contrary, it increases the importance of taste, brand judgment and editorial control. But it significantly improves the speed and flexibility of production, which is critical in event environments where deadlines are short and campaigns evolve quickly.

The strongest argument for AI in MICE, however, is not novelty. It is business impact. When implemented well, AI can increase conversion rates by making communication more responsive and relevant. It can reduce service load by automating repetitive attendee questions. It can improve customer satisfaction by helping people navigate events more easily. It can support international growth by lowering language barriers. And it can help teams scale execution without scaling headcount at the same pace.

At the same time, it would be naive to ignore the risks. The first is overpromising. Many companies adopt AI because they fear being left behind, but they do so without a clear use case. The result is often a flashy feature that generates attention but little value. In MICE, where every touchpoint affects reputation, poorly implemented AI can create confusion rather than efficiency.

The second risk is quality control. AI-generated content can be inaccurate, generic or inconsistent with brand tone. AI assistants can misunderstand context. Translation tools can lose nuance, especially in high-level business communication or live stage environments. This means human oversight remains essential. The winning model is not "AI instead of professionals" but "AI with expert supervision."

The third concern is data. Personalized recommendations, smart networking and AI-driven support often depend on participant information. Organizers must be transparent about what data is collected, why it is used and how it is protected. Trust is central to events, and any digital layer that weakens trust will ultimately damage adoption.

There is also an internal challenge: resistance from teams. Many professionals worry that AI will devalue their expertise, when in fact the opposite may be true. As routine tasks become easier to automate, strategic thinking, relationship management, curation and decision-making become even more valuable. In other words, AI raises the premium on human judgment.

So where should MICE companies start? Not with a full transformation program. Start with practical pilots. One useful first step is an AI assistant for attendee communication and FAQ support. Another is AI-enhanced content production for event marketing and post-event distribution.

A third is multilingual content adaptation: subtitles, translations and localized assets. A fourth is personalized agenda and networking recommendations for selected event segments. These use cases are concrete, visible and measurable.

The key is to begin with outcomes, not tools. Ask: where do we lose time, where do attendees face friction, where do we leave money on the table, and where does personalization matter most? From there, AI becomes easier to evaluate not as an abstract technology, but as a business instrument.

The MICE industry has always evolved through format innovation, technology adoption and changing audience expectations. AI is the next layer of that evolution. It will not replace the core value of live events: trust, emotion, energy and human exchange. But it will redefine how those experiences are built and delivered.

The companies that benefit most will not be the ones talking about AI the loudest. They will be the ones using it quietly and intelligently to improve sales, widen access, personalize journeys, accelerate production and create more value for participants and partners. In that sense, the future of AI in MICE is not about machines taking over the event experience. It is about giving human-centered events a smarter operating system.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ivan is an expert in AI-powered digital transformation for business and events, with a practical focus on how artificial intelligence can improve customer experience, increase efficiency and unlock new growth opportunities. He works with companies that want to apply AI not as hype, but as a real business instrument across events, communications, personalization and content production. For an individual consultation on digital transformation and AI implementation, contact: [mail@creativityforintroverts.com](mailto:mail@creativityforintroverts.com).

# SENSORY MARKETING IN PRACTICE

All of us are familiar with sensory marketing, use its tools and are exposed to it daily, although not everyone knows the term. This is a type of marketing aimed at the buyers' feelings and their emotional state. It can be said that this is a direct, natural, and even reflex path to a client, since it is based on human nature, on our basic responses.

The most successful brands are "champions" in conveying feelings and emotions. The method of unconscious communication is very effective for brands, because our senses are immediately connected to the limbic system. It is this part of our brain that is responsible for memories, feelings, pleasures and emotions. If a brand stimulates multiple senses, we will be connected to it at a deeper emotional level. Sensory marketing helps a person develop a conditioned reflex, i.e., a clear association of melodies, sounds, smells and colors with certain brands. In this way, it increases not only brand recognition, but also its memorability and customer loyalty.

As it is known, humans have 5 senses — smell, touch, sight, hearing and taste. Stimulating the senses generates emotions and facilitates learning. Such sensory methods as color and sound have been used actively by marketers for a long time, but in terms of our nature direct contact is made through aromas and tactility.

