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THE EDITOR'S OVERTURE



Dear friends! This issue fills me with happiness, pride and delight. For the first time, Saint Petersburg is on the cover of MICE&more GLOBAL. It is my hometown, a city I love and consider the most beautiful on the planet.

Saint Petersburg can be intimate or grand, with great potential for business tourism: it offers settings for both large-scale congresses and small gatherings, as well as opportunities to combine a business programme with cultural experiences.

I hope our articles and images will inspire you to visit Saint Petersburg during the summer White Nights or in the snowy winter. Whatever the season, I am sure the city will find a way to surprise you.

This issue is also special to us because, for the first time, we have made it immersive. Our inspiration was music — a force that brings people together around the world and plays an enormous role in the events industry.

Music accompanies us throughout our lives, bringing back memories and helping us create new ones. We explore why music has such power and how it can inspire and shape the design of an event, setting the mood and creating a shared experience. We also look at journeys inspired by music and listen to the different ways countries and cities sound.

Together with a professional creative team, we have created a special project for this issue, expressing music through visual imagery. It is built around three genres — classical, ethnic and disco — each with its own character, energy and mood.

Throughout the issue, you will find QR codes. Scan them to listen to unique playlists or see music brought to life through images. We hope you will not only read this issue, but also listen to it, see it and feel it.

I wish you enjoyable reading and listening, new music and new journeys!

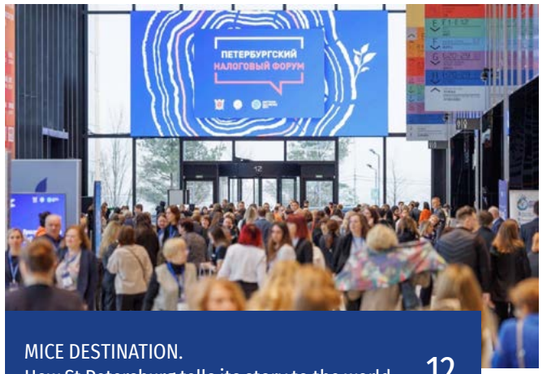
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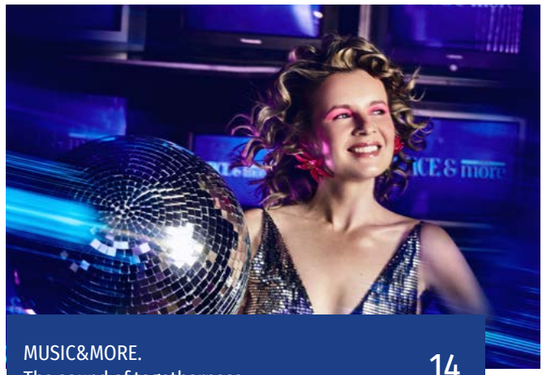
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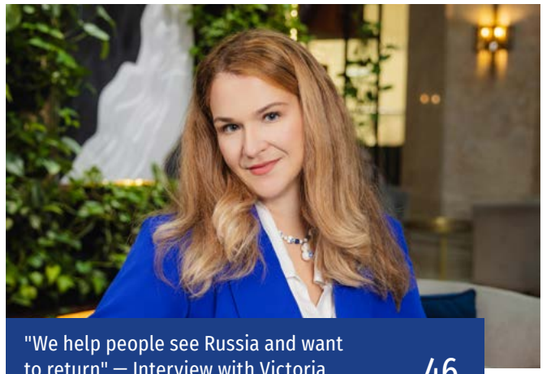
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THE CITY OPENS UP IN A NEW WAY

Tourism generates more than RUB 843 billion for St Petersburg's economy. In 2025, the city welcomed a record number of visitors. Its strategy aims to make every season worth a visit, encourage guests to discover St Petersburg beyond its classic landmarks and give them new reasons to return. In an interview with MICE&more, Yevgeny Pankevich, Chair of the St Petersburg Committee for Tourism Development, discusses the economic impact of tourism, international promotion and the city's "The Season of Premieres" initiative.



MICE&MORE: St Petersburg welcomed a record number of visitors in 2025. Where is tourism's multiplier effect most visible?

YEVGENY PANKEVICH: For St Petersburg, tourism is a priority alongside industry, IT, transport and the creative industries. The 2025 figures confirm its macroeconomic role: 12.5 million visitors and more than RUB 843 billion for the economy.

Its multiplier effect is especially visible in hospitality, transport, retail, culture, business tourism and MICE.

Business travel generates high spending, supports the off-season and creates jobs. It also benefits the creative industries, IT, construction, education and healthcare.

MICE&MORE: The project's very name, "The Season of Premieres", is already recognisable. How did the idea come about? Was it conceived as a way to rethink St Petersburg's traditionally low season, or was it driven by a more specific market demand?

YEVGENY PANKEVICH: More than 6 million tourists visited St Petersburg from May to September 2026. Most importantly, a significant share of these visitors return, discovering the city anew with each subsequent visit. The "Season of Premieres" is a guide to St Petersburg in autumn and winter: from exhibitions, theatre and concerts to banyas (traditional Russian steam bathhouses and saunas).

The citywide programme brings together premieres, exhibitions, festivals and seasonal experiences, giving visitors fresh reasons to come beyond the summer high season.

This is when theatre premieres and museum exhibitions begin and festivals take place. Visitors can enjoy a range of experiences: try pishki, the city's iconic doughnuts, explore concept stores on the Petrogradskaya Side and plan a visit to the Christmas Market at Manezhnaya Square.

MICE&MORE: Hotel booking data show that business travel to St Petersburg grew by 8% in autumn 2026 compared with the same period last year. Demand comes not only from the largest forums, but also from commercial and industrial companies, as well as the IT, healthcare and consulting sectors. How can the city turn this demand into a steady year-round MICE flow?

YEVGENY PANKEVICH: This is an important signal for us: Business needs St Petersburg not only as a venue for one major event. The city has a broad professional agenda: industry, trade, healthcare, science, technology, transport and the creative industries. Our calendar must be busy and clear for organisers and participants in every season.

Major forums undoubtedly set a high standard. Preparations for SPIEF begin many months in advance and involve not only venues and hotels, but also museums, theatres, exhibition spaces and public areas. At the same time, specialised events are equally important. They help sustain demand during the off-season and support hotels, restaurants, transport providers and tour companies.

We want business trips to extend beyond the programme at a congress centre. Delegates should have the opportunity to stay for another day or two, see a premiere or an exhibition, explore a new district and meet colleagues in a more informal setting. This is how St Petersburg becomes more than a host city: it becomes a place people want to return to.

MICE&MORE: You have set a key objective: to retain visitors. Nearly half of all tourists are now returning guests. What still needs to be done to encourage even more of them to come back?

YEVGENY PANKEVICH: Visitor satisfaction with the city has reached 86%, and 80% of guests say they would recommend it. This is the result of systematic, visitor-focused work. We are building an ecosystem for a wide range of audiences, showing the city from different perspectives and creating new formats and combined itineraries.

Visitors can discover not only the Hermitage and Palace Square, but also contemporary St Petersburg: its gastronomy, technology and popular science tourism. Events take place in every season, and many tourists travel to the city specifically for them.

MICE&MORE: St Petersburg is traditionally associated with the Hermitage, palaces and classical architecture. Today, however, visitors are increasingly choosing New Holland, Sevkabel Port, Kronstadt and contemporary gastronomic and creative spaces. How does this change the business travel experience and the city's approach to its historical heritage?

YEVGENY PANKEVICH: Historical architecture is one of our greatest competitive advantages, but it has to remain part of a living, modern city and be incorporated into the tourism offer thoughtfully. At SPIEF, we discussed how cultural heritage sites can become a catalyst for investment and tourism. Kronstadt is a good example, where maritime history, public spaces and new infrastructure come together in one visitor experience.

St Petersburg is also revealing another side of itself. New Holland and Sevkabel Port do not replace the Hermitage. They offer a way to experience the city's contemporary rhythm through design, gastronomy, local brands and cultural projects. In 2025, Chinese visitors made more than 100,000 visits to the city's creative spaces.

This balance is particularly valuable for business audiences. After a full programme at a historic hotel or convention centre, guests can be offered more than a standard tour: a walk through a neighbourhood, a meeting with creative-industry representatives, dinner in a former industrial space or an intimate cultural event. It helps them see not only ceremonial St Petersburg, but also a city that is developing and creating new reasons to discover it.

MICE&MORE: In 2025, international visitors accounted for about 6.5% of St Petersburg's total tourist flow, most of them coming from CIS countries. But the number of Chinese tourists is still far below pre-pandemic levels, and the city has set a target to grow this market several-fold by 2030. In today's international environment, what are the Northern Capital's priority markets and practical tools for attracting overseas visitors?

YEVGENY PANKEVICH: Last year, around 770,000 tourists came to us from other countries. The geography of inbound tourism has expanded: we are welcoming visitors from the Middle East and Asia. International guests often visit both Moscow and St Petersburg on the same trip.

We are consistently investing in high-quality promotion: we take part in specialised travel exhibitions in India, China and Vietnam; organise themed events abroad; and invite industry partners to the city, including tour operators and, at times, hoteliers and event companies, so they can promote our tourism offer.

FAM-trips for tour operators and journalists are also important, as are international museum projects.

Alongside the classic highlights, international tourists are increasingly choosing nature-based itineraries. Cooperation between the city and the Leningrad Region could be particularly promising in this regard.

St Petersburg has a unique opportunity to develop year-round tourism. The city can act as a transit hub for the Russian North, which is of great interest to overseas travellers, including Chinese visitors. This is why interregional cooperation with the Murmansk Region is also important for us.

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ST PETERSBURG INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FORUM: THE INDUSTRY'S LEADING VENUE

From 10 to 12 December, St Petersburg will host the St Petersburg International Travel Forum, a key event for the travel industry. For the eighth year running, the Forum will review the year's results and outline the future direction of the sector.

FROM AN EXHIBITION PROGRAMME TO AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Held since 2018, the Forum has evolved from an event within a trade exhibition into an independent gathering of international scale. Its first edition attracted around 3,000 participants from 15 countries; by 2024, attendance had grown to 4,400 delegates from 23 countries. In 2026, the Forum is expected to welcome more than 6,000 participants from 40 countries.

Over the years, the Forum has brought together more than 70,000 participants from 70 Russian regions and 50 foreign countries. These numbers reaffirm St Petersburg's status as a MICE tourism centre where industry professionals find new partners, exchange expertise, discuss talent development, and present projects and opportunities for developing tourism destinations.

The Forum will bring together representatives of public authorities, tour operators, hoteliers, experts and media professionals.



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A SYSTEM BEHIND ST PETERSBURG'S HOSPITALITY



"The leitmotif of the 2026 Forum is "The Tourism Code". It reflects our approach to developing the industry: St Petersburg goes beyond merely welcoming visitors: it brings together its historical heritage, modern infrastructure, digital services and high hospitality standards in a coherent tourism ecosystem. The "Tourism Code" is a set of principles and solutions that helps our city remain among the leaders and set a benchmark for other regions," says Sergey Azarenkov, General Director of the St Petersburg Convention Bureau.

The programme is structured around three key areas: the development of international inbound tourism; tourism strategies; and the development of different tourism segments. Each area includes round tables, sessions and discussions addressing a broad range of industry topics.

The Forum also traditionally hosts a range of partner events under its umbrella: business sessions, presentations, meetings and award ceremonies. These include the WhereToTravel Hotel Awards, a nationwide hospitality award, and the annual Pulkovo Awards.

This year, the Vologda Region will be the event's partner region.

FROM DISCUSSION TO ACTION

The Forum's impact is not limited to its three days of meetings. Previous editions have led to cooperation agreements with international partners and a national industry association. In 2022, 12 agreements were signed, including arrangements with companies from India and Vietnam. In 2025, the Forum became the place where an education cluster for tourism and the creative industries was announced.

This is how the Forum works in practice. It brings together people who deal with the same challenges from different sides: public authorities, destinations, transport companies, hotels, tour operators, museums and event organisers. They can compare priorities, identify gaps and turn useful contacts into joint projects.

International tourism is an important part of this work. Recent discussions have addressed promotion in source markets, direct transport links, cooperation with online booking platforms and the need to adapt products to the expectations of guests from different countries.

The Tourism Code is a continuation of this approach. It is about linking heritage, infrastructure, digital services and hospitality standards into one system — and about making sure that ideas discussed in December can be developed into projects throughout the year in the months that follow.

BUSINESS IN THE HEART OF THE DESTINATION

As usual, the Forum will take place at well-known hotels in the historic centre. Traditionally, it extends beyond a single venue and unfolds across the historic heart of St Petersburg. Its business programme is hosted by hotels within walking distance of the city's leading landmarks, including the Wawelberg Hotel, Grand Hotel Moika 22 and Four Seasons Hotel Lion Palace St Petersburg.

This format allows participants not only to work in the city, but to experience the very tourism environment they are discussing. It highlights the close connection between today's hospitality industry and St Petersburg's exceptional historical and cultural heritage.

For Russia's tourism industry, the Forum is a major annual meeting point, where the sector's agenda for the year ahead takes shape and where government officials, business leaders and industry experts review the season and compare notes on the issues shaping the sector: inbound tourism strategy, government support, digital services and higher hospitality standards.

ST PETERSBURG CONVENTION BUREAU: 13 YEARS SUPPORTING THE CITY'S BUSINESS TOURISM

For 13 years, the St Petersburg Convention Bureau has helped strengthen the city's position as a destination for major congresses, exhibitions and business events. In 2025, St Petersburg hosted more than 760 congress and exhibition events across a network of 242 venues — from purpose-built convention centres to palaces, museums and creative spaces, with plans to expand even further.

St Petersburg is a business destination of international standing: a city where major congresses and forums take place, important agreements are signed and global issues are discussed. In 2025, 1.41 million people travelled to the city for business purposes, with business tourism contributing RUB 111.4 billion to the local economy.

Last year, St Petersburg hosted more than 760 MICE events — and there is room for further growth. Strong transport connections, a developed hotel network, venues for business events of every scale, a rich cultural life and the energy of a modern city all make St Petersburg an attractive destination for meetings and events.

BUILT FOR BUSINESS EVENTS

St Petersburg's appeal as a business tourism destination rests on three key strengths:

- international-standard congress and exhibition venues, including the Expoforum Convention and Exhibition Centre, PetroCongress Congress Centre and the Mining University Multifunctional Complex (Gorny MFC);
- a rich cultural and historical heritage, providing organisers with a wide range of leisure and entertainment options;
- a well-developed network of hotels, transport links and services for organisers and delegates.

The city on the Neva has 242 venues equipped to host business events of every scale. These include not only highly functional convention and exhibition centres, but also palaces, museums, creative spaces and sites in the city's emerging tourism districts.

As a result, St Petersburg becomes part of the event experience itself: guests are immersed in its distinctive atmosphere and discover the city from different perspectives.

THIRTEEN YEARS OF CONNECTING THE INDUSTRY

The growth in business travel is underpinned by the Convention Bureau's systematic work over the past 13 years. Its mission is to promote St Petersburg internationally, attract Russian and international events to the city, and help create the conditions for their successful delivery.

"Professional recognition is welcome, but the true measure of our success is the tangible impact on the city. Over the past 13 years, we have helped bring together St Petersburg's business-events community and have shared the city's opportunities with international audiences. Our aim is to make the city a place where organisers, investors and visitors can work with confidence. And it is always rewarding when guests who first come here on business choose to return," says Sergey Azarenkov, General Director of the St Petersburg Convention Bureau.

The Bureau's work continues to expand, with new initiatives and solutions introduced every year. Since 2026, the city has run its unified City of Events campaign, bringing St Petersburg's leading business events together in one calendar and promoting them under a shared brand.

TEAMWORK: BRINGING MAJOR EVENTS TO ST PETERSBURG

The city also relies on its ambassador programme to attract major events. Leading experts in priority fields — scientists, doctors, engineers and representatives of the creative industries — help bring congresses and conferences to St Petersburg. Since the programme was launched in 2018, ambassadors have attracted 30 major business events with more than 20,000 delegates, generating over RUB 2.5 billion for the city's economy. In 2026, the initiative gained powerful new momentum and was officially relaunched as the "Tourism Ambassadors of St Petersburg" programme. Set to welcome new specialists from a diverse range of industries, the expanded project is designed to serve as a premier platform for collaboration, cross-sector dialogue, and the generation and implementation of groundbreaking ideas.

Teamwork is equally important. The Convention Bureau's partner programme brings together more than 266 organisations, including hotels, venues, universities, museums, tour operators, media outlets, restaurants and transport companies.

The Bureau's work extends beyond business events alone. Its projects include the St Petersburg Breakfast and St Petersburg Dessert festivals, which highlight the city's culinary scene and the role of gastronomy in the business travel experience.

BRINGING ST PETERSBURG TO INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

The St Petersburg Convention Bureau regularly organises press trips for international journalists. Their aim is to introduce the city's congress potential, strengthen its image as a leading business destination and reach new international markets.

In October 2025, St Petersburg welcomed representatives of leading media outlets from China, India and Vietnam. The programmes combine visits to classic landmarks such as the Hermitage Museum and the Peter and Paul Fortress with sites from the city's emerging tourism geography, as well as key congress and exhibition venues including Expoforum.

Participants also learn about St Petersburg's experience of working with international companies and the prospects for expanding international cooperation. According to Sergey Azarenkov, these meetings give overseas media a deeper understanding of the city's convention infrastructure and help build a positive image of St Petersburg as a destination for large-scale business events.

SAINT PETERSBURG CONVENTION BUREAU

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HOW ST PETERSBURG TELLS ITS STORY TO THE WORLD

International professional exhibitions are not only about stands and souvenirs. They give St Petersburg a direct line to the people who influence where tourists and business travellers go: tour operators, travel agents, tourism boards, airlines and congress organisers. Over the past 13 years, the St Petersburg Convention Bureau has presented the city at 170 exhibitions worldwide — from Latin America to Asia — using each event as a strategic tool for building partnerships and developing business tourism.

St Petersburg's stand is consistently popular with visitors and regularly receives industry recognition. From 2023 to 2026, it won Best Stand Design awards at exhibitions in China, Azerbaijan, India, Vietnam, Iran, Kazakhstan and Malaysia.

At a recent exhibition in Guangzhou, China, St Petersburg was named the most popular destination for cultural tourism.



TELLING ST PETERSBURG'S STORY IN FULL COLOUR

"A St Petersburg exposition is a small performance in its own right. We showcase what the city has to offer as vividly as possible: we organise photo exhibitions and bring St Petersburg musicians to perform classical repertoire. It creates a distinctive atmosphere that feels unmistakably St Petersburg. At times, Peter the Great himself joins our team, played by a presenter in the role of the city's founder. This turns a standard presentation into an interactive experience that people remember and talk about. When we present St Petersburg, we aim to create a real emotional connection and tell the story of the city we love in a way that makes people want to see it for themselves," says Sergey Azarenkov, General Director of the St Petersburg Convention Bureau.

The most important outcome is practical: partnerships that help grow visitor flows. At every exhibition, the St Petersburg stand becomes a hub for business meetings, new contacts, agreements and joint projects.

PRESENTING ST PETERSBURG AROUND THE WORLD

In 2026, St Petersburg took part in key international travel events: Guangzhou International Travel Fair in China; PATA Travel Mart in Malaysia; Ho Chi Minh City International Travel Expo in Vietnam; and Business + Leisure Travel and MICE in India.

The city was also represented at International Travel & Tourism Trade Fair "OTDYKH" in Belarus, and at Moscow International Travel & Tourism Expo (MITT), International Tourism Forum "Let's Travel!", International Regional Hospitality Exhibition and Forum "Intourmarket" and OTDYKH Leisure Travel Market in Russia.

The Convention Bureau also organised photo exhibitions in major cities across South Africa and in Mongolia. Featuring the city's architecture, cultural heritage and urban landscapes, they introduced international audiences to the many sides of St Petersburg — a city where history and modern life meet.

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THE SOUND OF TOGETHERNESS

Music has always been a way of bringing people together. Rhythms, instruments, spaces and social rules have changed, but the human need to connect through a shared sound has never disappeared. From ritual songs and dances around a fire to stadium concerts and business events in modern hotels, music continues to perform the same essential function: it creates an invisible space in which many individuals can, for a while, become part of a shared experience.