## SMELL AND TOUCH

Smells and touching surfaces provoke us as customers. And vice versa: using knowledge about them, we form certain (necessary) responses from buyers. Direct methods of exposure can be represented by aromatizing premises and products, creating a certain texture of packages and promotional products.

Bakeries located in supermarkets increase sales by saturating the air with the aroma of freshly baked bread, thereby encouraging impulse purchases on the way to this department. In



department stores, expensive perfumes are sprayed at the entrance to the escalators leading to the departments for wealthy customers. Furniture sellers use aromas of coniferous wood, lingerie stores use sexy scents to bring customers into a state of euphoria, even banks perfume their premises for the purpose of creating a sense of well-being.

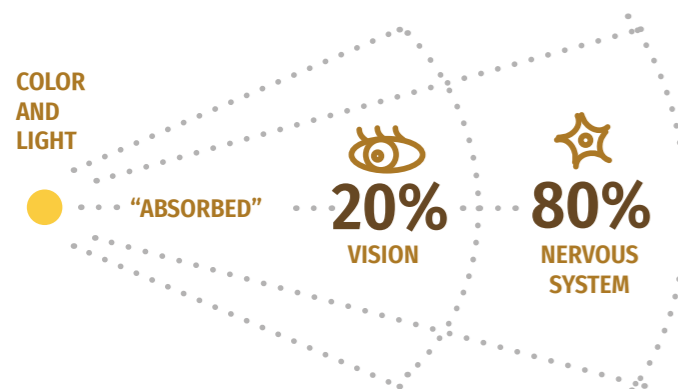
A practical case: "The French travel agency Havas partially reproduces the atmosphere of future vacation destinations in its offices, giving off the smell of heated sea sand and exotic tropical thickets."

Indirect contact with customers can be made through visual perception and hearing, that is, through visual and audio images. In this case, indirect channels successfully influence the dominant ones, because our psyche itself supplements the information received. For example, if we see something fluffy on the screen, and this video is accompanied by a soft sound, we have a real feeling of touching a fluffy object, and a warm emotion is born inside.

A practical case: "In the shoe salon where sensory marketing is used, sales increased by 40% in two months. The salon attracts its customers with the scent of "budding buds," stylish music, coffee and chocolate shades of the interior, and even pleasant-to-touch packaging."

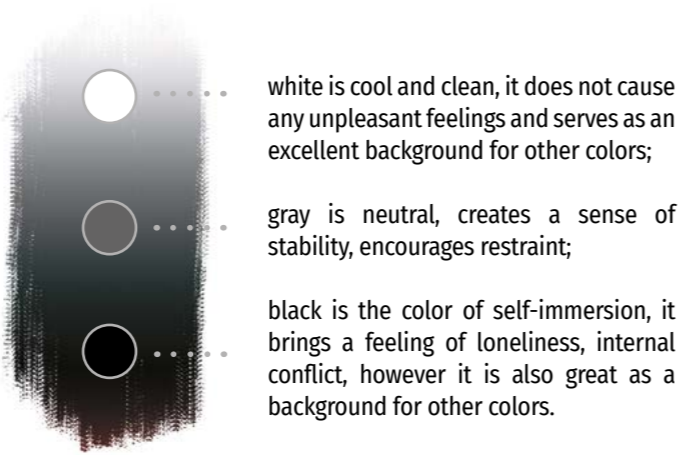
COLOR

Colors appeal to feelings, not to human logic. Color significantly affects a person's mental and intellectual state.