Neuroscientist and music researcher Daniel Levitin considers social bonding one of the historical functions of music. He argues that early humans used music to relieve social tensions and strengthen bonds within the group. At the same time, he argues that the modern Western model in which professional musicians perform while everyone else listens emerged relatively recently. For most of human history, music was much more closely connected to everyday life and direct participation.

The way people come together through music has constantly evolved. In some cultures, music was inseparable from ritual and collective action; in others, it became a way of communicating, playing and passing on traditions. Seen from this perspective, the history of music reveals a gradual transformation in the way people belong to a group: from direct participation in a shared rhythm to focused listening, then to self-expression and, eventually, to the creation of a complex shared experience.

ETHNIC — THE RHYTHM OF COMMUNITY

Some tourists once shared a memory that had stayed with them as one of the strongest impressions of their trip to St Petersburg. Walking along the shore of the Gulf of Finland on a White Night, in almost complete silence broken only by the sound of the waves, they heard very quiet, unfamiliar music coming from somewhere beyond the trees or a line of rocks. Rhythmic but gentle drumbeats and unfamiliar ethnic instruments seemed almost disconnected from the modern world. It was impossible to tell immediately who was playing or where the sound was coming from. Yet that uncertainty made the moment even more powerful: for a few minutes, the familiar sense of time and place disappeared, and the modern shoreline seemed connected by invisible threads to a much older human experience.

Ethnic music reminds us of one of the earliest forms of musical communication. People do not simply come to listen to it — they participate in it. It accompanies dance, celebration, ritual and other collective activities, and cannot easily be separated from the community that performs it and takes part in it.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF BEING TOGETHER

For example, in the drumming traditions of the Ewe people of Ghana and Togo, rhythm does not simply accompany dance — it helps organise the collective action itself. A lead drummer gives signals, dancers respond with movement, while other participants support the musical pattern through clapping, singing and playing additional drums. People are not merely listening to performers; they become part of the ritual, the dance and the music.

Another example can be found among the Inuit. Traditional throat singing, usually performed by two women, takes the form of a musical dialogue: the participants create short rhythmic and breathing patterns in turn and try to continue longer than their partner. The practice was part of everyday life — women sang while playing together during long winter evenings and also used the singing to lull children to sleep. Here, too, music does not exist separately from communication: it becomes the interaction itself.

This characteristic of musical participation is well described by musicologist Matthew Rahaim, Associate Professor of Music at the University of Minnesota. As he writes, “Ethnomusicologists have long been fascinated by the idea of participation” and by the way participatory music-making can draw individuals into forms of solidarity.

Music becomes less a work of art than a way of saying: we are here, we are together, we share the same tradition.

This is the principle of “we gather”.

MUSIC THAT BRINGS US THROUGH THE AGES

The model has proved remarkably resilient. Contemporary ethnic festivals, folk celebrations, opening ceremonies and cultural programmes still use music as a tool for bringing audiences together physically and emotionally. Technology may transform the stage, lighting and acoustics, but the basic logic remains the same: first, people are brought together in one space; then they are given the opportunity to feel part of what is happening. Music survives through reinterpretation. One extraordinary example is the Hurrian Hymn No. 6, a song dedicated to the goddess Nikkal and inscribed on a clay tablet around 1400 BC in the ancient city of Ugarit. It is one of the oldest known songs with surviving musical notation, and modern musicians have reconstructed and performed it more than three thousand years after it was first written down. The exact melody remains open to interpretation, but the very fact that people can still bring this ancient musical idea to life connects performers today with a community that disappeared millennia ago. Hearing some of its modern reconstructions, one might almost be tempted to call it “ancient Syrian rock”.

A much more recent, but equally telling example is Greensleeves, the traditional English folk song first documented in the sixteenth century. Unlike the Hurrian hymn, it has been performed and reinterpreted countless times, moving across genres, generations and cultural contexts. Its melody has become so familiar that it can be placed in completely different musical settings while remaining recognisable — a reminder that folk music does not simply preserve the past, but continues to be reshaped by the people who inherit it.

We remain. We remember.

Music can therefore carry not only a tradition, but also a connection between people who may be separated by centuries.

Scan and enjoy ethnic dance and music



CLASSICAL — THE ART OF PERFECTION

Classical music creates a very different way of being together. Here, participants are not expected to perform the music or move to a shared rhythm. Instead, they are expected to pay attention, while a certain distance between performers and audience is established through a set of behavioural rules.

The concert hall becomes a space where dozens of musicians follow the same score and the conductor's interpretation, while hundreds of listeners adopt the same rhythm of interaction: silence during the performance, concentration, anticipation of the climax and a response at the appropriate moment. Togetherness is no longer based on doing the same thing, but on agreeing to follow shared rules and experience a complex work at the same time.

We listen. We appreciate. We learn.

This is a different social code of music: distance, attention, mastery, etiquette, and a clear distinction between performer and listener. A person becomes part of the community not because they are doing the same thing as everyone else, but because they understand the rules of the space and share its values.

Yet classical music also reveals another side of collective experience. When an orchestra follows a score in perfect synchrony and an audience responds to the performance as one, many individuals become connected through a result that cannot be created by one person alone.

We experience perfection together.

And that is a very different form of belonging.

CHANGING WITHOUT LOSING ITS POWER

Classical music, however, has never remained frozen in its historical form. Today, works from previous centuries are given new life through contemporary arrangements, electronic music and reinterpretations, allowing different generations to meet within the same musical work. A particularly striking example is Recomposed: Vivaldi — The Four Seasons by Max Richter. The composer took Antonio Vivaldi's famous Four Seasons and, while retaining recognisable elements of the original, reimagined them through a contemporary musical language. For the listener, the result is neither simply an eighteenth-century composition nor simply a modern work, but a meeting point between two musical eras.

A more playful and immediately accessible example comes from The Piano Guys. In The Cello Song, cellist Steven Sharp Nelson takes the Prelude from J. S. Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 — originally written for a single cello — and turns it into a layered performance built from eight cello parts. Additional melodies, rhythmic patterns and even percussive sounds produced on the instrument transform a familiar Baroque composition into something closer to a contemporary instrumental track.

The two interpretations are very different, but their underlying principle is the same. The language of performance may change, but classical music can still connect people across generations.

MUSIC TO MAKE US FEEL

Meanwhile, the classical tradition has moved beyond the concert hall itself. One telling example emerged in the London Underground. In 2003–2004, London Underground began experimenting with classical music in station ticket halls, waiting areas and passageways. The initial aim was to improve passengers' experience and reduce antisocial behaviour. Research conducted several years later found that around 85% of those surveyed supported the practice, while passengers reported feeling calmer, happier and less stressed when classical music was played. Eventually, the programme was available at 64 stations.

Here classical music stops being an object of special attention. A passenger does not come to a concert or choose a piece to listen to; the music becomes part of the environment and influences the emotional perception of the space.

This is particularly relevant to hospitality and events. Sound can do more than accompany what is happening: it can shape the atmosphere of a place, set its pace and influence its emotional register.

Scan and enjoy classical dance and music

DISCO — THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Disco brought the listener back into the role of an active participant, but fundamentally changed the basis of that participation. People were no longer brought together by a shared tradition or ritual, but by the possibility of expressing themselves in a common space.

The club and dance floor became places where sound could not be separated from movement, light, clothing, bodies and behaviour. Music was no longer simply something that filled the room: its social effect was created directly by the audience, which danced, moved, interacted and shaped the atmosphere together.

Most importantly, people on the dance floor did not have to move in the same way. On the contrary, the dance floor allowed individuality and turned it into part of the collective energy.

"I can be myself — and that is precisely why I belong to this group."

A new principle emerged: we express, we connect, we belong.

FROM LISTENING TO SELF-EXPRESSION

For disco, this idea also had a very specific historical context. The genre developed within the club culture of 1970s New York, where the dance floor became a space for freedom, self-expression and new forms of social interaction.

At the same time, disco became one of the great musical laboratories of its era. One of the most telling examples is I Feel Love by Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder, released in 1977. Its combination of repetitive synthesiser patterns and a dance-oriented rhythm became one of the defining sounds of the emerging electronic music scene and influenced the development of synth-pop, house, techno and other genres. In 2024, the recording was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

Disco therefore changed not only the way people danced, but also the idea of what a musical space could be. Sound became increasingly electronic, club culture became increasingly visual, and the artist gradually became a central figure in a larger spectacle.

Music was no longer simply a composition to be heard; it was becoming an experience to be seen and lived.

One of the symbols of this transformation was Michael Jackson. His Thriller in 1983 turned the music video into a major visual event and helped MTV evolve beyond its initial rock-oriented identity to become a global cultural phenomenon.

Music was thus moving closer to the form that the event industry knows so well today: the artist, stage, choreography, lighting, visual language and audience become part of one integrated experience.

THE SOUND OF TOGETHERNESS

Music can bring people together even when they are not in the same place. A song, rhythm or musical instrument can travel far beyond the culture in which it was created and become a way of encountering another one. Music moves through time, across borders, between cultures and generations. A local musical style can become an international genre; a traditional melody can become part of a new composition heard by people on the other side of the world.

This ability to create connection despite physical distance is highlighted by Eric Clarke, music psychologist at the University of Oxford. He describes music as "a collective experience which can overcome physical distance" and argues that physical separation does not necessarily prevent "social togetherness". Singing together, he notes, can create "a palpable sense of social solidarity".

This matters in a world where musical experience is no longer tied to a single place. A concert can take place simultaneously on a stage and on the screens of thousands of viewers; a local musical tradition can become part of an international festival; and a composition created decades or centuries ago can continue to live through new interpretations.

But the modern event has inherited all of these models and brought them together within a single system. A festival still creates a sense of community; a concert still builds shared attention; a dance floor still preserves the freedom of self-expression. A conference or corporate event adds several more layers: architecture, programme design, visual communication, technology, gastronomy, lighting and audience engagement.

Here music does real work. It can subtly change the pace of a space, emphasise the highlights of a programme and create emotional connections between separate parts of an event. In a hotel, conference hall or festival venue, music becomes part of the architecture of the experience.

This is why contemporary events increasingly work not only with content, but also with feelings. A guest should not simply receive information or watch a performance; they should remember how they felt among other people.

Formats will continue to change. New spaces, technologies and ways of interacting with audiences will emerge. But the reason people come together will remain the same.



“AN EVENT IS NOT A SINGLE TRACK. IT'S AN ENTIRE ALBUM”

Surrounded by records, instruments and art in Andrey Galich's creative space, we sat down for a lively, immersive interview for MUSIC&More. MICE&more CEO Lina Moskvina asked the Head of the Concertmaster Project and Incentive Club some intricate and deep questions: why can silence matter more than music, how can colleagues become an orchestra, and why would top executives choose the thick of a Metallica crowd over a VIP box?

LINA MOSKVINA: Andrey, this room is full of music, vinyl records and art. What part does music play in your life and work?

ANDREY GALICH: There's music in every part of my life. Sometimes I can almost “hear” an event before I can see it: its tempo, the climax, where a pause is needed. If the running order doesn't play in my head like a piece of music, something is wrong. For an event organiser, music is a way of guiding emotions and attention. In a sense, the organiser is a conductor.

Music is also my memory, a diary of my life. I may forget a date, but I can remember what was playing on the way to an airport or in a taxi, and suddenly the people and the whole occasion come back to me. We've delivered projects in 127 countries, and many of those trips have their own soundtrack.

I love browsing record shops. Ten years later I can pick up an album and remember where I found it, who was with me, where we had lunch, even what the weather was like.

“PUTTING ON A RECORD IS A DECISION”

LINA MOSKVINA: Where did your love of vinyl come from? And which records mean the most to you?

ANDREY GALICH: It goes back to childhood. My father is a professional musician; back in the Soviet era, he collected rare foreign releases. I would study the covers and read the sleeve notes, even before I really understood the music.

I have more than 6,000 records now, starting with Psychic TV's Live in Tokyo from 1984. I also have signed editions whose value has nothing to do with what they might fetch at auction. It's the stories behind them.

LINA MOSKVINA: Why is vinyl appealing to so many people again, especially younger listeners?

ANDREY GALICH: A record is something you actually own.

> And playing it is a conscious decision: you take it out of its sleeve, lower the needle and spend the next twenty minutes listening to one side of the album, just as the artist intended. It's a way to slow down, almost a form of meditation. For younger people, it isn't nostalgia. It's an escape from the digital rush.

And there is the visual side of it. A 30-by-30-centimetre sleeve, inserts, photographs, lyrics — the whole thing is a work of art. An artist creates not just a collection of tracks but a concept, the music and the visual world around it. So much of that gets lost on a phone screen.

“YOU CAN'T JUST BRING IN THE SPEAKERS AND CALL IT A DAY”

LINA MOSKVINA: How do you approach sound at events? What mistakes do you see most often?

ANDREY GALICH: People spend serious money on venues, decor, catering and even scent marketing, yet may have almost nothing left for a considered soundtrack. Music is part of the event's architecture, not an afterthought.

Sound architecture is about directing attention. People need to hear, understand and remember what is being said.

> If a message doesn't get through to employees or clients at a business event, the company then has to spend more time and resources getting that message across again. So good sound has a direct bearing on how effective the event is.





We choose music for the brief, the brand and the people in the room. Their ages, backgrounds and countries of origin help us work out what will resonate. Playing the current charts isn't a strategy.

Silence matters just as much. An executive can walk onstage to music, but it must give way before they speak. Nothing is worse than cutting it off abruptly after the speech has begun. Sometimes a pause before a keynote or after a film has more impact than a jingle.

LINA MOSKVINA: At networking events the music can be so loud that people leave with no voice left.

ANDREY GALICH: Because sound is treated as a line in the technical budget: connect the equipment, bring in a DJ, job done.

An event isn't one track — it's an album. Arrivals, speeches, networking, dinner and the party need different tempos. Music should put people at ease, leave room for conversation and build energy as the evening goes on. We plan cues and transitions around the acoustics: a glass hall sounds nothing like a marquee. You can't just bring in the speakers and call it a day.

Most importantly, the music has to work for the audience, not just please the DJ or the organiser. Sometimes DJs say, “I don't take requests.” That's fine at their own show.

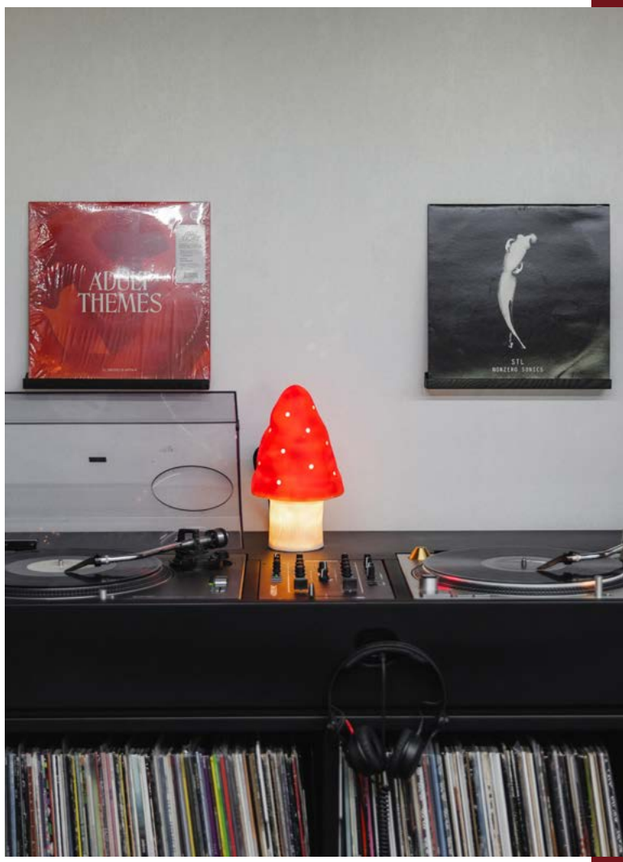
> But at a corporate event, personal preferences have to take a back seat. Sometimes the best compliment is when nobody notices how perfectly the soundtrack fitted the event.

You also need a Plan B: a spare wireless microphone, a backup music source and extra batteries. If the sound fails mid-presentation, the programme must go on. At a live event, anything that can go wrong eventually will.

LINA MOSKVINA: I recently heard a brilliant covers band — young musicians, a genuinely interesting set list, even Depeche Mode. And this huge audience barely reacted. I was thinking, “Come on, are you alive? At least blink!” Why does that happen?

ANDREY GALICH: Live musicians become part of the scene, not just its soundtrack. A jazz trio in the lounge works beautifully, and guests enjoy meeting the players. It's different from music simply coming out of the ceiling. But at an exhibition, that same trio might distract from what's on display.

Even a great covers band can fall flat if it doesn't fit the audience. The trick is to guide the mood, not just turn up the volume.

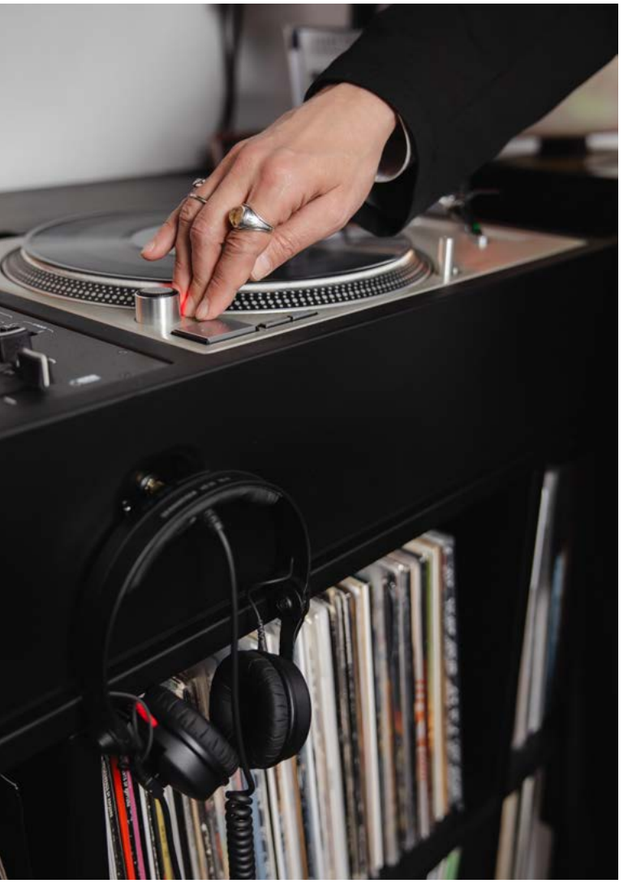


“A DRUMMER IS FUN!”

LINA MOSKVINA: How did Concertmaster come about — the team-building experience where colleagues pick up violins for the first time and become an orchestra?

ANDREY GALICH: Everybody knows the phrase “our team works like an orchestra”. I wanted to bring the metaphor to life.

> We chose the violin, an instantly recognisable symbol of an orchestra: compact and very photogenic. And here's the paradox: it's quite easy to pick one up, learn a few basic movements and make a sound, but learning to play it properly is incredibly hard. That's why the first “I did it!” means so much.



For most participants, a violin is a completely unfamiliar object. At first they insist they won't manage it. Then comes that first terrible screech, and everybody laughs. Step by step, our instructor and concertmaster help turn individual sounds into a melody.

After about ten minutes, you hear a shared rhythm. You can't play in an orchestra and scroll through Reels. Try to slack off and you'll get some sharp looks from colleagues who aren't. Everyone has a part, has to listen and adapt — exactly what a business team needs.

After roughly an hour, we bring in a fuller arrangement and a live drummer. A metronome is boring; a drummer is fun! Suddenly people hear themselves as a real orchestra. A little earlier, nobody believed they could do it. Now they're playing an actual piece together. That change from “there's no way” to “we did this” is the heart of the project.

For Concertmaster, we break down familiar pieces into simple, playable parts – themes from Game of Thrones and Pirates of the Caribbean, songs by Imagine Dragons, Nirvana and The Weeknd. We can also arrange a company's own anthem for strings.

LINA MOSKVINA: What's the largest group you've worked with? And what do participants take away from the experience?