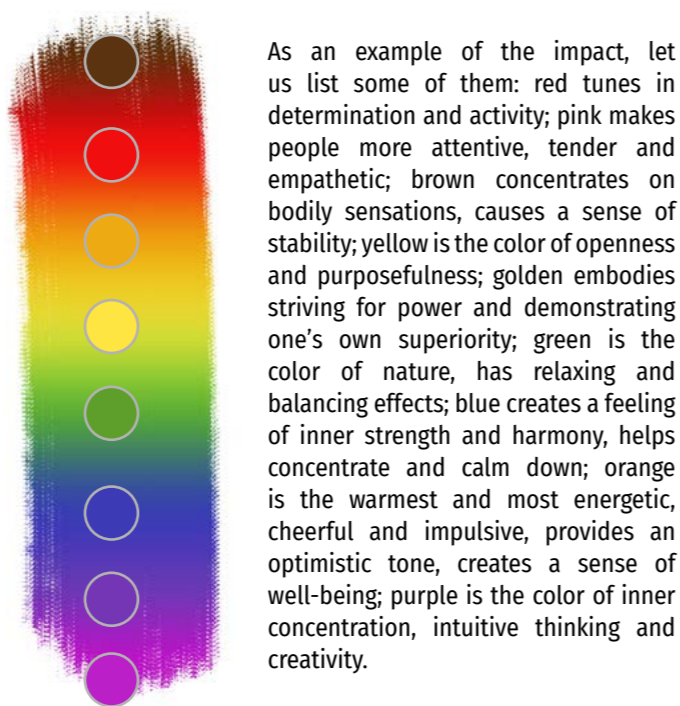


It has been found reliably that each color evokes subconscious associations and reactions. Properly selected color solutions attract the target audience's attention, promote communication, and form an emotional perception.

IN SHORT, THERE ARE THREE BASIC (ACHROMATIC) COLORS:



CHROMATIC COLORS ARE PRESENTED IN THE WIDEST RANGE, ESPECIALLY IF THEIR SHADES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT



When choosing a color for the visual range, it is necessary to take into account seasonality (for example, do not use soporific neutral tones in spring) and national color associations (for example, in European culture white is the color of purity, but in Buddhism it is the color of death).

SOUND

Psychologists have established that fast music forces customers to move faster through the rows. When loud music is playing, customers spend less time in the store, but spend more money. The music should be in harmony with the company's general style, so that the customer has formed a number of subconscious associations linked to this brand.

A practical case: "Nike has opened several shopping malls, where all the shopping pavilions are vocalized. They emit sounds characteristic of respective kinds of sports. There is a clatter of balls in the basketball department, and horses' neighing can be heard from the riding pavilion."

As for music, it is not recommended using well-known melodies to attract customers, because these can evoke various memories and emotions (including negative). Classical music is also not suitable, since many people neither understand nor perceive it, but melodic arrangements of classical music are quite appropriate. It is best to use melodies of related musical styles.

Some companies have their own sound logo or sound slogan, which becomes a harmonious complement to the company's corporate identity and creates an additional emotional connection with consumers. Musical intonation makes speech more expressive, and memorability of a musical slogan is higher than that of a verbal one.

Fixation and multiple repetition of a specific sound signal for a certain type of information causes in the listeners something like a conditioned reflex.

A practical case: "It was decided to accompany the moment of payment with a VISA card by a sound signal of money falling into a basket. Thus, a person gets a sense of reassurance: my virtual money has arrived where it is needed."

**CONCLUSION:** The uniqueness of sensory marketing is that it is possible to influence the audience not only through direct contact at the point of sale, but also through advertising, sending customers not so much rational motives for the purchase as an emotional call to remember, feel, touch... When developing marketing policy, it is necessary to understand which experiences are important for the target audience, what excites and delights them. And having understood this, it is also important not to miss the opportunity for "hooking" their feelings and, consequently, cultivating attachment.



**MICE&MORE:** "We are surprised at hearing that print media is a thing of the past. We have a lot of evidence that our glossy magazine, which attracts attention from afar with its bright cover, is desired to be picked up, to inhale the exciting aroma of fresh printing ink, and start flipping through its pages with large illustrations and eye-catching headlines. Moreover, you can complement the reading with a cup of coffee and a fresh croissant. When you get acquainted with a new issue, you first experience pleasant emotions, and then immerse yourself in the meaning of the articles that are interesting to you. We make you want to go somewhere, visit some places, get to know someone and accomplish something. The main color of the MICE&more brand is purple, since we are about creativity."