ANDREY GALICH: We've done it with 500 people — we have that many violins. That's the upper limit if everyone is to stay involved, and it takes about two and a half hours. What they get afterwards isn't the usual corporate highlights reel: it's a music video in which they're the orchestra. It's really them playing — we just give the recording a little polish.

Sometimes we even press the recording on vinyl and put it in a company-branded sleeve. We've had companies give their clients Christmas records featuring music performed by their own employees. It's a genuinely personal gift, not a recording by hired musicians.

LINA MOSKVINA: What about the online version – and some of the more unusual venues?

ANDREY GALICH: During the remote-work period, we arranged for violins to be delivered to participants. They joined over Zoom, sometimes from different continents. Afterwards the instruments were collected, and the company received a music video. We still run one or two online projects a year, but Concertmaster thrives on the energy of playing together in person.

One summer, sixty people played violins on the open deck of a slowly moving boat, with water and forest all around. We've performed on rooftops too, including in St Petersburg. Once, an office became an orchestra, with different sections rehearsing in separate meeting rooms before coming together. Colleagues kept asking, “What's Alexander doing in the meeting room with a violin? And why has Maria got a double bass?” Suddenly the office felt like a concert venue.

LINA MOSKVINA: What's the reaction you'll never forget?

ANDREY GALICH: After a summer event with almost 300 people, the company's finance director came up to me and said, “There are now two unforgettable moments in my life: my first parachute jump, and today, when I played the violin in an orchestra.”

That's why we do it: to give people memories like that.



“WE OFFERED THEM VIP COMFORT. THEY WANTED TO BE IN THE THICK OF THE CROWD”

LINA MOSKVINA: A concert can be the reason for an incentive trip, not just part of its programme. Have you organised trips like that? How are they different?

ANDREY GALICH: Our first corporate concert trip was to Los Angeles for Lana Del Rey in 2013. Since then we've taken groups to Metallica twice and to Sting. Sometimes clients dream of a particular artist; more often we make the concert the emotional centre of the trip. Even guests who've been to Istanbul many times might return for a favourite band. In the past, Formula 1, football or the Olympics often played that role.

LINA MOSKVINA: What does an organiser need to think about first?

ANDREY GALICH: If the concert is the reason for the trip, the artist's schedule dictates everything: flights, hotels, staff holidays, budgets. It's best to start nine to twelve months ahead, and earlier if visas are involved. Tickets for the biggest shows go fast, and you need to keep a group seated together. That's why we work with reliable ticket suppliers, often opting for official hospitality packages with dedicated areas and extra services. But you have to understand what people actually want.

Once we took a group of very senior executives from a major Russian company to Metallica. These were people at the very top who had flown in specifically for the gig.

LINA MOSKVINA: To live out a childhood dream.

ANDREY GALICH: We offered them comfortable seats in a box, the full VIP treatment — champagne, cognac, everything. And they said, “No, we want to be right down there in the thick of the crowd, where the real mayhem is, close to the stage.” So that's what we arranged. It was brilliant.

LINA MOSKVINA: So the key is understanding what people really want from seeing their favourite musician. What logistical difficulties tend to be underestimated?

ANDREY GALICH: Getting everyone together after the concert.

When 60,000 to 80,000 fans leave a stadium at once, “let's meet outside” simply doesn't work. We draw up a map in advance: a clear route, an exact meeting point, everyone's contact details, where the transfer will wait and how it can get there. Even thirty people in a crowd like that can be a serious logistical challenge.

For groups travelling from Russia, we also have to factor in visas, connecting flights and payment arrangements abroad. And if the show is postponed or cancelled, you need a Plan B.

LINA MOSKVINA: Do you also prepare people for the music before the trip?

ANDREY GALICH: Of course. You can send everyone a playlist beforehand, hold a pre-party or watch a concert recording together. When people recognise the songs at the live show, the experience hits harder. You can build the rest of the itinerary around recording studios, legendary clubs and other musical landmarks. Sometimes you can even arrange access to a soundcheck, backstage or a photograph with the artist. Meeting your idol can be worth more than the most luxurious hotel.

“AI CAN MAKE A RECORDING, BUT IT CAN'T REPLACE THE FEELING”

LINA MOSKVINA: What do you make of music generated by artificial intelligence?

ANDREY GALICH: I'm interested in technology, although I don't particularly want to listen to music that's entirely AI-generated just for pleasure.

We've seen these fears before: when electric instruments arrived, people worried about acoustic ones; when synthesisers appeared, they worried about the piano. Now they coexist quite happily, mix and complement each other. I think it'll be the same with AI.

We already use AI tools to create background music for particular briefs or quick musical sketches when a client isn't ready to pay for a fully commissioned soundtrack. It's fast and it keeps costs down. But people go to concerts for the human being onstage — their story, their energy. AI can make a recording, but it can't give you the feeling of playing something yourself, together with your colleagues. Of course, there are still big questions about music rights and how creators are paid.

Playlist



MUSIC-DRIVEN TRAVEL, A HEADLINER FOR MICE

In 2027, MICE planners will increasingly need to look beyond congress and trade show calendars and check what is happening on the city's stages. The 2027 leg of Metallica's Sphere residency in Las Vegas, Oasis Live '27 at Manchester's Etihad Stadium, Bruno Mars' four-night run at Singapore's National Stadium, Lollapalooza Argentina are all the sort of dates that can change the logic of a corporate itinerary.

For one company, a major concert week means higher rates, limited hotel availability and a reason to move the meeting elsewhere. For another, it is the natural climax of an incentive programme, an opportunity to host partners or an emotional reason to choose the destination in the first place.

Music events reshape a city's value for MICE, but their real impact depends on how well the organiser can turn high demand into a meaningful group experience.

A MAGNET OR A REASON TO CHANGE PLANS

Music tourism is often an individual traveller's story: a fan chooses a city for a favourite artist, then builds flights, hotels and extra experiences around the concert. In the MICE world, the same festival can attract one group and send another to a different week.

María Soledad Piñeiro, Founder & Director, Acercar Viajes DMC, sees this clearly in Argentina. Lollapalooza Argentina, one of Latin America's largest multi-genre festivals, will take place at the San Isidro Hippodrome on 12–14 March 2027. Cosquín Rock in Córdoba, the Buenos Aires Tango Festival and World Cup, and major stadium shows by international artists also affect the MICE calendar.

When events of this scale are on, congresses and meetings with flexible dates usually look elsewhere: hotels, transfers and city transport are under pressure. For an incentive group of 40 or 50 people, however, a concert can be the very reason to travel. In 2022, Acercar Viajes DMC hosted a group that came to Argentina for Coldplay's shows. The concerts set the travel dates and gave the group a shared experience that even the most spectacular gala dinner would struggle to replicate.



The UAE presents the same contrast. Lina El Fassi, CEO of A Sweet Spot Events & DMC, says UNTOLD Dubai, scheduled for 19–21 March 2027 at Dubai Parks and Resorts, can either attract a corporate or incentive group or prompt a MICE buyer to move the programme elsewhere. It depends on how flexible the itinerary is.



The festival requires hotels, transport and tickets to be secured early, but it also offers participants access to an event that will be talked about long after the trip.

For a MICE buyer planning a large congress, a quieter period will usually make more sense: it is easier to secure a room block, calculate rates and provide a clear route from airport to venue. Smaller groups of partners or top-performing employees may deliberately choose festival week instead.

MUSIC IN THE CITY, WITH THE GROUP, AND IN THE HEART

The benefit is not simply a ticket. A concert places the group inside the city at one of its most energetic moments. A strategy session or annual review can be followed by a shared evening that does not feel like another scheduled networking format. Clients have a more relaxed setting in which to talk, employees see that their contribution is being genuinely recognised, and the destination is experienced as a living place rather than a list of venues and attractions.

At the largest scale, festivals have long outgrown the standard weekend format. Coachella turns California's Coachella Valley into a travel season in its own right. Tomorrowland in Boom, Belgium, has its own travel programmes and temporary accommodation options. Glastonbury transforms the rhythm of a substantial part of Somerset. These events function as temporary cities, with their own routes, services and rules of access.

Sziget in Budapest, Primavera Sound in Barcelona and FANOMENON in Seoul offer a more urban version of the same idea, combining a festival with a full city programme. Artist-led trips follow a different logic. An Oasis show in Manchester is inseparable from the story of the band and its home city. A Metallica show at Sphere in Las Vegas is as much about the venue as the artist, with the visual environment playing a central role.

A music event is never a universal advantage. It either serves the group's objective or gets in its way. The more precisely an organiser understands that distinction, the more confidently a difficult date can be turned into a sought-after meeting point.

WHAT REMAINS AFTER THE FINAL NOTE

Festivals last only a few days, concerts only a few hours. What they leave behind can shape a city for far longer. The legacy is not limited to new venues, refurbished stadiums or additional hotel rooms. It also lies in a professional ecosystem of sound and lighting engineers, technical producers, security teams, artist-logistics specialists, caterers and crews able to manage major guest flows and deliver complex service at speed.



"Major concerts have left Buenos Aires with top-tier technical providers in sound, lighting and production that organisers can draw on for gala dinners and conference closings," says María Soledad Piñeiro. The same industry has also helped shape venues such as Movistar Arena and the modernised Más Monumental Stadium, which now host corporate events alongside artists and sports crowds.



In the UAE, the connection between entertainment and MICE infrastructure is particularly visible. Etihad Arena in Abu Dhabi hosts international artists as well as corporate events, while Yas Island and Dubai Parks and Resorts bring together venues, hotels, restaurants and entertainment within one cluster.

This makes it easier to build one coherent journey rather than piece together the daytime agenda, accommodation, dinner and evening experience from separate parts of the city. The same events keep local AV, security, transport and hospitality teams at a high level.

"Music events can add a strong emotional and experiential dimension to a corporate programme," says Lina El Fassi.

Morocco demonstrates another dimension. The Gnaoua World Music Festival and MOGA in Essaouira, Mawazine in Rabat, Jazzablanca in Casablanca, Tanjazz in Tangier, the Fez Festival of World Sacred Music, Oasis in Marrakech and events in the Agafay desert form not just a concert market but an entire ecosystem. Years of staging international festivals have built local expertise in stage production, artist logistics, security and crowd management. That expertise feeds straight into corporate gala dinners, brand launches and programmes in heritage venues or the desert.

The festival economy also brings challenges. A large event puts pressure on transport, public spaces and local communities. It requires clear movement plans, understandable logistics, work with neighbouring areas and careful management of guest flows. A beautiful festival poster does not automatically make a destination convenient for a business group.

When a city hosts major events successfully year after year, this capability becomes part of its MICE offer, even when the music has stopped. What remains is a team able to work quickly and accurately, venues with new possibilities and a city that knows how to welcome guests at moments of peak demand.

BEYOND THE TICKET

The most common mistake in working with a major music event is to buy tickets for the group at the last minute and call it an "additional activity". In that case, the concert remains a pleasant but random episode. It may not match the group's interests, create stress around transfers or simply get lost between a late dinner and an early airport departure.

A strong MICE programme builds the event in from the start. The planner needs to understand who will be in the group, what kind of impression the buyer wants to create and what role music should play: rewarding a team, strengthening client relationships, revealing the character of a destination or giving participants space for informal conversation.



"The model we use is simple: meetings and workshops by day, VIP festival passes by night," says Habib El Fassi, Visit Morocco Travel & Events Managing Partner. For one group, the Gnaoua Festival in Essaouira and its local cultural identity may be the right fit. For another, it may be an electronic-music programme in Marrakech. For a third, an intimate concert or private performance in Agafay.

Before booking, planners need to assess the level of access, opportunities for privacy, journey time, traffic around the venue and whether the music itself suits the group's age, nationality and expectations.

In Argentina, a stadium concert can be paired with dedicated transport and a separate hospitality area when a group needs privacy. The same wish for music can also be answered more intimately: with a private tango show, a tango lesson or a dinner with a live performance. A major concert and a local cultural experience do not compete with one another. Together, they give planners a range of options, from the energy of tens of thousands of people to an almost personal evening.



"Integrating high-profile music events into a Doha itinerary allows companies to turn business trips into highly structured networking platforms," says Mohammed Firas Al Obisi, CEO of Doha Magic Adventures DMC. The Qatar Grand Prix, scheduled for 3–5 December 2027 at Lusail International Circuit, shows how daytime meetings and client hosting can flow naturally into an evening concert programme.

Music becomes more than entertainment after work: it creates a setting for informal relationships, which can matter as much as the formal agenda.

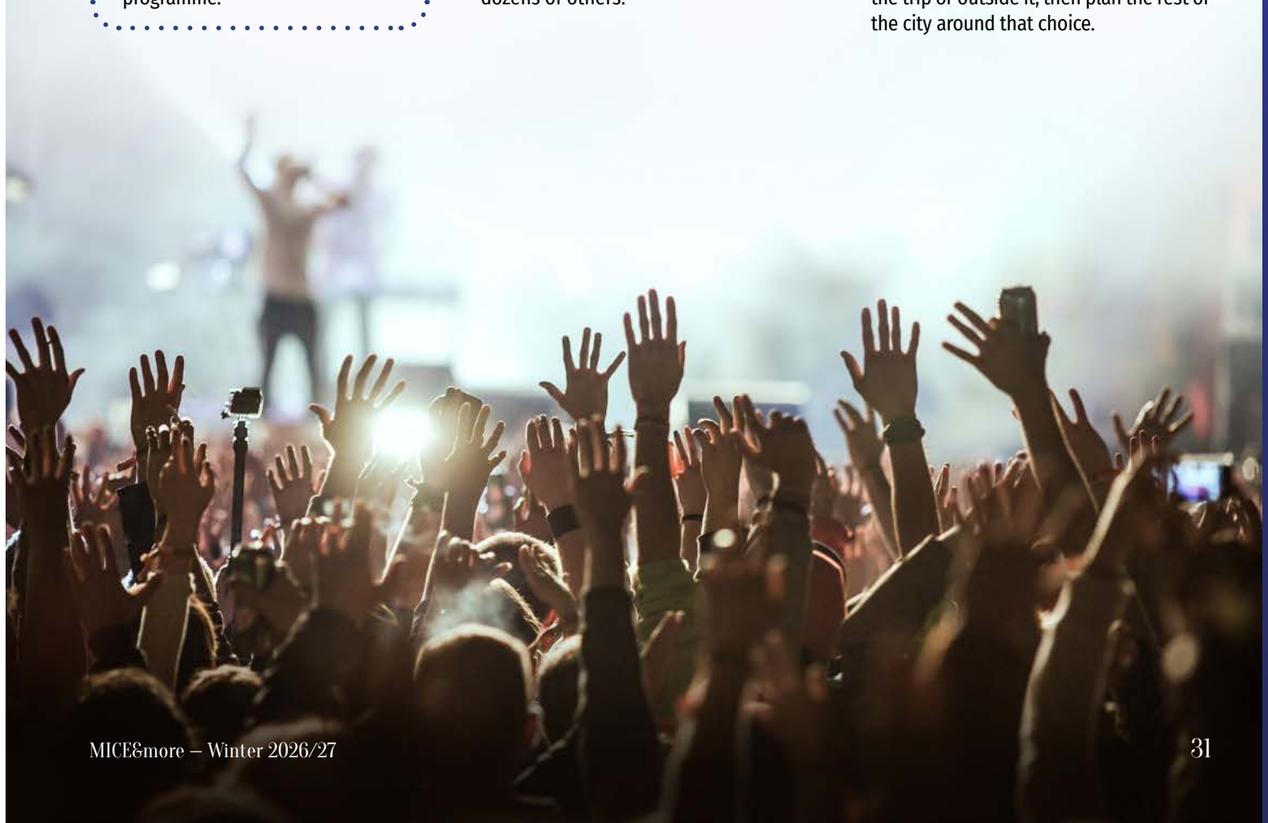
Cultural institutions and open-air productions create another kind of musical magnet. The Royal Opera House Muscat season, Aida on Sydney Harbour and major productions in Europe's historic theatres can be just as persuasive a reason to travel as a multi-stage festival. Their value is different: they give a group access to an experience that cannot be fully recreated elsewhere. The business agenda does not disappear, but it gains a precise and memorable cultural continuation.

Music is no longer a decorative layer added to make an itinerary look more attractive. It helps a group experience the city together, creates topics of conversation beyond the meeting room and makes a business trip distinct from dozens of others.

WHEN MUSIC, ROUTE AND PURPOSE MEET

Major music events reshape a city in several ways at once. They make planning more demanding, increase pressure on hotels and transport, require earlier ticketing and more careful routing. At the same time, they renew infrastructure, develop professional expertise and give the MICE industry a rare resource: a shared experience that cannot be ordered from a standard catalogue.

That is why it is not enough for a planner to find a concert on suitable dates. The more important question is who in the group actually needs it, and what story it can help tell. One group may need the energy of a stadium crowd; another, an opera performance, a private dinner and a few carefully chosen seats in the auditorium. The strongest programmes do neither by accident. They decide early whether music belongs at the centre of the trip or outside it, then plan the rest of the city around that choice.



I LISTEN, THEREFORE I WANDER

Have you ever listened to a sunset? Or a sunrise? Go on — listen. They sound, and each time they sound different, depending on where and when you are.



My own sunset lives on the shore of a resort sea, when the sweltering beach day has finally gasped its last, when the sun — now bearable to the naked eye — visibly rolls towards the horizon, and the sun-soaked bathers suddenly turn into frantic gatherers, snatching up towels and sandals scattered everywhere, trooping back to their rooms to scrub off salt and rumple into something decent for the summer dinner. At that hour, every noise goes slack in the air — no longer a taut, bright string, but muffled, cottony, as if dropped into a vacuum — and eventually it all dissolves into the thickening dusk, which seems hell-bent on tipping its grey shadow over every meadow. In the bushes nearby, crazy cicadas start their mechanical monologue. I knock back the last lukewarm sips of Chablis, take my time, and listen. The quieter you become, the more you hear. The same is true of a train pulling out of a station in Zurich, or a muezzin's call bouncing off minarets in Marrakech, or the first clatter of a market awakening in Bangkok.

I love the scrape of a knife over a Saturday toast — crisp, golden, still warm from the pan — spreading a whisper-thin layer of butter that's just given up its chill, and then a slick of amber apricot jam on top. At the same time, I love the hiss of a street-food vendor's wok in Hanoi, the sharp clatter of chopsticks against porcelain, and the sizzle of fresh spring rolls hitting hot oil. I love the sizzling, whistling whisper of a lit candle, and the puffing, grumbling, hypnotic mutter of a fireplace — a rare guest in my city life. Yet nothing beats the rhythmic clack of a night train on old rails, or the sudden silence when it enters a tunnel. I love the sound of rain — pitiful and polite, tapping on windowpanes and tin gutters the tune of 'let me in' — but I also adore its aggressive cousin: a tropical downpour drumming on corrugated roofs in Ubud, drowning out all conversation until it suddenly stops, leaving only dripping eaves and a chorus of frogs.

I love the slap of a breaking wave, its snorting white foam vanishing into sand as coarse as rice in a single breath — and I love the crunch of volcanic grit under my shoes on a black-sand beach in Iceland. I love piano playing — anything, really: clumsy, amateur, even on a piano that hasn't seen a tuner in years — because I have no ear for music, so I can love without judgment. But in a foreign city, I'm just as drawn to the off-key busker on a subway platform, his guitar case open and his voice rasping out a folk song I don't understand, yet the melody travels straight to my soul. I love the pop of a properly chilled bottle of fizz — fine, not necessarily champagne, just any dry white that goes pfft when the cork gives. And I love the pop of a tuk-tuk's engine backfiring in Colombo, or the gong-like bang of a wooden door slamming shut in a Venetian alley.

In winter, I love the crunch of slow steps on a fresh snow crust, sculpted overnight by a howling, moaning blizzard. In my childhood, that "music" was performed for us by felt boots, with a chorus of sleds dragging behind. Today we hear the same thing, each of us in our own version of UGG boots. But when I travel north, I listen for the creak and groan of glaciers calving into the sea — a deep, primal cracking that sounds like the Earth itself is yawning.

In summer, I love the roar of a July forest — already thick-cheeked, stuffed with May and June's feasting, breathing ultraviolet into every leafy lung. You walk through the woods. Silence. Then suddenly a gust tears across the treetops, startling birds into clapping flight, then drops floor by floor through the forest, rattling dry twigs and green branches, jangling ripening berries and nuts, and finally, with a sweeping rustle, covers your tracks with roadside grass, burdock flowers, and last year's pine needles and cones tangled in them. Ten seconds of noise — and then silence again. But in the Amazon, that same gust brings a thousand different chatters, squawks, and clicks, as if the jungle is a giant, living instrument that never quite falls silent.

My favourite sound? You'll never guess — it's the rumble-purr of a cat, that little motorised tractor of fur, who settles his pleasingly vibrating six kilos (the more, the merrier) right on your lap. I've heard similar motors in far-off places: the throaty growl of wild gorillas in Uganda, or the contented hum of a street dog dozing in the shade of a Greek taverna. Yet the cat's purr remains my anchor — a sound that follows me home, no matter which time zone I land in.

And one more thing — I love that musical jingle they play before announcements in most airports around the world. For me, a frequent flyer, it's not a starting pistol — ready, steady, go! — I don't even bother with what they're actually saying. It's more like the bell before a theatre curtain, accidentally performed with flair by amateur actors — the passengers — whom I love to watch while



sipping something yummy, no matter the hour. But the airport itself is a symphony: the whir of luggage carousels, the soft thud of passport stamps, the hurried heel-clicks on polished floors, and the whispered goodbyes in a dozen languages. For years, the top spots on my jingle podium belonged to the airports in Kuta, Bali, and Monastir, Tunisia. I haven't been back in ages; maybe they've changed their tunes.

Go on, pull out the earplugs of your life, and listen. The world is still scoring its best soundtrack, and you've got a front-row seat — whether you're at 10,000 meters, at a five-star deluxe hotel, or just sitting on your suitcase in a station hall. Every journey hums with a tune of its own. All you have to do is tune in.

THE SOUND OF A PLACE

Music can make a destination tangible through its rhythms and traditions, even before a guest has visited a museum or joined a city tour. That makes it particularly valuable at business events, where the timetable is often too tight for a separate cultural excursion. It may remain in the background, set the pace of the programme or take over an evening entirely. Either way, it can make a place feel more present and the event more memorable.

Music can immerse guests in the atmosphere of an event and of the city or venue that hosts it from the first minutes. At a welcome reception, during a coffee break or in the evening, local instruments, a familiar melody reimagined by local musicians or a DJ set can say something about a destination before anyone needs to explain it.

That matters when an international group's agenda is full of meetings, site inspections and networking. There may be little time for a dedicated cultural experience, and in those circumstances music can be one of the most effective ways to share something of the local culture with guests.

A traditional performance inserted between courses may add colour, but it does not automatically create a connection. Music works more convincingly when it has a place in the event's own story: when it helps guests arrive, shift focus, relax, meet one another or bring the day to a close.

A SOUNDSCAPE FOR AN ISLAND

For resort destinations, this is especially natural. Corporate groups do not simply visit a city for a few hours between meetings; they spend several days in one self-contained environment. The sound of that environment becomes part of the experience.



"In the Maldives, music rarely works as a pure background," says Emma Bell, Strategic Partnership Manager at Viluxur Holidays. "A live acoustic set at a welcome reception, a DJ at a sunset beach party or a band at a gala dinner each sets the tone for the whole programme."

An expert draws a useful distinction between formats. At a conference or a business meeting, soft instrumental or acoustic music can support arrivals, breaks and networking without competing with the content. At an incentive trip, product launch or gala dinner, it may become the centre of the evening: a headline act, a sunset concert or a programme built around a live performance.

The Maldives also provide a clear example of music as a first encounter with local culture. Bodu beru — the country's best-known traditional performing art — brings together drums, singing, dance and a rhythm that gradually gathers momentum. Guests are often invited to join in. And this is a good moment to remember that one of music's oldest and most enduring roles is to bring people into a shared action. As we explored in The Sound of Togetherness, it is not simply about giving people something to listen to, but about creating a moment in which they move, respond and take part together.

The most interesting option, Mrs Bell believes, is to avoid a strict choice between tradition and international entertainment. A bodu beru performance can flow into a DJ set; local drummers can appear within a contemporary musical programme. The result is recognisably Maldivian without asking an international corporate audience to adapt to an entirely unfamiliar format.

This approach also requires care. Local culture should not be reduced to atmosphere alone, and the format needs to suit both the guests and the setting. For the Maldives, that includes sensitivity to the country's Muslim context, as well as practical planning: artists, sound equipment and lighting may have to be brought to an island well in advance.

A WELCOME THAT SAYS WHERE YOU ARE

As in the Maldives, music in Nepal can offer guests an immediate introduction to the destination. It can be heard at gala dinners, corporate receptions, incentive programmes and welcome events, often alongside local food and hospitality.

The madal drum, sarangi and folk music can give a welcome dinner a clear sense of place. Suji Maharjan, Founder & Owner of Journey DMC, points out that organisers do not have to choose between tradition and contemporary formats. A programme may combine a cultural performance with modern music or a DJ, depending on the group and the concept.

For international delegates, Maharjan says, these performances go beyond entertainment: they create opportunities to connect with Nepalese culture and make business events more memorable.



"For international organisers, it is important to select performances that reflect the destination while considering the audience, event objectives, and cultural sensitivities. In Nepal, where hospitality and cultural traditions are central to the visitor experience, thoughtfully selected music can transform an ordinary corporate gathering into a meaningful cultural experience," Maharjan says.

A BANQUET WITH A SENSE OF PLACE

China takes the same principle in a more theatrical direction.

Emy Zheng, Inbound Manager at Viluxur Holidays, gives one example: some restaurants offer themed imperial

banquets, where guests enjoy Chinese cuisine while watching theatrical scenes inspired by the country's history, accompanied by music, dance and elements of acrobatics. For international groups, such experiences offer an engaging way to discover Chinese culture beyond the usual sightseeing programme.

The cultural encounter is not an optional excursion added to the itinerary — it is built into the evening itself.

Zheng also recalls a Hong Kong gala dinner where a DJ, host and carefully planned lighting guided the group from the official year-end review into a more festive, informal evening, illustrating why the choice of music should follow the event format and group profile.



"When planning MICE programmes in China, we recommend defining the role of music at an early stage. It may introduce guests to local culture, complement the business programme or become the centrepiece of the evening. Considering these elements in advance helps ensure that the music fits naturally into the overall event concept and supports the experience the organisers want to create," Zheng says.

HERITAGE IN THE PRESENT TENSE

Music can help make a historic setting feel active and relevant to the event itself. In Cairo, the Grand Egyptian Museum offers a particularly vivid setting for this approach: an orchestral programme or cultural performance can turn a corporate evening into an encounter with Egypt's history, without separating guests from the rhythm of the event.



Azza Zaghloul, CEO, Luxury Travel Expert in Corporate & MICE, and Cleo Owner Representative & Project Manager, says the choice should respond not only to a venue but to the programme, audience and timing. "Music is a defining part of Egypt's MICE identity. It can pace a full-day summit, support brand storytelling and turn a business gathering into a more immersive cultural experience."

That does not mean presenting tradition in its most formal form. Organisers may draw on classical tarab for its emotional depth, choose neo-oriental ambient music for a more contemporary setting or combine local and international formats. The right balance will depend on the corporate objective, the generational mix of the group and the moment within the day.

For larger incentives and international conferences, music can also take guests into the city's cultural life. The Cairo International Jazz Festival, held at AUC Tahrir Square, brings together international artists, workshops and networking in a central downtown setting. At the other end of the spectrum, Starlight Festival, developed by Serbia's EXIT Festival beside the Great Pyramids of Giza, shows how contemporary electronic music can turn an historic landscape into a shared experience for an international group.

NOT A PLAYLIST, BUT A ROUTE THROUGH THE DAY

Music can also help participants sense where they are in the programme. It marks the shift from arrival to conversation, from a working session to a celebration, and from one part of the day to the next.

In a previous interview with MICE&more, Andrey Galich, founder of the Concertmaster project, described music as a form of emotional navigation through an event.

Seen this way, a musical programme is less a playlist than a route through the day. A quiet acoustic welcome can make arrival feel unhurried; a change of tempo can release energy after a concentrated session. The point is not to soundtrack every minute, but to give each part of the programme its own emotional register.

When the music changes with the occasion, participants do not need to be told that the mood or purpose of the event has shifted: they feel it.

That principle does not require a concert or an elaborate production. It is a question of thinking about music before the event starts: what should arrival feel like? Where does the energy need to rise? When should the programme make room for conversation, reflection or celebration?

WHEN THE THEME BEGINS TO SOUND

The recent BE IN RUSSIA autumn session also offered an example. Its theme of Russian fairy tales was not confined to graphics, costumes or a final show. Familiar fairy-tale music in contemporary arrangements helped shape the atmosphere of the evening programme; characters appeared among the guests, invited them into activities and created new reasons for conversation.

The finale, with electrobalalaikas, songs and dancing, turned the theme into a shared experience rather than a visual reference.

The example is useful precisely because the music did several jobs at once. It introduced a cultural code, carried the event's central idea through the evening and gave guests a way to enter the theme together. Some heard it in the background; others became part of the action.

THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SOUND

Music has a psychological role, too. Research into background music and sustained attention suggests that its effect is not universal: it can shape arousal, engagement and the perceived load of a task, but the outcome depends on both the task and the listener. A busy networking reception and a demanding conference session therefore do not need the same soundscape.

Music also reflects a country's or a site's cultural character. At an international event, a local instrument, rhythm or performance can make a destination tangible without diverting guests from a tight programme. That is why it is a useful part of event design abroad, rather than simply a decorative addition to a gala dinner.

Finally, music has a practical role: it gives the programme contour. It can soften an arrival, signal a transition, create a pause after a working session or lift the room for the final evening. Used with restraint, it does not compete with the event; it helps participants move through it.



WTC CONGRESS CENTRE: SPACES, PEOPLE AND EXPERTISE FOR EVENTS OF EVERY SCALE

World Trade Center Moscow (WTC Moscow) has been in existence for over forty-five years. During this time, it has become one of the main destinations in the capital's business hub — a venue trusted to host events of international, state, and federal significance, a place where companies have been operating and developing for many years, and a name regarded by the nation's top leadership and the business community alike as a sign of quality and reliability.

The complex is also home to the WTC Congress Centre, one of the capital's major venues. It offers 6,000 square meters of space and is certified to the standards of the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC). Business, cultural and entertainment events are held here, including those at the highest level. Ahead of the New Year, MICE&more GLOBAL met with Daria Salamatova, Director of the WTC Congress Centre, to discuss the particular challenges of organising events today and the changes needed.

Since the start of the autumn business season in September 2026, Moscow has hosted several major events, including the Russia–Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum and the 8th Heads of State and Government Summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Member States. The International Collective Security Forum also took place in November. Some of these events were held at the WTC Congress Centre. And this is no coincidence.

Until recently, clients selected an event venue based on a core set of criteria: location, capacity and the number of meeting spaces. Today, they look at the entire event journey, considering it from the perspective of both the organiser and the guest. They take into account how easy the venue is to reach, how clearly visitors can find their way around, the quality of the food, the cleanliness of the restrooms, the comfort of the temperature and lighting, and the venue's online reviews. They also consider whether the business, exhibition and entertainment elements of the programme can be brought together naturally in one place.

MOSCOW: BUSINESS AND BEYOND

Moscow has everything needed to make an event a success. According to WTC Moscow, in 2022 the city ranked first in the world for urban infrastructure and quality of life in the UN City Prosperity Index. Its digital services, banking, public transport, restaurants, cultural and sporting projects and public spaces are part of a continuing investment in the capital's appeal and comfort for residents and visitors. Development has continued in the years since the ranking: in 2025, Moscow welcomed 26.5 million visitors.

Moscow is a vibrant, genuinely authentic metropolis with the energy of a major city. Life here goes on around the clock, all year round. During seasonal festivals, streets, squares and boulevards become one large open-air stage, filling the city with music, light, decorations and a festive atmosphere.

There is always something to do: stroll through the historic centre or take a boat trip along the Moskva River; visit the Moscow Kremlin Museums, the Tretyakov Gallery, the Pushkin Museum or another museum; go shopping, spend an evening at a fashionable restaurant or discover the city after dark. Moscow appeals to those who love big cities and are looking for variety and memorable experiences. Despite all this diversity, the level of service remains high — a fact noted by many of our international guests.

SPACES FOR EVENTS OF EVERY SCALE

WTC Moscow is an ideal place to experience the energy and rhythm of the business capital while enjoying a sense of calm and comfort. Originally created as a venue for the development of international business in Russia and designed as a "city within a city", the complex in central Moscow brings together all the infrastructure needed for productive work and a fulfilling stay. It offers office space for rent, four- and five-star hotels, its own banquet service, cafés and restaurants, a business centre, beauty salons and shops, a fitness centre, on-site parking with 2,000 spaces and other services.

In other words, everything guests need to stay, work and hold meetings without unnecessary logistical complications is available within one secure complex.

At the same time, WTC Moscow is more than a hotel, a conference hall and a business centre. It is an integrated complex where all these facilities operate together. This combination creates a distinctive competitive advantage that would be difficult for a single competitor to reproduce: neither a business centre nor a hotel nor a congress venue on its own can achieve the same combined effect as all these services working together under one roof.

Arrival is straightforward. Sheremetyevo Airport connects to Belorussky Railway Station via Aeroexpress in roughly 35 minutes. From there, a transfer to the complex takes just a few minutes. The venue sits 3 km from the Kremlin, with metro access nearby, the Moscow City business district five minutes away, and the capital's main business, cultural and tourist attractions within half an hour. This makes the complex an ideal location both for guests who want to be at the centre of things and move around the city easily, and for event organisers.

When an event venue such as the WTC Congress Centre is part of a large business complex with hotels, restaurants, parking and landscaped grounds, the client can consider the possibilities offered by the entire infrastructure. This approach is becoming increasingly popular because it reduces organisational risks and makes an event easier to manage. Understanding the "event journey and the client's journey within it" allows both venues and organisers to remain competitive even in a shrinking market.

Despite the emergence of new facilities and the development of major national venues, the WTC Congress Centre's format remains unique. It is neither a hotel function room, a banquet hall nor an exhibition pavilion. The Centre manages more than 30 halls and meeting spaces, ranging from small meeting rooms to the main Congress Hall, which can accommodate 1,500 people. These are arranged across three areas: the large two-story Congress Centre, the Ladoga business space and the separate conference floor.





The variety of spaces and their layout make it possible to host events in parallel or combine a plenary session with group work. The halls can also be reconfigured and fitted out to suit different concepts. They have accommodated a beach with sun loungers and umbrellas, an ice rink, a football pitch, a fighting ring, a fashion-show runway, an art gallery and much more.

Professional congress management, modern AV equipment and individual air conditioning, well-thought-out space zoning and transformable halls provide the infrastructure and support needed to bring these events to life.

THE DISTINCTIVE ATMOSPHERE OF A “CITY WITHIN A CITY”

Another important advantage of the WTC Congress Centre as part of this “city within a city” is its own hotel complex, which includes the five-star Plaza Garden Moscow WTC. The hotel is entering a new stage in its development, with repositioning as an important part of that process.

Plaza Garden offers opportunities for meetings that change plans and evenings without plans. Its concept caters both to business travellers and conference participants making short stays and returning frequently, and to weekend guests visiting with or without a special occasion. These are not two separate hotels, but the same audience at different moments in life: a business traveller can return to the same hotel with family for a weekend.

Business efficiency and intimate leisure are two distinct premium experiences under one roof. Plaza Garden is conceived not simply as a business hotel where guests can also relax, but as a fully dual-purpose offering: guests choose which world they wish to be in and receive the corresponding service. The scale and infrastructure of the complex allow them to choose a different experience each time — the precision and speed of a business meeting today, an evening without a single plan tomorrow. One address, the same level of care and two different reasons to return.

In addition, as part of World Trade Center Moscow, the WTC Congress Centre has a distinctive atmosphere, culture and history that are attractions in their own right. Visitors can see a fountain featuring Mercury, Zurab Tsereteli’s panel Historical Monuments of Russia, mosaics by Boris Talberg and the famous Russian Souvenir cockerel clock.

MAJOR TRENDS IN LARGE EVENTS

Based on the WTC Congress Centre’s experience, organising an international event and an event attended by heads of state have much in common: there are no minor details. Everything matters — protocol, guest routes and the management of visitor flows, security, the work of service teams, the reliability of technical solutions and readiness for changes to the programme at literally the last minute.

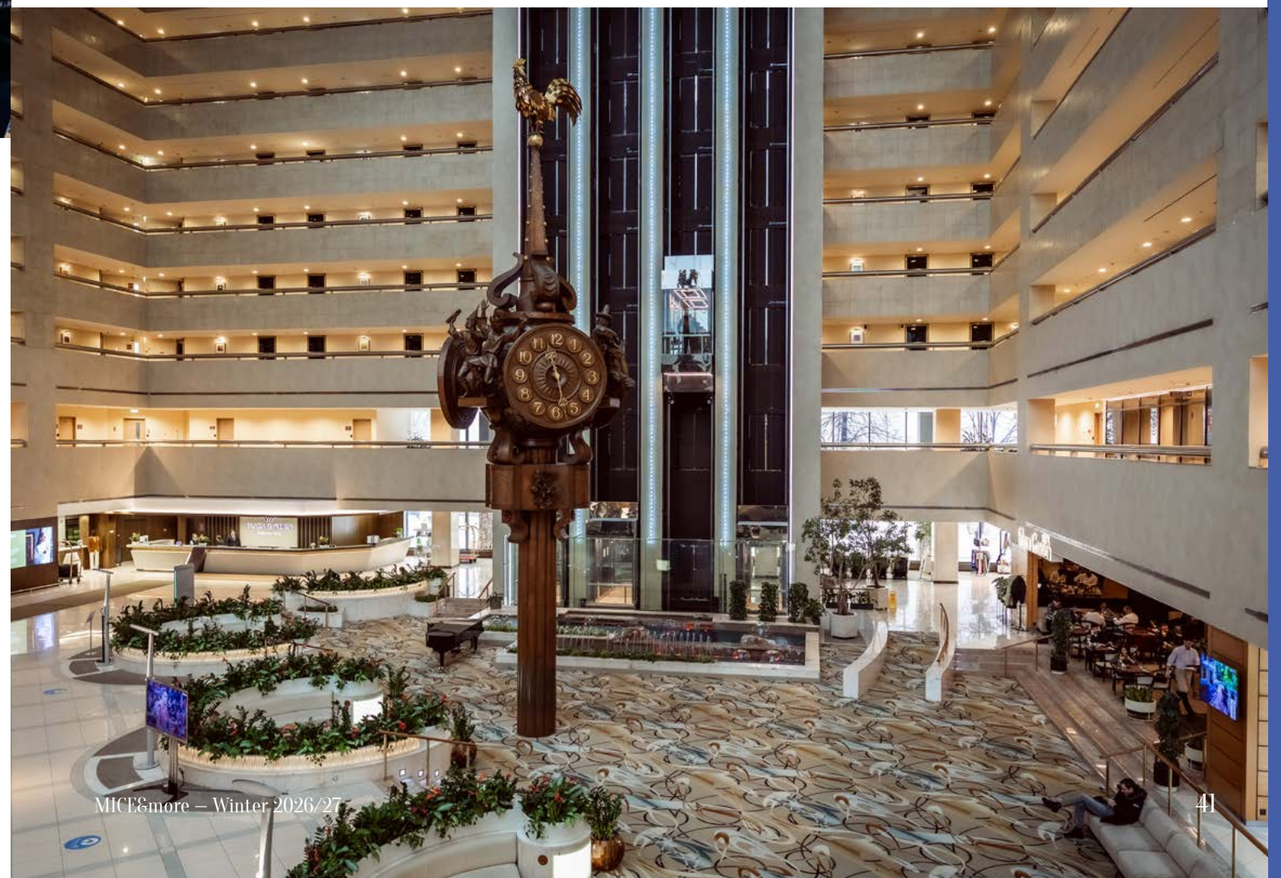
Such events require a structured approach, coordination, protocol, attention to guests’ cultural backgrounds and a venue prepared not simply to provide space, but to support a complex project with a high degree of professionalism.