[www.miceandmore.org/en/media/sensory-marketing-in-practice/](http://www.miceandmore.org/en/media/sensory-marketing-in-practice/)



# WHY ITB ASIA 2026 MATTERS FOR THE GLOBAL MICE INDUSTRY



Program, over 90% of buyers are curated in advance. With 1 in 2 buyers signing contracts with exhibitors, each meeting represents a high-value opportunity to convert connections into tangible business outcomes.

**DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH DECISION-MAKERS**

Approximately 70% of attendees at ITB Asia hold senior decision-making roles.

This means direct engagement with stakeholders who influence budgets and partnerships, shortening sales cycles and enabling more meaningful business conversations on-site.

**A MARKETPLACE FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND GROWTH**

Beyond buyer meetings, ITB Asia brings together 1,000+ exhibitors, including destinations, venues, hotels, airlines, and event solution providers. This enables businesses to source partners, benchmark offerings, and build long-term regional collaborations within a highly efficient three-day environment.

**ASIA'S MICE MARKET: GROWTH AND COMPLEXITY**

Asia's travel industry is entering a new growth phase, with Asia Pacific projected to reach 710 million international arrivals in 2026, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

The MICE segment is accelerating alongside this recovery, driven by the return of international events, corporate travel, and incentive programs across a highly fragmented region.

For MICE stakeholders, capturing this growth requires direct access to the right partners across markets.

**A PLATFORM BUILT FOR THE MICE ECOSYSTEM**

ITB Asia 2026, taking place from 21-23 October in Singapore, brings together

over 18,000+ attendees from 132 countries.

What sets it apart is its integrated format – three co-located events serve distinct segments of the travel industry. Alongside the core marketplace, MICE Show Asia focuses on meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, while Travel Tech Asia highlights innovations shaping event delivery.

**ACCESS TO QUALIFIED MICE BUYERS**

ITB Asia hosts more than 1,500 qualified buyers across leisure, corporate travel, and MICE segments.

MICE buyers include event planners, corporate travel managers, incentive buyers, and procurement specialists. Through the Buyers Elite Partner

**SECURE YOUR SPOT AS AN EXHIBITOR AT ASIA'S LARGEST TRAVEL TRADE SHOW**

Exhibiting at ITB Asia is an opportunity to connect with high-value buyers and grow your presence in Asia's MICE market.

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## THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GRAND HOTEL EUROPE

On January 28, 2025, the Grand Hotel Europe, Russia's first luxury hotel, St. Petersburg's calling card and a national symbol of hospitality, celebrated its 150th birthday. The gala reception spanned all of the hotel's public spaces, while the multimedia show transported guests to both the past and the future. One of the guests at the gala was Lina Moskvina, the founder of MICE&more.

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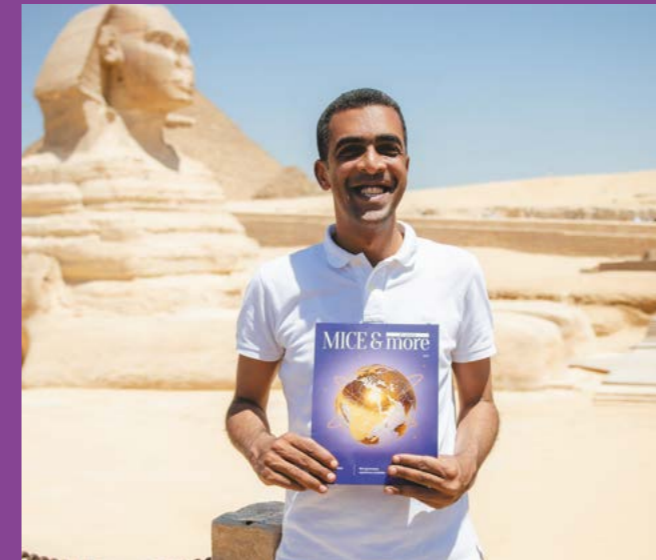
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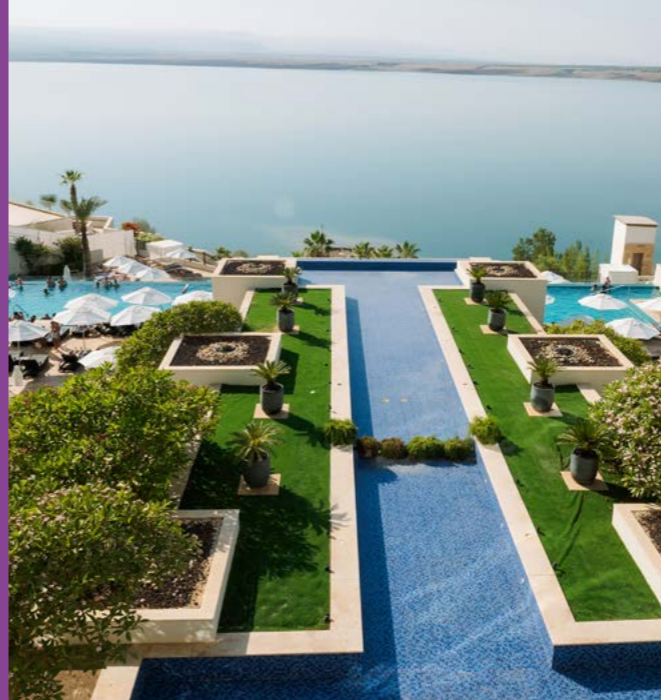
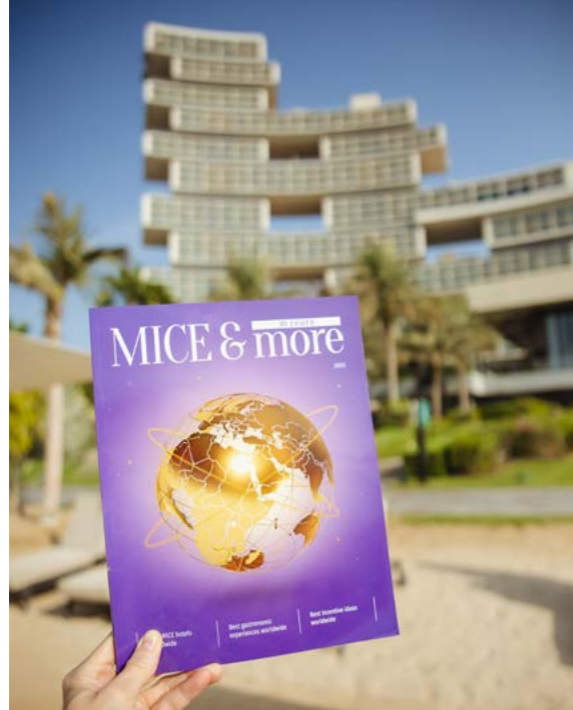


## STRONG INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL INTEREST FOR SL-MICE EXPO 2025 ORGANIZED BY SLCB

The much-anticipated SL-MICE Expo 2025, organized by the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) — the national tourism organization under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment, and Tourism — will be held in Colombo from 22–26 September 2025. As a premier event, it aims to strengthen Sri Lanka's profile on the global MICE map by providing a unique platform for local and international stakeholders to showcase their products, services, and innovations. The Expo will serve as a dynamic marketplace for business growth, networking, and collaboration among MICE professionals worldwide.

MICE&more – Summer 2026





### ROYAL FAM TRIP TO THE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

Jordan mesmerized us back in February 2021, when we published a special issue devoted entirely to the country. Since then, we bonded through genuine friendship with Visit Jordan (the Jordan Tourism Board) and its representative Majd Abu Arqub, repeatedly discussed the possibility of a familiarization tour for Business Community members, and finally the happy moment arrived: the MICE&more group boarded Royal Jordanian Airlines and set off for Amman.



### A JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF LUXURY IN DUBAI WITH DESERT GATE

This unusual fam trip offered participants the "best of the best": the most striking locations, the most iconic hotels, the most spectacular ballrooms, the most delicious restaurants — and all this in the company of MICE&more founder Lina Moskvina, a renowned expert in the premium segment. To this magical world of Dubai, the Community MICE&more group was invited by the professionals at Desert Gate Tourism DMC.