SEVERAL MAJOR TRENDS ARE SHAPING THE ORGANISATION OF LARGE EVENTS.

THE FIRST IS THE GROWTH OF MULTI-FORMAT PROGRAMMES. Even serious business events are becoming more varied in structure. To hold the audience’s attention, organisers seek a balance between content, pace and opportunities for networking. A single event increasingly combines a traditional plenary session, parallel sessions for different audience interests, private meetings, exhibition and demonstration areas, interactive formats and, as an essential component, informal evening events for the most productive networking.

THE SECOND IS TECHNOLOGY, HYBRID FORMATS AND THE ADOPTION OF AI. The shift from flipcharts to smartphone voting and displaying information on screen reflects the growing value of a rapid response: results can be presented and discussed here and now, rather than processed afterwards.

THE THIRD IS THE GROWING VALUE OF THE CLIENT AND GUEST EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING ITS EMOTIONAL DIMENSION. Guests



should feel comfortable, know what to expect and feel at ease, so that they want to return and recommend the venue to others. This applies to every detail, from the first impression to the lasting impression of the event and the venue.

Emotions translate directly into business results: when people feel comfortable and see that attention is paid to them and their time is valued, they are more likely to return and become loyal clients. Managing emotions is therefore no longer a pleasant extra, but part of the economics of an event: it contributes to audience retention, repeat sales, reputation and revenue growth.

THE FOURTH IS SECURITY. Whereas the focus used to be on guests' physical safety, organisers have also had to learn to deal with DDoS attacks and, for high-profile events, provide for backup power supplies, PCR testing, additional treatment of premises and other measures.

THE FIFTH IS THE RETURN OF INTERNATIONAL EVENTS. And, alongside it, a stronger "Russian code". Interest in Russian culture is reviving in a contemporary interpretation, particularly through the use of national elements in design and décor, cultural programmes and cuisine.

The greatest challenge is coordination and communication across different functions. A large team is always involved in delivering such projects at the WTC Congress Centre. Alongside the congress centre's own employees, protocol teams and press services, it includes colleagues from other departments: hotel and banquet staff, the IT department, electricians, audio and video engineers, specialists responsible for load calculations and venue fit-out, security and cleaning teams, and occupational health and safety specialists. More than 200 World Trade Center employees may be involved in a single event, and all must work together as one team.

A FORUM FOR LONG-TERM DIALOGUE

One example is an event of particular importance to Russia that took place in October this year: the 8th GECF Summit, which brought heads of state and government of gas-exporting countries together at the WTC Congress Centre with their representatives and delegations. For a summit at this level, choosing a venue is about more than a selection of spaces. The event required not only a stage and a plenary hall, but also meeting rooms where delegations could work before and after the plenary session, separate entry routes, technical facilities, including simultaneous



interpretation, security and enough flexibility to deliver a programme that could change at short notice.

Natural gas remains a traditional foundation of many economies. Its infrastructure, from fields and processing facilities to pipelines, ports and power stations, is designed to operate for decades — and so are the decisions made around it. This is an industry with a long horizon, in which reliability allows countries to plan, households to heat their homes and industries to operate.

The Moscow summit had a more specific agenda than a general conversation about energy. According to the Russian Government, the main objectives of the Summit were promoting the use of natural gas in the global economy, analyzing the current state and forecasting the development of gas markets, exchanging experience, and facilitating technological cooperation among member states.

In anticipation of the event, Alexander Novak named the coordination of efforts to promote the legitimate interests of gas exporters in global energy markets and counteract unilateral economic restrictions, as well as enhancing the role of natural gas in global energy markets due to its affordability, reliability, versatility, and environmental friendliness among Russia's priorities within the Forum.

The summit concluded with the adoption of the Moscow Declaration. Its stated aim is to mark a new stage of cooperation among GECF countries, with an emphasis on stability, strategic autonomy and their capacity for development.

It enshrines not only general principles but also specific areas of joint work. Among them are the formation of new markets, including in Africa and other developing regions, the creation of mechanisms for long-term financing of infrastructure projects, technology exchange and the introduction of digital solutions, including artificial intelligence. The common task was to create conditions for building long-term mutually beneficial relations. It requires predictable market rules, long-term contracts and fair risk-sharing.

The meeting also coincided with the 25th anniversary of the Forum's foundation. The GECF has been an intergovernmental organisation since 2009; its full members include Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela. Summits of heads of state and government have been held regularly since 2011.

World Trade Center Moscow was built around the idea of international business dialogue — the patient work of bringing people, interests and decisions into the same room. For a summit dedicated to an industry built on long-term connections, the choice of venue is entirely logical: a place shaped by decades of international exchange provides a venue for discussion of the next stage of cooperation.

A TRACK RECORD OF MAJOR EVENTS

The WTC Congress Centre has the logistical, spatial and technical capabilities required, as well as many years of successful experience hosting events that combine multiple formats. These include the Made in Russia International Export Forum, the International Customs Forum, Sber's AI Journey conference and VTB's Russia Calling! Investment Forum.

The WTC Congress Centre has also hosted major events including the BRICS Media Summit, which brought together representatives of more than 60 media organisations from 45 countries; the BRICS Business Forum, "BRICS Partnership: Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security"; the International Economic Forum of CIS Member States; the Moscow City Tourism Committee's Meet Global MICE Congress (MGMC), which brought together more than 2,500 participants from 37 countries; and the 33rd IASP World Conference on Science Parks and Areas of Innovation, attended by more than 1,700 participants from 74 countries and featuring 69 speakers across 19 sessions, as well as many other significant events.

If you are looking for a balance of price, quality and atmosphere, a contemporary interpretation of tradition, culture and history, professionalism and a flexible approach, the WTC Congress Centre is an excellent choice.

The WTC Congress Centre is one of Russia's leading congress venues, hosting more than 300 events a year, including major events of national importance attended by heads of state.

THE WTC CONGRESS CENTRE OFFERS:

- More than 30 conference halls and meeting rooms
- 6,000 sq m of multifunctional space
- A configurable main hall for up to 1,500 people
- Additional meeting spaces for 10 to 500 people
- The Ladoga business space with nine functional zones for up to 350 people
- The separate conference floor with eight rooms for 30 to 250 people

THE MELODY OF MOSCOW: A WINTER AT HOTEL METROPOL

Just steps from the Bolshoi Theatre, Hotel Metropol welcomes the winter season with new ways to discover its history and contemporary approach to hospitality. Designer suites, a special menu for the New Year holidays and a cultural programme featuring leading Moscow museums complement a stay at one of the capital's most iconic historic hotels. Its history is intertwined with music and the arts, and its guest list has included some of the most celebrated cultural figures of their time.

NEW YEAR AT THE BOLSHOI, JUST STEPS AWAY

A stay at Metropol places guests in the heart of Moscow's cultural life, just steps from the Bolshoi Theatre, whose legendary New Year performances of The Nutcracker are a highlight of Moscow's winter season, drawing audiences from across Russia and abroad. For Metropol guests, an evening at the theatre becomes a natural extension of the hotel's connection to the city's cultural heritage.

The hotel's "Metropol: A Key to the City's Cultural Life" programme offers guests complimentary access to exhibitions at leading Moscow museums, including the State Tretyakov Gallery, the State Historical Museum, the Museum of Russian Impressionism and the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art. It also includes a Mikhail Vrubel exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts.





A HOTEL WHERE MUSIC HISTORY IS MADE

The hotel's location and its own history are inseparable from Moscow's musical and artistic life. Savva Mamontov, founder of Russia's first private opera, originally envisioned Metropol as a Palace of Arts opposite the Bolshoi Theatre, with a 3,000-seat opera hall, galleries, a grand hotel and a restaurant. The opera house was never built, but Mamontov's idea of a "theatre with a hotel" has remained part of Metropol's cultural identity.

Composer Sergei Prokofiev and singer Alexander Vertinsky lived at Metropol, while pianist Van Cliburn, actress Marlene Dietrich and actor Marcello Mastroianni were among the hotel's celebrated guests.

Metropol also has its own place in the story of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. It was over lunch with patrons at the hotel that Diaghilev found support for his idea of a ballet company that would go on to introduce Russian art to audiences around the world.

MODERN SUITES WITH HISTORICAL SOULS

Hotel Metropol's Deluxe and Premier Suites were designed under the direction of Jean-Michel Gathy, founder of the international design bureau DENNISTON. Continuing the renovation concept unveiled for the hotel's 120th anniversary in 2025, the interiors combine contemporary comfort with elements inspired by the building's history and Art Nouveau architecture. Flowing furniture lines meet wood, glass, textiles and metal, while high tented ceilings echo the dome of the hotel's main hall.

Each suite includes a bedroom, dressing room, workspace and living room; Premier Suites also have a separate dining area. The bathrooms are finished in Italian marble, and panoramic windows offer views towards the Moscow Kremlin, the State Historical Museum, the Bolshoi Theatre and Revolution Square.

THE NEW-YEAR MOOD WITH DELIVERY

For the New Year season, the hotel team, led by chef Alexander Mishakov under the guidance of executive chef Andrei Shmakov, has prepared a special delivery menu for a festive meal at home. New dishes include three-fish aspic, seared tuna with furikake and spicy sauce, Kamchatka crab, red caviar and pike perch soufflé, and a seafood salad with basil and capers.

Main courses include lamb shanks with rosemary sauce and quail with mandarin glaze and pine nuts. For dessert, guests can choose a Christmas cake with rum and dried fruit or a stollen with marzipan.

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Advertisement

WE HELP PEOPLE SEE RUSSIA AND WANT TO RETURN

A visit to Moscow's Museum of Cosmonautics gave one incentive traveller a new view of the history of space — a reminder to Victoria Korshunova that a journey can change perceptions. For MICE&more GLOBAL's music issue, Nordway's CEO spoke at the Arbat Stars Hotel about the details that shape a visit to Russia, its two capitals and the North.

LINA MOSKVINA: Our new issue — MUSIC&more — is devoted to the way music helps people feel a place. Russia has a rich soundtrack from its major cities to the North. You have worked in inbound tourism for almost two decades. How has international perception of Russia changed during that time, and what speaks most persuasively to guests today?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: My experience began in 2007, when Russia was very different for international visitors. The 2009 Eurovision Song Contest was a landmark for Moscow: English-language street signs appeared, and service, infrastructure and hospitality evolved in Moscow, St Petersburg, Kazan and beyond.

Today, Russia offers MICE clients high-quality venues and hotels, gastronomy, cultural programmes and the ability to solve non-standard challenges. Its distinctive strength is the diversity of its nature and regions. Demand for nature-based experiences has grown since the pandemic — from the North and Lake Baikal to the south.

LINA MOSKVINA: Moscow and St Petersburg remain the main magnets for international groups, but they are very different in character and atmosphere. How do you advise clients to choose between them when guests only have a few days? And when does it make sense to combine the two capitals in one itinerary?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: For three or four days, I would choose one city. They have distinct architecture, rhythms, cultures and experiences; on a short trip, it is better not to try to see everything at once. Guests should leave wanting to come back. Moscow is vast: even travelling between districts can feel like a small journey. Both capitals have rich cultural calendars. If they are combined, I would recommend at least five or six days, including time for suburbs, parks, palaces and places beyond the familiar classics.

LINA MOSKVINA: How did you come into the industry?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: I studied at the Faculty of Geography at Moscow State University. At the time, tourism was not yet a large, independent field: the department was part of the Chair of World Economy Geography, and the profession was often reduced to buying a holiday package at a travel agency. After my third year, I did an internship with a company working in inbound tourism, and it was a revelation: international visitors came to Moscow for leisure, and they were genuinely interested in our hotels, museums and city life.

I have worked in inbound tourism ever since. For me, it is above all about love for my country and for Moscow, where I was born and live. The most important feeling is when a guest says: "I have come to love your country even more, and I will definitely return." I remember one incentive group visiting the Museum of Cosmonautics. Afterwards, a participant came up to me and said: "I had always thought the Americans were first in space." Learning more changed his perception of Russia; he said he respected the country far more and would definitely come back. In such moments, you understand that the work matters. Little by little, we help people see Russia and want to return — with their families or friends.

LINA MOSKVINA: And nowadays, on a first visit do guests choose the "must-see" classics, or a more contemporary side of the city? And which opportunities in Moscow and St Petersburg do international groups still underestimate?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: A first visit usually centres on the essential classics, and that is absolutely right. You cannot come to Moscow and not see Red Square. But by the second or third trip, people are looking for something different: a theatre and a contemporary production, a new restaurant, an unusual urban route or a creative space. Sometimes clients are wary of these ideas: why experiment when there is a tried-and-tested programme? But when we do add an unusual place to an itinerary, it often becomes the strongest memory of the trip.

Advertisement

MICE Interview





In Moscow, I would single out VDNH. It is a whole world of architecture, parkland, museums, pavilions, gastronomy and the Moskvarium. The sheer scale of the place already makes an impression on an international group. Kolomenskoye is another good example, especially when a classic site is explored through an interactive programme or a quest. Stadium tours and other venues given a contemporary interpretation also work very well.

LINA MOSKVINA: The name Nordway points north. In recent years, the Murmansk Region and the Barents Sea coast have become increasingly visible on the travel map. How much demand is there from international MICE groups? What do they travel there for, and can an expedition-like feeling be combined with the level of comfort they expect?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: Demand for the Murmansk Region is growing very noticeably, especially from Asian markets. Moscow and St Petersburg often serve as hubs for these guests: they spend a few days here and then continue north. Three or four years ago, organising a corporate trip for eighty people in the region was not easy; accommodation and transport both required a great deal of effort. Today, this is a normal, workable group size for the market — the infrastructure has grown.

Of course, the North has its own specifics. We need to speak honestly about the weather, distances and the fact that parts of a programme depend on nature. Our role is to make the journey as comfortable and safe as possible and, if weather changes

the plan, to offer a worthy alternative. But the impressions are usually stronger than the inconveniences: northern gastronomy, the sea, extraordinary landscapes, whales, the chance to be above the Arctic Circle, to see the Northern Lights, the Polar Day or the Polar Night. In a metropolis, you rarely experience such immediate contact with nature; here, you feel part of it.

And today, that experience no longer means giving up comfort: after a long journey, guests can arrive at a high-standard hotel and let the whole experience settle in.

LINA MOSKVINA: Which international source markets are currently the most active, and how do their expectations differ?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: Our principal demand now comes from the Middle East and Asia — particularly India, China, the Philippines and Malaysia. For many guests from the Middle East, the classic route remains important: Moscow, St Petersburg and Kazan. Nature-based itineraries are still less common in the business segment, but I think that is a matter of time. Guests see the service level, return, and gradually become ready to go beyond the familiar routes.

When working with international groups, details that may seem small to us can be decisive. These include food and accommodation requirements, halal options, the preferred degree of meat doneness, or a handheld bidet shower in the room. It is important not merely to hear a request, but to translate it in advance into a clear action for the hotel, restaurant and guides. Much depends on the professionalism of partners and on our ability to find a solution quickly.

LINA MOSKVINA: If we talk specifically about MICE, which formats do international clients choose most often? Does the classic incentive remain at the core, and how much demand is there for immersive programmes, quests and other formats that allow a guest to experience the culture of a country as part of their own journey, rather than as a backdrop?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: Most enquiries are for incentive programmes. In the Middle East, they are also combined with study trips, conferences and delegation programmes. Clients sometimes ask for immersive formats — cultural quests and participatory team activities — though less often. Direct contact with culture works especially well: Russian gastronomy, folk dance, traditional costumes and crafts. These are a way to feel the place guests have come to.

LINA MOSKVINA: When an international client is considering Russia alongside other countries, what tends to become decisive in the final choice?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: When clients compare Russia with other destinations, flight connectivity can be decisive. For a large group, a route with a connection may be enough reason to choose another country, even if the programme in Russia is more interesting. The client also, of course, looks at the budget. But at comparable cost, Russia is often highly competitive: in Moscow, St Petersburg and a number of regions, we can offer five-star accommodation or a more comprehensive package where another market offers only a basic option.

Moreover, many business travellers are now eligible for an e-visa to Russia, making their trips easier and more convenient.

Russia is also still perceived as something unexplored, and that makes it attractive. Beyond Moscow and St Petersburg lie Murmansk, Altai, Lake Baikal and the towns of the Golden Ring — many destinations with very different characters. We have not yet discovered everything for ourselves.

LINA MOSKVINA: Whenever I meet industry colleagues abroad, I ask whether they have been to Russia and what stayed with them. I increasingly hear that first-hand experience has challenged old assumptions. In your work, which stereotypes tend to fall away once guests arrive — and how much do payments, connectivity, urban logistics and safety concern them today?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: These are understandable questions. Not being able to use a familiar foreign bank card is a real limitation, but for organised MICE groups most expenses are normally covered in advance, and personal spending can be planned for. There are practical connectivity solutions too: we offer available options and our accompanying staff are always ready to help on the ground.

At first, guests can be cautious: how will they order a taxi, use the internet or move around the city on their own? But experience quickly puts things in perspective. Public transport in Moscow and St Petersburg is fast, clean, safe and convenient; for many, it becomes not a forced alternative but a comfortable way to see the city. And a group always has an accompanying manager, so any non-standard task — from getting a taxi to visiting a pharmacy — can be resolved quickly.

Safety is also something that matters not just as a statement, but as a feeling guests can experience for themselves. People can read all sorts of things about a trip, but personal experience works more strongly than any publication. They arrive, see the city with their own eyes, relax, notice the warmth of the welcome and tell their colleagues about it. That word of mouth is extremely valuable.



LINA MOSKVINA: How does a professional team act when plans are disrupted by delays and flight cancellations?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: We cannot prevent a delay, but we can handle its consequences. We stay in contact with the airport and the group, monitor changes and rearrange transfers when necessary. Once guests pass border control, they should immediately meet their representative, board the bus and reach the hotel.

The hotel prepares a late dinner or early check-in so that people feel cared for. Disruptions are part of travel, which is why it is important to choose partners who can act calmly and quickly.

LINA MOSKVINA: Listening to you, I am struck by how much of MICE rests on women who carry a remarkable amount of invisible work — calmly, professionally and day after day. It feels as though we are working for the same goal. One place where the industry can come together is Meet Global MICE Congress. What role does it play for you?

VICTORIA KORSHUNOVA: We have been involved since the very first edition. The event has grown: preparation now starts six months ahead, sometimes even earlier. This year several clients will be there, and we are preparing a familiarisation MICE programme in Moscow to show non-standard solutions. For us, it is an excellent final point of the year: a chance to talk to international partners and a reminder that interest in Russia as a MICE destination is definitely there.

LINA MOSKVINA: Victoria, thank you. I hope you continue this mission with the same conviction and professional generosity. We are on the same team: each in our own way, we help people discover Russia, return to it and see it as a strong, welcoming destination.

THE SOUNDS OF RUSSIAN CITIES

MOSCOW

The voices of the Metro — Male voices announce stations on trains heading towards the city centre, female voices on trains heading away from it. Short musical signals are also part of the Metro's soundscape.

Birdsong in the parks — From the vast green spaces of Gorky Park to the historic gardens of Moscow's estates, birdsong offers a peaceful escape from the city's bustle.

The Kremlin Chimes — The famous clock on Spasskaya Tower marks the passing hours with melodies and bell strikes heard across Red Square.

ST PETERSBURG

The ringing of tram bells — A nostalgic sound of the city's historic streets, especially aboard its vintage trams.

The midday cannon — Every day at noon, a cannon fires from the Peter and Paul Fortress, a tradition dating back to the 19th century.

The waters of the Neva and the Gulf of Finland — Waves lapping against granite embankments and the sound of water along the city's waterfronts.

MURMANSK

The sounds of the port — Ship horns, seagulls and the industrial rhythm of one of Russia's major Arctic ports.

The crunch of snow — On a frosty winter day, every footstep makes a distinctive squeaking sound in the snow — one of the most memorable sounds of the Arctic.

A MUSICAL START TO EVERY JOURNEY

In Russia, even train journeys have their own soundtrack. Since December 2025, long-distance trains operated by the Federal Passenger Company (FPC) have featured The Journey Begins!, a symphonic poem composed by Kuzma Bodrov and recorded by the New Russia State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Yuri Bashmet. The music plays before departure and upon arrival at the final destination, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, adding a musical touch to the beginning and end of every journey.

BRIEFLY: UNEXPECTED PLACES TO ENJOY LIVE MUSIC IN RUSSIA

Looking for a memorable evening after a business event? From jazz clubs and historic mansions to churches, botanical gardens and even metro stations, Moscow and St Petersburg offer live music in some rather unexpected settings. Here are eight places to enjoy a wide variety of music — and discover venues you might never think to visit without a local tip.

MOSCOW

1. Moscow International House of Music — Classical music, jazz and contemporary performances in one of the capital's major concert venues. The highlight is Svetlanov Hall, home to a magnificent pipe organ.

2. Alexey Kozlov Club — One of Moscow's best-known jazz clubs, featuring several stages and a programme ranging from jazz and funk to soul and experimental music. An excellent choice for an evening of live music.

3. Scriabin Memorial Museum — Intimate piano recitals and chamber concerts in the historic home of the Russian composer and its adjoining concert hall. A hidden gem for visitors interested in Russian musical heritage.

4. Music in the Metro — Free live performances by selected musicians at Moscow Metro stations and pedestrian passages. An unexpected encounter with the city's music scene on the way to your next destination.

ST PETERSBURG

5. Annenkirche — Organ music, classical concerts and neoclassical performances in a Lutheran church whose extraordinary interiors still bear traces of a devastating fire.

6. Peter the Great Botanical Garden — The seasonal Summer Music Park festival brings classical music, jazz, rock and film soundtracks to an open-air setting surrounded by rare plants and greenery.

7. Igor Butman Jazz Club — Live jazz over dinner beneath the historic brick vaults of an 18th-century building. An intimate atmosphere, renowned musicians and regular evening performances.

8. Myasnikov Mansion — Intimate piano recitals and chamber music in an elegant 19th-century mansion, where historic interiors recreate the atmosphere of St Petersburg's aristocratic musical salons.

WHEN A HOTEL FINDS ITS SOUND: MUSIC OF GRAND HOTEL EUROPE

For more than 150 years, Grand Hotel Europe has welcomed guests to the heart of St Petersburg. Located on Nevsky Prospekt, close to the city's landmarks, the hotel has hosted musicians, writers and artists, including Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Anna Pavlova, Luciano Pavarotti and Elton John. Today, a grand piano in a suite, ballet over dinner and live music in the lobby bar bring that heritage to life. Just across the street is the Philharmonia, another part of the city's musical landscape.

Other guests over the years have included royalty, politicians, artists, musicians and writers, among them Rasputin, Johann Strauss, Bernard Shaw, Sergey Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich, Whitney Houston, Leonardo DiCaprio and Daniel Radcliffe.

The hotel has been the setting for impromptu concerts by internationally renowned artists, social receptions, memorable encounters and international events. Its central location, distinguished service and historic interiors continue to make it a venue for occasions ranging from weddings and intimate celebrations to business meetings.

DESIGN INSPIRED BY MUSIC

The Tchaikovsky Suite, opened in 2025, honours the composer who once stayed at the hotel. Its sitting room features a 1906 Diederichs Frères grand piano that belonged to composer Alexander Knaifel, as well as reproductions of archival photographs and opera librettos from the St Petersburg Philharmonia library. The suite overlooks the Philharmonia's Grand Hall, where Tchaikovsky conducted his final symphony.

The two-room suite combines historic plasterwork and an antique mirror with grey walls and red velvet upholstery. The carpets were inspired by the layers of a ballet tutu, while contemporary artworks include an embroidered musical staff by Evgenia Tut and the ceramic sculpture Ballerinas by Artemy Maksimau.





MUSIC IS PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE

At L'Europe Restaurant, Tchaikovsky Nights bring together dinner, opera and ballet in tribute to the composer. The programme culminates in ballet performances, including the White Adagio from Swan Lake, with a chamber orchestra and selected operatic arias. Guests enjoy a five-course set menu created by Grand Hotel Europe's Executive Chef Denis Sobolev.

The restaurant's Art Nouveau interior provides a distinctive setting for the performances. According to the hotel, when L'Europe opened in 1905, it became Russia's first restaurant to use electric light bulbs. Its interior has remained largely unchanged since the Silver Age, with a coloured-glass dome designed by Karl Brenzen, carved ornaments and Art Nouveau stucco work by Karl Makkenzen. A stained-glass panel depicts Apollo in a chariot and is believed to be based on a design by Leonid Benois.

Music is part of everyday life at the hotel, too. L'Europe also hosts Sunday brunches with live music, while a pianist plays in the Lobby Bar each evening. Each setting has its own rhythm: a formal dinner concert, a leisurely Sunday gathering or a pause over coffee during the day.

Music can also change the way a space feels. It can be the centrepiece of an evening, bring guests together around a table or create a mood for conversation. At Grand Hotel Europe, its role shifts with the occasion, from the intimate setting of a suite to the restaurant's grand dining room.

A ST PETERSBURG SETTING FOR BUSINESS

For event organisers, the character of a venue can be as valuable as its technical facilities, particularly when the aim is to give participants a sense of the city as well as a productive meeting.

Grand Hotel Europe's conference centre has four meeting rooms with natural light, equipped for business events. The Krysha Ballroom provides another setting for events. The hotel has 266 rooms, including historic and avant-garde suites on the historic floor, with a dedicated butler service.

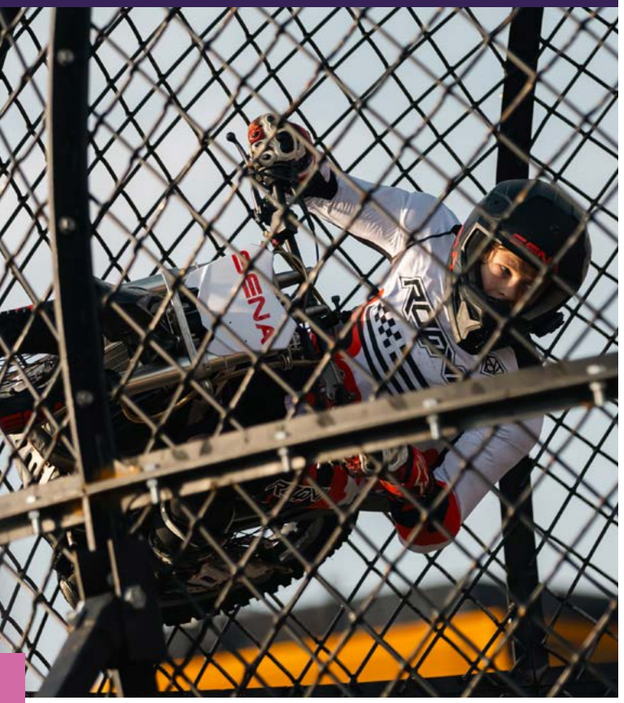
The combination of meeting facilities and cultural experiences offers scope for different itineraries. After a day of meetings, delegates can continue their conversations over dinner or, if dates coincide, attend a Tchaikovsky Night. A Sunday brunch with live music could provide an informal gathering for guests staying in St Petersburg over the weekend.

In this way, discovering the city can begin at the hotel itself. Music brings a sense of St Petersburg to a business trip, giving participants an experience rooted in the place they have come to visit.



EXPOFORUM: FROM TIES TO TYRES

For three days and nights, roaring engines and heavy bass replaced the hum of conference discussions at St Petersburg's Expoforum, as business suits gave way to motorcycle helmets. With more than 20 acts on the main stage and over 15,000 visitors, Piter Moto Fest brought live music, motorcycle culture and nightlife together, revealing another side of a venue known for major business events.



Expoforum Convention and Exhibition Centre is well known for global forums and business events of many formats. Its large, technologically equipped spaces can be reconfigured quickly, making the venue a popular choice for dance and sporting competitions, as well as film shoots. Even Expoforum's large car park can become a festival venue.

The complex has been operating for more than a decade, yet every year brings a new first. From 31 July to 2 August 2026, Expoforum hosted Piter Moto Fest, with multiple stages and activity areas bringing together concerts, extreme sports and motorcycle culture.

THREE DAYS OF MUSIC AND MOTORCYCLES

By day, festivalgoers watched freestyle motocross (FMX), stunt riding, motorcycle globe acts and other extreme sports shows. In the strength sports area, Russian and world champions demonstrated their skills and held open competitions. Visitors could also try motorcycle gymkhana, a timed obstacle course that tests precision and control, and flat-track riding on specially equipped tracks. Both beginners and experienced riders were welcome.

After dark, the festival grounds became an open-air dance floor, operating from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. The program featured a well-known project dedicated to electronic music and urban culture. The following evening, the lineup included a major St Petersburg promotion team, renowned for arranging large-scale rap and club events across Russia since 2012.

"The organisers managed to strike a balance: the scale of the event is impressive, yet it retains the warm, intimate atmosphere that the motorcycle community values so highly. You can see how much has been invested in the project, both in resources and professional expertise. This event gives us reason to believe that Russia's northern capital finally has a festival of its own," said Dmitry Khitrov, a journalist, motorcycle traveller and prominent figure in the motorcycle and customising community. He is an organiser of the Baikal Mile, Motozima, Motovesna and Honky Tonk projects.

Over three days, Piter Moto Fest attracted more than 15,000 visitors. More than 20 acts performed on the main stage, with a line-up that included DIMMA URIH, XOLIDAYBOY, L'ONE, Kaspiyskiy Gruz, BEARWOLF and Komnata Kultury.

The layout brought different activities together while giving visitors room to move between them. Guests noted the clear wayfinding and comfortable spaces.

"In terms of organisation, line-up, venue, scale and budget, the festival has surpassed everything previously done in the motorcycle festival scene in Russia. It is up there with the world's best motorcycle festivals," said Maxim Privezentsev, a biker, traveller, entrepreneur, blogger and documentary filmmaker, as well as the creator of SUZDALBLUES and founder of the Total Flame brand.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE BEHIND THE SOUND

For organiser ExpoForum-International, several factors contributed to the festival's success. The extensive outdoor area accommodated multiple stages and activity spaces, alongside food courts, lounges and exhibitions. The venue's flexible infrastructure supported different formats, from daytime concerts to late-night DJ sets.

The site also offered the technical resources needed for high-quality sound and lighting, both essential to musical performances. Transport connections made it easier for visitors to reach the festival and for organisers to bring in and install equipment.

Music is a familiar presence at Expoforum. It can set the mood in the passage connecting the exhibition pavilions, provide a highlight at a business event or shape the programme of a gala dinner or corporate celebration. It also features in multidisciplinary shows: a symphony orchestra performs favourite melodies while an artist creates sand paintings inspired by the music, with the images projected onto a screen for the audience.

As the busy convention and exhibition season winds down in November, corporate events join the calendar in December. Today, corporate celebrations often feature live concerts, performances, shows and multimedia alongside the traditional banquet. Music shapes the evening's atmosphere and brings guests together.

The more ambitious the programme, the more a venue needs to provide: not only space for guests, but also the technical and organisational conditions to bring an event concept to life.

For ExpoForum-International, music is one way to engage the senses. The company compares its work to an orchestra, with each department contributing its own part to the overall performance. At Expoforum, that performance is the event itself.



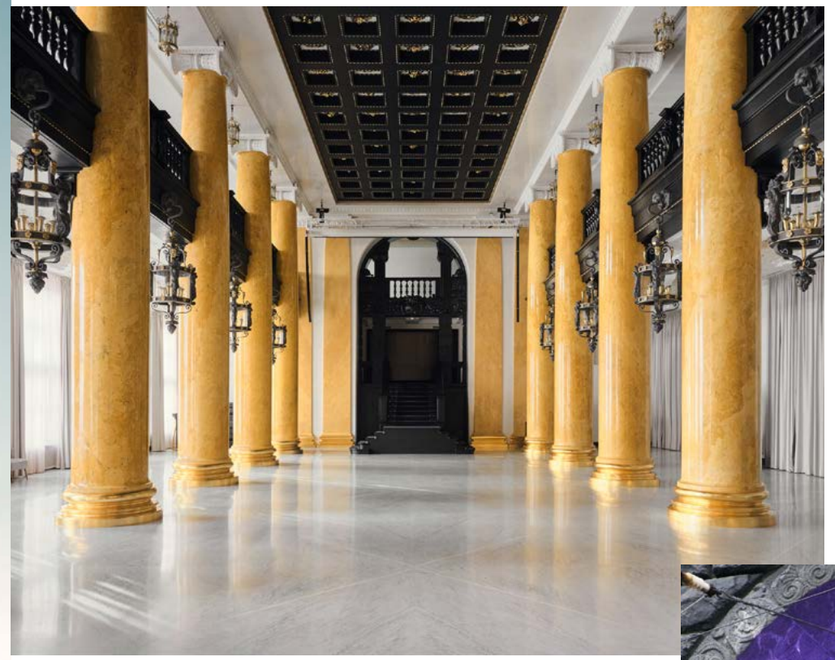
WAWELBERG: A HISTORIC SETTING FOR MEMORABLE EVENTS

A former bank on Nevsky Prospekt, just a short walk from Palace Square, Wawelberg combines the grandeur of St Petersburg's architectural heritage with the comfort of a five-star hotel. Its restored interiors offer a setting for events ranging from private gatherings to conferences and celebrations.

A LANDMARK WITH A PAST

Built in 1911–1912 for banker Mikhail Wawelberg, the St Petersburg Trade Bank was designed by architect Marian Peretyatkovich and completed in just 12 months. Its Italian Neo-Renaissance façade, clad in grey Serdobol granite, recalls Venice's Doge's Palace, with columns, arches and sculpted masks. Inside, the former banking hall retains its coffered oak ceiling and Ionic columns of yellow marble.





Over the decades, the building has served the city in different ways. During the Second World War, it housed a laboratory of the Vitamin Institute; from the 1950s, the former banking halls were occupied by the Central Air Communications Agency and the well-known Aeroflot ticket offices. Today, the carefully restored interiors form part of Wawelberg.

The hotel has 80 spacious rooms, including eight with terraces overlooking the historic centre. In 2026, it opened a new two-level penthouse beneath a glass dome.

Music is also part of the Wawelberg experience. With its "Opera on the Balcony" project, the hotel turns a balcony of the historic building into an open-air stage, where opera singers perform for passers-by. Launched in 2024, the project brings live classical music to the streets of St Petersburg.

SPACES FOR EVERY OCCASION

The historic, two-level Wawelberg Hall, once the bank's main operating hall, accommodates up to 200 guests. With a separate entrance through the rotunda, its own cloakroom and dressing rooms, it provides a setting for corporate celebrations, weddings and large conferences.

For more intimate occasions, Atrio restaurant on the second floor hosts up to 45 guests. Its glass multimedia dome changes the atmosphere with the seasons. The new penthouse offers a private residence setting: its living room, with panoramic views of St Isaac's Cathedral, can accommodate events for up to 20 guests.

For meetings, presentations and briefings, the hotel offers the Birch Study and historic drawing rooms with restored early 20th-century interiors. Modern technology complements their period character.

Events are catered by Minerals, the hotel's signature restaurant, whose chef prepares reception and banquet menus.



A SUCCESSFUL ROUND IS WHEN ONE PERSON WRITES TO THE OTHER A MONTH LATER

EventMania Festival is now in its third year in Dubai. The event brings together owners and directors of event agencies, corporate buyers, venues, hotels, destinations, production companies, wedding professionals and other suppliers shaping the region's live-events industry. Its 2026 edition combined a B2B programme, an open programme and the new Wedding Mania stream, while the Event Maze networking format helped participants move quickly from introductions to practical conversations. MICE&more GLOBAL spoke with EventMania founder Sergey Larin.

MICE&MORE: EventMania is now in its third edition in Dubai. For readers who are discovering it for the first time: what is the festival, who is it designed for, and what has helped it remain a dynamic format rather than simply another industry gathering?

SERGEY LARIN: EventMania is a meeting point for the people who create events and the people who commission them. We bring together agencies, venues, hotels, destination representatives, production teams, corporate and institutional buyers, media and, now, wedding professionals. The idea is not to assemble a large audience for the sake of a large audience. It is to create an environment in which people can have the right conversations quickly.

By the third edition, a festival has to prove that it is capable of evolving. This year we separated the B2B and open parts of the programme into different spaces and introduced Wedding Mania as an independent stream rather than one more panel in a general agenda. We also renewed around 70% of the speaker line-up. Not because the previous speakers were not strong, but because familiar faces and familiar subjects can make an event feel predictable.

At the same time, not everything should be redesigned every year. Event Maze, our networking mechanic, is already an established working tool. Freshness comes from new people, themes and connections, while the elements that make the day genuinely useful should remain reliable.

MICE&MORE: You have said that the most important measure of success is not simply how many people attend, but who is in the room. What does a strong EventMania audience look like in practice?

SERGEY LARIN: There are three indicators I follow closely. The first is the share of decision-makers among registered participants. This year, we saw more company owners and directors, rather than people who had come simply to explore the market. That changes the quality and pace of conversations.

The second indicator is what happens after the festival, without our intervention. When participants arrange follow-up meetings themselves, it is a good sign that the introduction was meaningful. The third is the return rate: how many companies come back because they found value in the previous edition and want to continue the conversation.

MICE&MORE: Live events are often judged by what is most visible: stage design, show elements, scale. How do you protect the participant experience while managing the practical economics of the festival?

SERGEY LARIN: We focus first on what affects the quality of a conversation. That means the venue, the speaker line-up and the food. Participants may forgive a more restrained decorative concept, but they will not forgive poor logistics, an uncomfortable space or a programme that does not respect their time.

There are many production elements where we can be more disciplined — including elaborate decor, certain show components and part of the external marketing spend.

But the participant should never feel that the organiser has economised at their expense. If someone has travelled across Dubai (or from another country) to spend a day at the festival, they should feel that the event was worth their time.





MICE&MORE: You are not only the founder of EventMania, but also its producer and a visible presence on stage. Which parts of the festival do you still consider impossible to delegate?

SERGEY LARIN: The final architecture of the programme remains very personal for me: the sequence of speakers, subjects and time slots across the different rooms. On paper, this can look like a purely technical task. In reality, it determines whether the day has energy.

You need to see where two similar speakers may weaken each other, where a change of subject will give the audience space to think, and where an unexpected combination of themes can create a stronger discussion. This is how a programme begins to feel alive rather than simply full.

I can imagine delegating more of this work as the festival grows, and the team is already capable of taking on many aspects of it. But I still want to make the final decisions.

MICE&MORE: And which responsibilities are you happy to place in the hands of the wider team and external specialists?

SERGEY LARIN: That process has already begun. I no longer moderate the entire day myself: some panels are led by external hosts, which gives the programme more variety and allows speakers to work with moderators who understand their particular topic.

The festival also relies on a team that manages participant flow, timing and the practical side of networking. Event Maze, for example, needs people who can clearly explain the rules, monitor the movement between tables and keep the pace of the rounds. A good networking format looks effortless only when it is carefully managed behind the scenes.

The moment EventMania takes place simultaneously in two cities, it will be physically impossible for one founder to be everywhere. At that stage, holding on to every visible role would limit the brand rather than protect it. My role is increasingly about strategy, curation and reputation, not about personally holding every microphone or ringing every gong.

MICE&MORE: Event Maze is one of EventMania's recognisable elements. How does it work for someone who has never encountered the format?

SERGEY LARIN: Event Maze is a structured speed-networking session. Participants meet in three-minute rounds, with a gong marking the changeover. Three minutes may sound brief, but it is long enough to introduce yourself, explain what you do and decide whether there is a reason to continue the discussion later.

The point is not to close a deal at the table. It is to create a strong first connection. All participants receive a contact database with phone numbers, email addresses and social links, so they do not need to spend most of the round exchanging business cards. We encourage them to use those minutes for an actual conversation.

MICE&MORE: How do you help participants respect one another's time in a networking session?

SERGEY LARIN: A confirmed place in a networking session should mean a real commitment. For the next edition, we are introducing a refundable deposit for Event Maze places: participants receive it back when they attend. We will also assign seats in advance, rather like a cinema. It is a simple way to make planning more reliable and to respect the time of every buyer and supplier who has made the effort to be there.

MICE&MORE: How do you know whether a short conversation has produced something more meaningful than a polite exchange of contacts?