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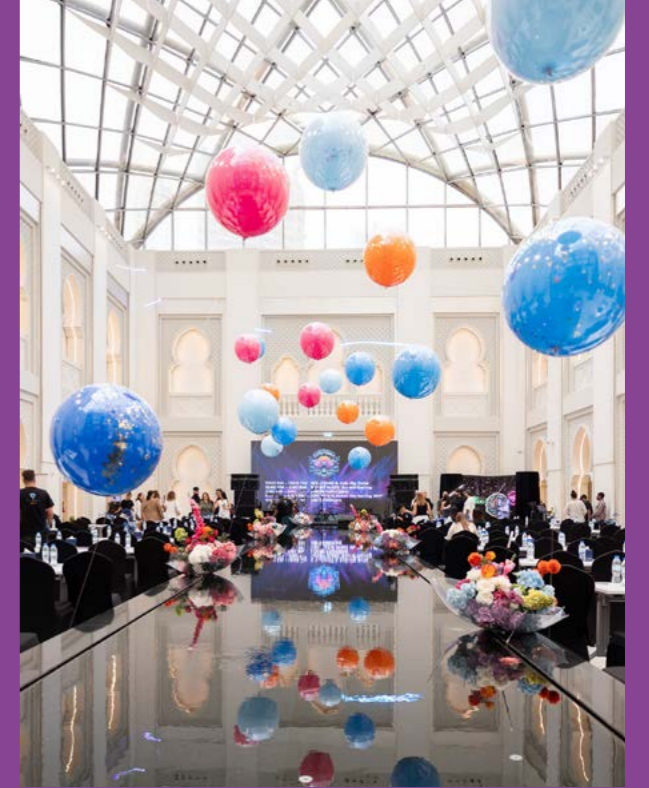


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The EventMania Festival, which took place in Dubai on September 9, 2025, brought together over 400 event industry professionals. The event served as a unique platform for networking, sharing experiences, and discovering new formats. Our festival is first and foremost about people. They are the heart of EventMania. Professionals meet on both sides of the table: event organizers and contractors, each of whom is creating the future of the industry. The festival became a platform where these creative minds and ambitious entrepreneurs could find each other, exchange ideas, and conclude new partnerships.

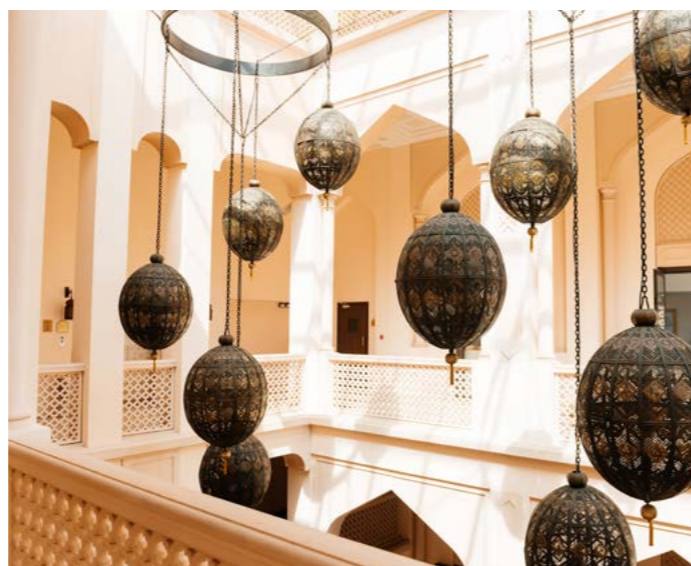


## Event calendar



### FABULOUS OMAN TOUR COMBINING SEA, MOUNTAINS, DESERT, OASES AND OCEAN

For an unprecedented week, from October 21 to October 28, MICE&more travelers discovered different facets of the amazing sultanate, which is considered the birthplace of the fabulous Sinbad the Sailor. It is the rarest case when during the tour there's an opportunity to cover the whole country, especially such a large one as Oman. This was made possible thanks to the support of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Oman, represented by the Oman Convention Bureau and their representative office in Russia, the extensive capabilities of the host company Pure Arabia and the national carrier Oman Air.



MICE&more – Summer 2026

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