SERGEY LARIN: For me, a successful round is when one person writes to the other a month later.

We ask participants to tell us when a connection made through Event Maze turns into a project or contract within the following three months. It is not a perfect figure: some deals take longer, while others happen without participants reporting back to us. But it is a more meaningful indicator than a general reach number.

We also see early signs of collaboration through social media and through the market itself. Some of the first visible connections involved Miral Destinations, JA Resorts and Celebration Station with Royal Wedding. What matters is not whether every round produces an immediate deal. It is whether people continue a conversation a month later because the introduction gave them a real reason to do so.

MICE&MORE: This year you launched Wedding Mania as a new programme within the festival. Why was the wedding industry the right direction for EventMania?

SERGEY LARIN: Dubai's wedding industry is substantial, international and highly creative, but it is also fragmented. There are many consumer-facing formats, including exhibitions for couples, but fewer B2B spaces where planners, venues, decorators, media and other suppliers can discuss how the industry is developing.

Wedding Mania was conceived as a dedicated programme within EventMania, rather than as an additional panel. It allows wedding professionals to have their own conversations while remaining connected to the wider event ecosystem. Corporate and wedding events work with different clients and decision cycles, but they share many suppliers, production challenges and ideas.



In the future, Wedding Mania may become an event in its own right. The sign will be when its audience comes specifically for that product, rather than discovering it through the wider festival.

MICE&MORE: What did the first edition of Wedding Mania reveal about the relationship between corporate and wedding events?

SERGEY LARIN: It showed that the two industries speak slightly different languages. Corporate buyers usually discuss quarterly budgets, procurement processes and KPIs. Wedding suppliers are more likely to speak about one particular couple, a visual idea or an emotional result. Neither approach is better; they reflect different types of work.



That distinction was clear in the sessions. Speakers from the corporate side naturally used numbers and planning frameworks; Wedding Mania speakers often communicated through stories and examples. Next year, we will prepare moderators to move more deliberately between these two registers rather than simply placing both industries in the same schedule.

But the overlap is real. At one coffee break, a B2B decorator met a wedding media partner; within 15 minutes, they agreed on a content project documenting a real wedding from preparation to final result. The decorator gained a route to a new audience, while the media partner secured exclusive material. These are the connections that are difficult to plan but valuable to make possible.

MICE&MORE: EventMag.Me is the festival's general media partner and gives participants a route to tell their stories beyond the event itself. How does the media platform extend the value of EventMania?

SERGEY LARIN: A festival is intense and brief. It creates a great deal of information, but without follow-up much of that information disappears as soon as the day ends. EventMag.Me allows us to continue useful stories: new projects, market shifts, people worth knowing and ideas that deserve more space than a short conversation can provide.

For participants, appearing in a respected B2B media environment is not only about direct traffic. It is also about professional visibility. A publication can become part of a company presentation or a future client conversation: it signals that the market knows the company and that it has something relevant to say.

MICE&MORE: EventMania's next geographical step is Doha. Why is Qatar the right first market beyond the UAE?

SERGEY LARIN: Saudi Arabia is growing very quickly, but it requires a different scale of entry and a local partner with substantial administrative and market experience. Entering too early, without the right foundation, would not serve the brand or the audience.

Qatar offers a more manageable environment for a first international launch. It is compact enough to test the format properly, understand the local rhythm and make adjustments without turning the first attempt into an unnecessarily expensive experiment. Bahrain is also interesting, but at this stage it does not offer the same critical mass of B2B demand for a format such as Event Maze.

MICE&MORE: What will change when Event Maze comes to Qatar and what will remain the same?



SERGEY LARIN: The core mechanism will remain unchanged. Short rounds, controlled timing and a clear structure are universal because they are based on time and attention rather than on a particular national business culture.

What will change is the mix of buyers and suppliers, because the Qatari market has a different balance between public and private-sector event clients. That needs to be reflected in the seating plan and categories. We are also adapting the registration timeline: the local B2B market tends to make participation decisions later than Dubai, so the announcement and sales calendar need to reflect that.

MICE&MORE: As EventMania explores further markets, what determines where it goes next?

SERGEY LARIN: The first filter is a trusted local partner who understands the format and can build a long-term edition, not simply someone looking for a licence to use the brand. Without that relationship, even a large market can produce a one-off event with no future.

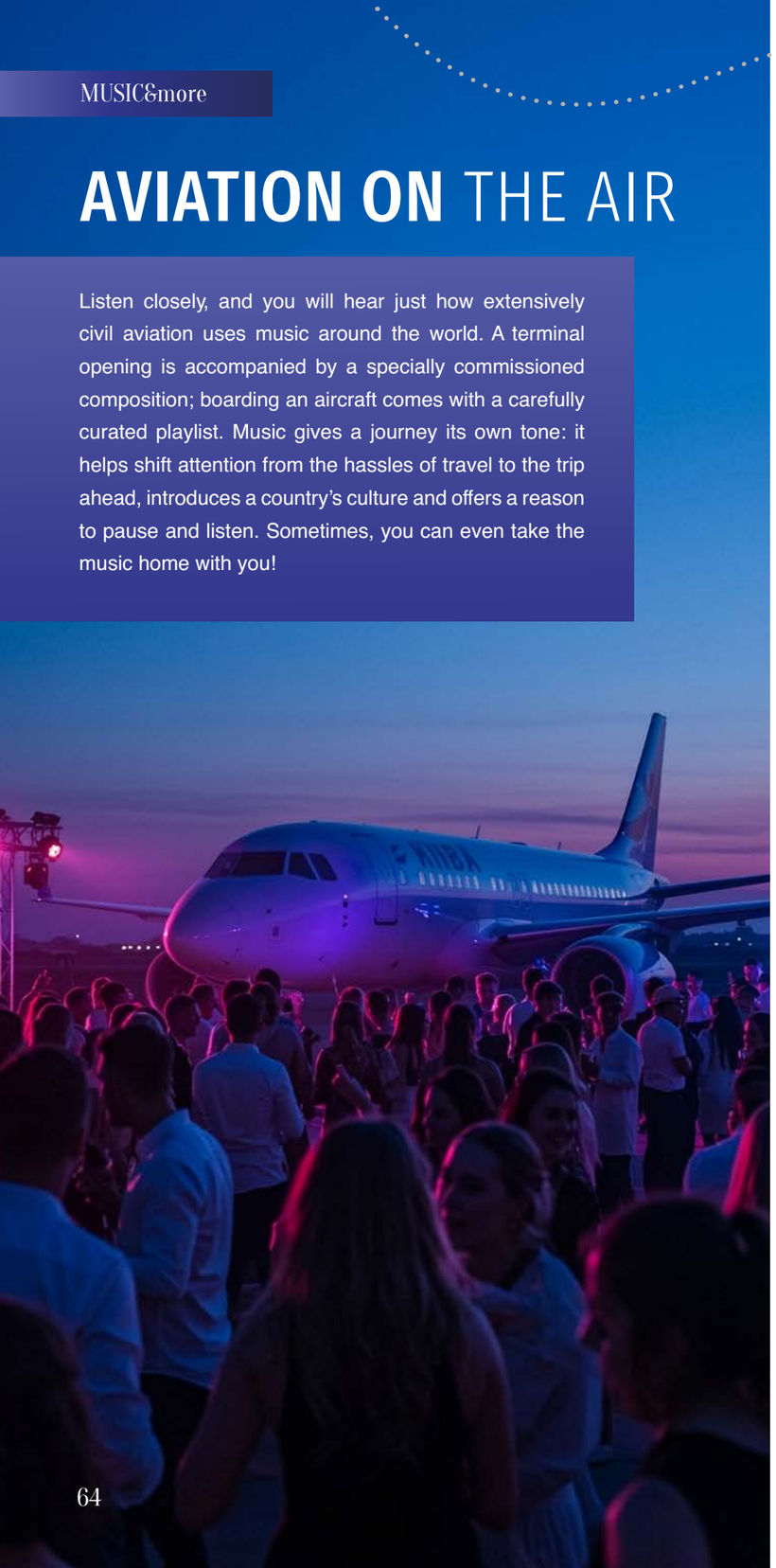
The second is the maturity of the local events industry. We need a market where there is already a meaningful professional ecosystem: enough buyers, suppliers, venues and ambitions to make the festival useful from its first edition.

Our ambition is to enter new markets carefully, respect how each one works and create EventMania editions that participants recognise as local, while still feeling part of one international professional community.

linkedin: @sergeylarin

AVIATION ON THE AIR

Listen closely, and you will hear just how extensively civil aviation uses music around the world. A terminal opening is accompanied by a specially commissioned composition; boarding an aircraft comes with a carefully curated playlist. Music gives a journey its own tone: it helps shift attention from the hassles of travel to the trip ahead, introduces a country's culture and offers a reason to pause and listen. Sometimes, you can even take the music home with you!



Aviation has made plenty of headlines in 2026: the opening of Terminal 3 in Frankfurt, the launch of departure facilities at Hong Kong's redeveloped Terminal 2, the completion of Salt Lake City International Airport's major redevelopment and another Skytrax World's Best Airport title for Singapore Changi. Some of those headlines came with a soundtrack.

Music itself has also made the news — from a concert flight over the Tasman Sea to an original soundtrack capturing the character of Finland.

SALT LAKE CITY: NEW MUSIC FOR A NEW AIRPORT

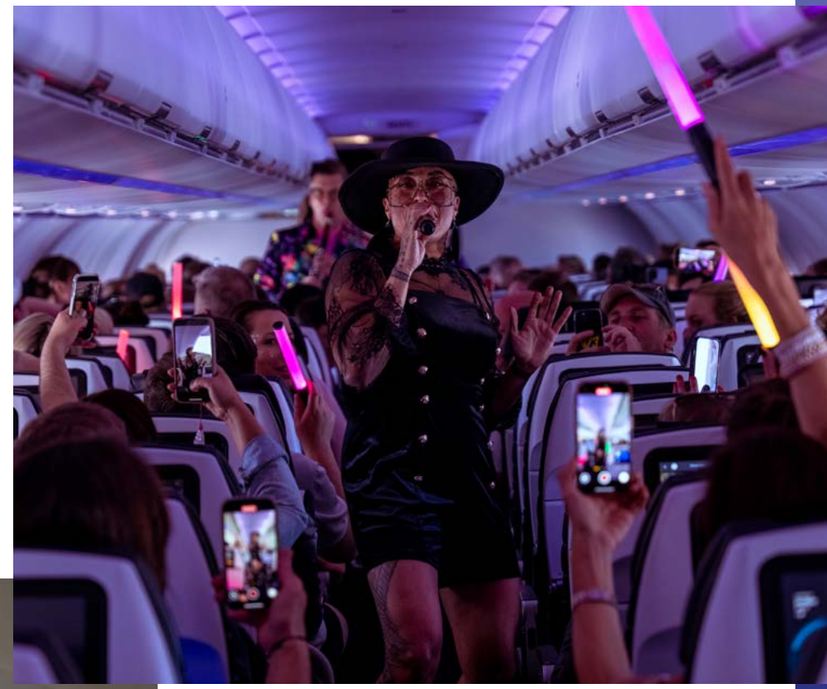
In October 2026, Salt Lake City International Airport marked the completion of The New SLC project with the premiere of Lux Altior, commissioned from Utah composer Kurt Bestor. The piece, whose title means "The Higher Light", celebrates flight, discovery and the pursuit of dreams; Leonardo da Vinci's fascination with flight was among its inspirations. It brings together instruments from different musical traditions with adult and children's choirs. The infrastructure project thus received its own musical dedication, extending the airport's exploration of Utah's culture beyond architecture and visual art.

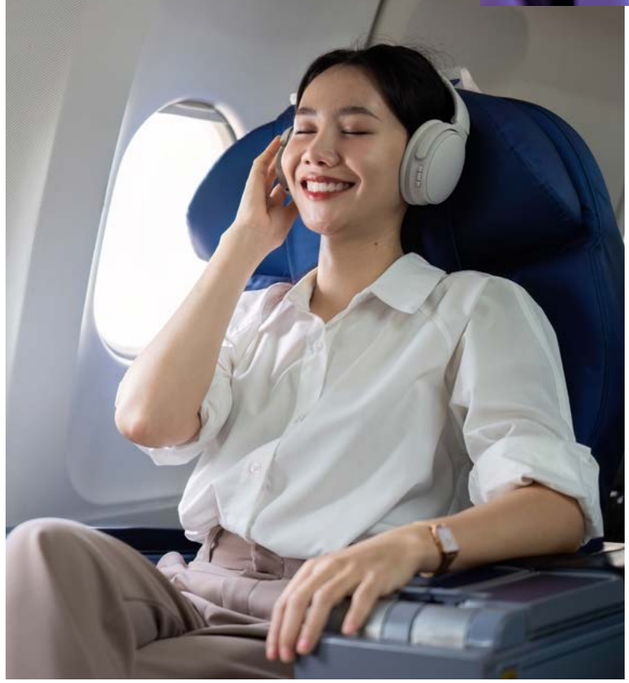
BRITISH AIRWAYS: A TICKET TO LONDON'S LIVE MUSIC SCENE

On 16 June 2026, British Airways ARC opened at Olympia in London: a 3,800-capacity live music venue operated by AEG Presents UK. British singer Self Esteem performed the opening shows. For British Airways, an Olympia partner whose name the venue carries, the project offers a way to stay connected with customers after their flight has landed. British Airways Club members have access to reserved ticket allocations, with additional benefits available to eligible ticketholders.

AIR NEW ZEALAND: THE MUSICAL JOURNEY

On 4 December 2025, Air New Zealand turned flight NZ1331 from Auckland to Sydney into a concert venue for SYNTHONY in the Sky, blending electronic dance music with live instruments and vocals. Passengers enjoyed performances by Shapeshifter's P Digsss, DJ Dick Johnson and singer Emily Williams, with saxophone, flute and clarinet adding orchestral touches. The ticket also included admission to the following day's show at the Sydney Opera House Forecourt. The journey to the concert became a concert in its own right, with the airline helping create the entire musical experience.





FINNAIR: THE SOUND OF FINLAND

At the end of February 2026, Finnair began introducing Matkantekijä: Music for Travellers, composed by Finnish musician Lauri Porra, the great-grandson of Jean Sibelius. The main work and several shorter pieces were created for use on aircraft, in lounges and across marketing and customer service channels. Porra drew inspiration from travel and the Finnish state of mind. The music accompanies a brand refresh centred on national identity: an introduction to Finland begins on board, through sounds that convey the country's character.

HONG KONG: TWO CITIES, ONE MELODY

On 4 August 2026, Hong Kong International Airport launched Resonance of Two Cities — Hong Kong and Shanghai, an arts and culture festival spanning Terminals 1 and 2 for the first time. At the opening ceremony, singer Joey Tang, Hong Kong's In-heritage Philharmonic and Shanghai's Music Bund City Band performed a new arrangement of the celebrated song The Bund. A three-month exhibition programme and stage performances introduced travellers to the cultures of both cities. Music brought their voices together, turning the terminals into a place of cultural exchange even for passengers on a brief stopover.



BENGALURU: A REGIONAL CELEBRATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL HUB

At Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru, a cultural programme celebrating Dasara took place from 12 to 17 October 2026. The programme brought Karnataka's traditions to Terminals 1 and 2 through performances, installations and festive displays for passengers and visitors. The airport's aim was to make local culture part of the journey, introducing international audiences to the region's traditions and allowing local travellers to enjoy the festive atmosphere before departure.

SCHIPHOL: THE FESTIVAL STARTS BEFORE YOU REACH THE CITY

On 21 October 2026, Amsterdam Airport Schiphol joined Amsterdam Dance Event in partnership with STMPD RCRDS, the record label founded by Martin Garrix. Travellers were treated to a silent disco and a surprise performance by Justin Mylo, while a separate evening programme brought electronic music fans together at the airport. Julian Jordan, Brooks, Citadelle and Nova Blue were announced for the DJ line-up. The evening brought a second surprise. Julian Jordan played inside a retired Fokker 100 on the airport's Panorama Terrace, where Martin Garrix joined him behind the decks for an impromptu set aboard the aircraft. The idea was to introduce travellers to Amsterdam's musical atmosphere before they even reached the city centre.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC: A RHYTHM FOR EVERY TIME OF DAY

In January 2026, Virgin Atlantic and Stellar Entertainment introduced a refreshed music offering for passengers. Two different playlists accompany boarding: an upbeat daytime selection and a gentler night-time mix to help passengers wind down. Albums and themed collections on the inflight entertainment system complement the offering, while monthly Spotify playlists let passengers keep listening after their trip. The airline sets the mood to suit the time of day and maintains a connection with travellers through music they can play again at home.

DUBAI: HOSPITALITY YOU CAN HEAR

Throughout August 2026, Dubai Airports ran Dubai Welcome, a programme of welcome experiences across Terminal 3 for arriving visitors, returning residents and passengers in transit. A local musician performed in Arrivals, while connecting travellers were offered a live performance inspired by the sounds of the region. Music became part of a wider expression of Arabian hospitality.

LAGOS: AN AIRCRAFT HANGAR TAKES THE STAGE

Aviation infrastructure can also serve as a venue for a music event in its own right. On 30 April 2026, Nigerian artist Asake presented his album M$NEY in a hangar at Legends Private Terminal at Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos. Art installations and interactive activities complemented the performance.

MAY EVERY GUITAR ARRIVE IN ONE PIECE

Music helps passengers unwind, gives a destination a voice and keeps a brand within earshot long after landing. It also taps into memory: a familiar melody can bring back the people, places and emotions of a trip. For business travellers, whose journeys demand sustained concentration, a chance to pause and listen can be particularly welcome.

But... airlines do not always get to choose their soundtrack.

In 2008, Canadian musician Dave Carroll's guitar was damaged while his band, Sons of Maxwell, was travelling with United Airlines via Chicago. After a long and unsuccessful attempt to obtain compensation, he wrote United Breaks Guitars. The video became an internet sensation in 2009 — a musical dedication the airline could hardly have wanted.

May the next aviation hit come from a memorable journey — and may every guitar arrive in one piece!

DEPARTURES, ARRIVALS AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

The thrill of departure, the sadness of saying goodbye or the joy of coming home — songs about travel capture very different moods. Here are seven for the journey, wherever work or curiosity takes you.

FRANK SINATRA — COME FLY WITH ME (1958). An invitation to explore distant destinations together, reminding us that even a business flight can begin with a sense of anticipation.

LENA CHAMAMYAN — YA MSAFERA. A farewell before a sea voyage, a request for letters from afar and a promise to wait on shore — a song for those who leave and those who stay behind.

WILLIE NELSON — ON THE ROAD AGAIN (1980). A touring anthem for those whose work keeps them travelling — and whose pleasure comes from doing what they love in good company.

NAT KING COLE — ROUTE 66 (1946). A road-trip classic that turns the towns and cities along America's famous highway into a ready-made itinerary.

CHRIS REA — DRIVING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS (1986). A warm companion for the year's final business trip, when the meetings are over and all roads finally lead home.

DESIRELESS — VOYAGE, VOYAGE (1986). A synth-pop dream of travel without borders that makes you want to pick somewhere far away on the map and book a ticket.

ENYA — ORINOCO FLOW (1988). Layered vocals and a cascade of place names turn an invitation to set sail into a dream of distant shores.

FOLLOWING THE WILD GOOSE

The wild goose on Turkish Airlines' emblem once inspired its cabin music. Elsewhere, airline soundtracks have grown from floral patterns, opera and a longing for home. Here are five stories behind the music.

BRITISH AIRWAYS — A CENTURY IN THE SCORE
For its centenary in 2019, British Airways gave its familiar Flower Duet theme a new twist. Quality engineer Lyndon Ooi created ten variations tracing the airline's history: bar numbers represented years, while the theme's first two notes, B and A, spelled out the carrier's initials. A two-octave ascent and descent evoked Concorde's Mach 2 speed. The piece was performed by the British Airways Orchestra, bringing colleagues and guest musicians together.

QANTAS — 220 VOICES IN A CANYON
For the finale of its 1998 I Still Call Australia Home advert, Qantas transported 220 choristers by helicopter into Kings Canyon for a sunset shoot. The Australian Girls Choir and National Boys Choir also sang at landmarks around the world. According to the Australian Girls Choir, viewers sometimes assumed the spectacular group scenes in these campaigns were digitally created — but the singers really were there.

SINGAPORE AIRLINES — A PATTERN YOU CAN HEAR
The Sound of Singapore Airlines began with the carrier's batik motif. Each of its 14 floral and leaf elements was assigned a short musical phrase; a specially developed tool, the Batik Instrument, allowed these phrases to be combined and transformed. Dominic Murcott and Rohan De Livera developed the material into a 30-minute suite for lounges, boarding and landing, recorded by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra.

UNITED AIRLINES — A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO GERSHWIN
In 1987, United agreed to pay $300,000 a year to use George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue in its advertising, according to Cambridge University Press. The relationship endured: the airline's 2024 safety video again featured the piece, which celebrated its centenary that year. A concert work written decades before the advertising brief had become the carrier's musical signature.

TURKISH AIRLINES — FOLLOWING THE WILD GOOSE
In 2015, cellist and composer Uğur Işık created around 40 minutes of music for Turkish Airlines, blending Anatolian influences with acoustic and electronic sounds. His inspiration came from wild geese crossing continents — the bird also depicted on the airline's emblem. The visual symbol of long-distance flight had found a musical counterpart.

HONG KONG FEELS MORE CONFIDENT AND MORE ACCESSIBLE

Beverly Au Yong, Director Middle East & Central Asia at the Hong Kong Tourism Board, talks about Hong Kong as a MICE destination, the “Only in Hong Kong” campaign and the experiences that make the city unique. We have known each other for many years, and it was a real pleasure to meet again at The Mira Hong Kong during a fam trip.

LINA MOSKVINA. CEO MICE&MORE: What was your first impression of Hong Kong, and how did it change over time?

BEVERLY AU YONG, HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD: My impression of Hong Kong has always been that it is a city of energy and contrasts: world-class infrastructure and global connectivity, paired with a strong local identity and culture. Over time, that “pulse” has only intensified for me.

In the past, I often viewed Hong Kong through the lens of speed: busy streets, iconic skyline views, and efficient daily life. Today, I see it as more than just a fast-paced hub. There’s been a noticeable shift toward a more experience-led city: more attention to arts and culture, neighbourhood storytelling, and new visitor-friendly initiatives that make it easier to discover what makes each district unique.

Overall, Hong Kong feels more confident and more accessible. It’s still distinctly itself, but it is evolving, offering richer experiences while preserving the characteristics that first made it stand out to me.

LINA MOSKVINA. CEO MICE&MORE: Why is Hong Kong the ideal destination for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions)? Give five key reasons.

BEVERLY AU YONG, HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD:

1. GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY

Hong Kong is a reputable international business hub and an ideal destination to meet, explore opportunities, and exchange ideas. Hong Kong offers visa-free entry for about 170 countries and territories. Logistically, Hong Kong is extremely convenient, connecting the city to over 200 destinations worldwide.

2. GATEWAY TO CHINESE MAINLAND AND THE GBA

Hong Kong’s location next to Chinese Mainland creates a wide range of opportunities for travellers. The city offers a convenient gateway to Chinese Mainland by air, car, and high-speed rail. International travellers who enter Hong Kong have visa-free access to Guangdong Province for up to 240 hours. This also unlocks the vast potential of the Greater Bay Area (GBA), which has a market of over 87 million people and approximately US$2 trillion in GDP.

3. WORLD-CLASS MICE DESTINATION

Hong Kong has been recognized as the international trade fair capital of Asia; its dynamic business-focused environment connects events to the region’s most robust markets, making it the premier meeting destination.

4. UNIQUE & DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Hong Kong balances Chinese tradition with modern, global vibes, making it ideal for business event guests. Its iconic east-meets-west cultural mix delivers unique and layered experiences. The city also offers a dynamic range of post-MICE event options, from local street food to Michelin dining and exclusive cultural festivals alongside skyline landmarks, which balance business and leisure for MICE travellers.

5. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR MICE GROUPS

Hong Kong is a city that purposefully invests in attracting business groups. Behind this effort is the Hong Kong Tourism Board and its specialized division, Meetings & Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK), which provide comprehensive support from event bidding to hospitality offers curated for events.

MICE groups arriving in Hong Kong can enjoy an array of exclusive offers and attractive benefits throughout their trip, from arrival at the airport to the event, sightseeing, and all the way to the day they depart. The Hong Kong Rewards program includes dining and shopping offers at Hong Kong Disneyland, promotions at Ocean Park Hong Kong, horse racing experiences at the Shatin and Happy Valley Racecourses, special deals for major museums, exclusive air and rail offers, free cultural boosts, and access to world-class attractions.





LINA MOSKVINA. CEO MICE&MORE: “Only in Hong Kong” is your new marketing campaign. What is it about, and what is the main idea?

BEVERLY AU YONG, HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD: The “Only in Hong Kong” campaign redefines how the city is experienced and differentiates Hong Kong as Asia’s World City. Moving beyond a place to see, the campaign reveals Hong Kong made to be felt. By capturing the city’s sights, sounds, and rich flavours, “Only in Hong Kong” reveals the true soul of the city, transforming everyday moments into lifelong memories.

LINA MOSKVINA. CEO MICE&MORE: Is this destination self-sufficient, or can it be combined with others? If so, with which ones?

BEVERLY AU YONG, HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD: Hong Kong is completely self-sufficient. It has everything for a full holiday of 1 to 10 days: from urban entertainment to nature parks, from museums to beaches. At the same time, it combines perfectly with neighboring regions.

THE MOST COMMON COMBINATIONS ARE:

Macau — a quick ferry ride, just one hour away, offering a multicultural heritage and Chinese culture with casinos, European architecture, and a unique culinary scene.

Southern China (Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Hainan) — high-speed trains get you to major mainland cities in a couple of hours, and Hainan Island is only a 1.5-hour flight away.

Southeast Asian countries (Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia) — Hong Kong serves as an ideal hub for Asian itineraries.

LINA MOSKVINA. CEO MICE&MORE: If you have only 24 hours in Hong Kong, what are the must-see places and must-try dishes?

BEVERLY AU YONG, HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD: I would start with Victoria Peak, taking the Peak Tram to enjoy the panoramic view of the city and the harbour. Then I would explore Central, the Mid-Levels escalators and Tai Kwun, where old historic buildings, modern skyscrapers, art, culture and heritage come together.

An evening cruise on the aqualuna junk and a visit to the West Kowloon Cultural District are also must-see experiences.

As for food, I would recommend trying dim sum, Hong Kong-style milk tea, Hong Kong roast goose and egg waffles (“gai daan jai”). Be sure to visit Hong Kong’s famous bars — Bar Leone was named the world’s best bar in 2025 by the World’s 50 Best Bars ranking.

And, of course, experience Five O’clock Tea at the historic Peninsula Hotel.

LINA MOSKVINA. CEO MICE&MORE: What large-scale and iconic events characterize Hong Kong? Which events attract guests from around the world?

BEVERLY AU YONG, HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD: Chinese New Year celebrations turn the city into a nonstop show, with a night parade, fireworks over Victoria Harbour, lion dances and concerts.

WinterFest transforms the heart of the business district into a festive wonderland with light shows, festive markets and seasonal experiences.

Art Basel Hong Kong is a centerpiece of the Asian art scene. In 2026, it featured 240 galleries from 41 countries and regions.

Dragon boat races are another important part of Hong Kong’s identity. The city is considered the birthplace of modern dragon boat racing, and the Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Festival attracts teams from around the world.

The Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival brings together hundreds of pavilions featuring fine wines and food from countries and regions around the world. Hong Kong is also one of the world’s jewelry trading hubs, hosting several prestigious International Gem and Jewelry Shows every year.

The Hong Kong Football Festival brings world-class football stars from prestigious clubs to the city. In 2026, the festival featured European giants such as Manchester City, Chelsea, Inter Milan, and Juventus.

These world-class business events and mega events highlight Hong Kong as “The World’s Meeting Place” and the “Events Capital of Asia.”



AZERBAIJAN'S MICE SOUNDTRACK

The rhythm of Baku, the voices of the mountains and the open horizon of the Caspian Sea: a familiarisation trip organised by MICE&more and the Azerbaijan Tourism Board explored how Azerbaijan's contrasting landscapes can come together in one corporate programme.

A visit to Baku can begin, unexpectedly, with music. Inside the Heydar Aliyev Center, the exhibition Musical Instruments: Unity and Diversity brings together instruments from Azerbaijan and around the world. Visitors can look at them and listen to their sounds — an invitation to discover a country through its many voices.

Three of those voices — the tar, the balaban and the kamancha — offer an imaginative soundtrack to a journey from the capital to the mountains and the Caspian coast. That was the route explored by MICE professionals during a familiarisation trip organised by MICE&more and the Azerbaijan Tourism Board in October 2026.

THE TAR: THE STRINGS OF THE CITY

Clear and expressive, the plucked strings of the tar seem a fitting accompaniment to Baku, where historic streets and contemporary architecture exist side by side. Traditionally played across Azerbaijan, the tar is also one of the instruments associated with mugham, the country's celebrated musical tradition.





A workshop organised by the Azerbaijan Tourism Board brought the group together with hotels, DMCs and incoming agencies working with corporate clients. Participants valued the opportunity to meet potential partners in person, discuss their clients' needs and establish direct contacts for future projects. For some, the experience also confirmed that Azerbaijan was a destination they would actively recommend to their own clients.

Local flavours were part of the programme, too, with meals at Qaynana, Otdykh, Cuppa, Manzara and Şüşəbənd. The generous hospitality left an impression, although some local dishes could feel rich to those unaccustomed to them. A buffet lunch at a hotel also gave participants a useful opportunity to assess its kitchen and chefs.

The group's introduction to the capital combined venue inspections with a walk through Icherisheher, the Old City. The Maiden Tower, the Juma Mosque, a caravanserai and the Palace of the Shirvanshahs brought the city's past into focus; the Heydar Aliyev Center and its classic car exhibition offered another perspective on Baku. Highland Park provided a view across the city and the Caspian Sea.

For event planners, the city offers a choice of international hotel brands and dedicated venues. Participants inspected Courtyard by Marriott Baku, Fairmont Baku, Flame Towers, JW Marriott Absheron Baku, Hilton Baku and The Ritz-Carlton, Baku, as well as the Baku Convention Center. Participants noted the contrast between Baku's compact, lively centre and the quiet expanse beyond. Among the highlights were the well-equipped Baku Convention Center, the nearby Heydar Aliyev Center and Fairmont Baku, with its spacious conference centre and panoramic Bar19 restaurant. Travelling outside the high season had its advantages: with fewer tourists around, the group was able to see almost all categories of rooms and meeting spaces.





THE BALABAN: A BREATH OF THE MOUNTAINS

The warm, soft voice of the balaban, a traditional wind instrument, suits a slower movement through the countryside. Beyond Baku, the itinerary continued to Shamakhi, Shaki and Gabala, bringing together local cuisine, craftsmanship and mountain scenery.

In Shamakhi, the group visited Shamakhi Palace Sharadil, where participants had lunch. In Shaki, participants stayed at and inspected Marxal Resort & Spa before exploring the Palace of the Shaki Khans and the city's caravanserai. A kelaghayi workshop introduced them to the making of traditional silk scarves.

The journey continued to Gabala, where the group inspected Qafqaz Tufandag Mountain Resort Hotel and the Tufandag cable car. Together, these stops showed how a corporate itinerary can move from business meetings to local cuisine, cultural discovery and mountain activities — each adding a different dimension to the experience.





THE KAMANCHA: THE CASPIAN HORIZON

The sustained notes of the bowed kamancha evoke a more expansive landscape: the Caspian coast, where the journey ended with a visit to Sea Breeze Resort. After lunch, the group toured the resort and explored its facilities.

For participants, combining Baku with the mountains revealed a different side of Azerbaijan. For an incentive trip, the appeal lies in bringing these settings together. A programme might begin with meetings and a cultural evening in Baku, continue with a regional journey and end by the sea. The result is a change of pace and scenery that gives participants time to connect beyond the formal agenda.

Azerbaijan's accessibility supports that idea. In summer 2026, nearly 40 airlines operated scheduled services from Heydar Aliyev International Airport, connecting Baku with cities across Europe, Türkiye, the Middle East and Asia.

Between January and September 2026, Azerbaijan recorded 1.83 million arrivals of foreign citizens from 191 countries; 73.5% arrived by air. Baku's accommodation capacity is also substantial: in 2025, the city had more than 15,600 rooms in hotels and similar establishments.

Like the instruments in an ensemble, the city, mountains and coast each have a distinct voice. Brought together, they make a richer programme — and give participants more than one way to remember the journey.

CONTENT, COMMERCE AND COMMUNICATION — THE FORMULA OF A SUCCESSFUL EVENT, ACCORDING TO DAVID RUETZ

Over the past six decades, ITB has grown from a single trade show in Berlin into one of the world's leading travel industry brands. For Messe Berlin, it has become a core part of its international portfolio. The company is continuing to expand the brand into new markets and formats, with projects in the Americas and the MICE sector. In Shanghai during ITB China 2026, where MICE&more GLOBAL was an official media partner, we discussed the company's global strategy and new projects with David Ruetz, Senior Vice President of Messe Berlin. The interview took place in May 2026, ahead of the inaugural CIMX and ITB Americas events in November.

LINA MOSKVINA, CEO, MICE&MORE: ITB has evolved from a Berlin-based trade show into a global portfolio of events. How would you describe the key stages in this international expansion?

DAVID RUETZ, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MESSE BERLIN: Our story began in 1966 — the year the ITB brand was born. This year, in Berlin, we celebrated our 60th anniversary with a major gala event.

Over the decades, we launched ITB Asia in Singapore in 2008, followed by ITB China in Shanghai in 2017. ITB India then joined the ITB brand family as the market continued to develop in the years following the pandemic.

In November 2026, we are launching our first ITB event on the American continent.

LINA MOSKVINA, CEO, MICE&MORE: Why did you choose Mexico as the starting point for this new project?

DAVID RUETZ, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MESSE BERLIN: We chose Mexico because of its strategic position, allowing us to reach the entire region efficiently.

We expect around 80% of the buyers to come from across the Americas — from Patagonia to Canada — and approximately 20% of exhibitors to represent destinations and companies from outside the Americas.

LINA MOSKVINA, CEO, MICE&MORE: You were preparing to launch CIMX, a dedicated MICE exhibition, in Beijing in November 2026. Why is this the right time for the project, and why Beijing?

DAVID RUETZ, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MESSE BERLIN: For many years, ITB China included a MICE section with its own conference program and hosted buyers. But now we see strong momentum returning to the sector after COVID. Recovery took time because many companies had drastically reduced event budgets during the pandemic.

The MICE and events industry has an enormous economic impact that goes far beyond venues alone. Events activate entire destination ecosystems — hotels, taxis, shuttle services, restaurants, retail, and airports.

We were developing a dedicated conference program tailored specifically to the Chinese MICE market and the needs of its buyers.

Beijing is a natural choice for the project. As the capital, it brings together associations, government institutions, and major corporations — all of which are key consumers of MICE services.

LINA MOSKVINA, CEO, MICE&MORE: What are your expectations regarding the exhibitor mix?

DAVID RUETZ, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MESSE BERLIN: We expect both long-term and new partners to join us in Beijing, with thousands of participants overall. Naturally, the majority of buyers and trade visitors will come from China, but we are confident that international exhibitors will also represent a solid double-digit percentage.

Major hotel chains and leading airlines will certainly be present, but destinations are also a very important part of our strategy.

For example, Georgia — the host country at ITB China — is looking to expand its MICE offering, currently concentrated mainly in Tbilisi, and sees the exhibition as an opportunity to learn and develop further.

At the same time, there are already highly mature MICE destinations — European cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Paris, London, Vienna, and Berlin.

Even fam trips are making a strong comeback now. Countries like the Dominican Republic, for example, may showcase products that combine conference experiences with leisure travel opportunities.

LINA MOSKVINA, CEO, MICE&MORE: But you also chose a completely new name — CIMX.

DAVID RUETZ, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MESSE BERLIN: We wanted to differentiate it from the ITB brand, which is traditionally associated with leisure tourism. Because ITB already has such a strong and established B2B community, we felt it was important not to confuse the audience and to manage expectations correctly.

LINA MOSKVINA, CEO, MICE&MORE: I am personally looking forward to visiting the event. Our very first magazine issue was dedicated to China after my visit to CIBTM in Beijing more than eleven years ago.

Looking ahead to 2027, are there any new projects you can already announce?

DAVID RUETZ, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MESSE BERLIN: After sixty years in the market, our brand has become extremely valuable, we are very careful about where and how it expands.

There is significant interest from destinations around the world that approach us about launching what I would call "geographical clones" of our events.

For now, however, our main focus remains on strengthening and expanding the events we already have, while developing more vertical formats.

For example, at ITB Asia in Singapore we already have co-located TravelTech and MICE events. This model may become an important direction for future growth — either through co-located formats or through spinning off dedicated verticals, particularly in the areas of technology and MICE.



LINA MOSKVINA, CEO, MICE&MORE: How do you integrate technology into your events — both in terms of organization and visitor experience?

DAVID RUETZ, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MESSE BERLIN: We use technologies such as automated facial recognition at entrances, badge systems, attendee analytics, and appointment scheduling platforms.

For example, at ITB China alone, our matchmaking platform facilitates around 46,000 appointments. Now we are integrating AI into these processes in two areas: intelligent matchmaking and personalized content recommendations. Let's say you register as a visitor. You provide your professional details, interests, and position.

AI can then automatically analyze publicly available professional information about you online and generate highly relevant networking and content suggestions.

LINA MOSKVINA, CEO, MICE&MORE: All of us are overloaded with information today. What we really need is efficiency — meaningful communication, relevant contacts, and measurable results. We would be very happy to support your MICE projects through our media channels, as our audience is strongly focused on this sector. Thank you very much for the conversation.

DAVID RUETZ, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MESSE BERLIN: Thank you very much.

ITB BERLIN 2027: THE EARLY BIRD IS ALREADY SINGING

Tickets for ITB Berlin 2027 are available earlier than ever before. Alongside the regular passes, the travel trade show has introduced the ITB Orange Pass, combining access to the exhibition with additional services for business meetings, networking and exploring the German capital. And to help visitors orchestrate their time at the show, ITB Navigator provides a digital platform for planning meetings.

The international travel industry will gather in Berlin from 16 to 18 March 2027 for the next edition of ITB Berlin. Held under the theme Travel & Tourism in Motion, the B2B trade show will bring together destinations, travel companies and industry professionals to exchange ideas and develop partnerships.

The scale of the event is reflected in the results of its 2026 edition: 5,601 exhibitors from 166 countries and territories presented their products and services to 96.5 thousand visitors. More than 24 thousand people attended the ITB Berlin Convention, where 400 speakers took part in the programme.



Visitors can already purchase their tickets through the official ITB Berlin Ticket Shop. Early Bird rates are available until 14 January 2027. Trade visitor tickets include access to both the exhibition and the ITB Berlin Convention, as well as guided tours and a selection of networking events.

A FIRST-CLASS ARRANGEMENT — ITB ORANGE PASS

A new addition for 2027 is the ITB Orange Pass, a premium ticket limited to 300 passes. It includes all the benefits of a regular trade visitor ticket, together with additional services:

- Early access to the exhibition grounds from 9 a.m. and fast-track entry at the north and south entrances;
- Access to the ITB Orange Pass Lounge and a personalised information service;
- A complimentary meeting slot at a Business Satellite and access to selected networking events;
- Reserved seating at the ITB Berlin Convention;
- Complimentary cloakroom use for one item of clothing and one piece of luggage per day, plus a daily refreshment voucher;
- Access to the Berlin Radio Tower viewing platform and an Orange Pass goodie bag;
- A four-day Berlin WelcomeCard, including public transport in zones ABC and discounts at attractions, museums, shops and restaurants.

> "We want to provide trade visitors with the right conditions so they can make the most of ITB Berlin for their business aims. The new ITB Orange Pass expands the existing ticket range to include services that offer greater efficiency and convenience while creating additional opportunities for networking and face-to-face meetings," said Deborah Perlitz (formerly Rothe), Director of ITB Berlin.

FINDING THE RIGHT RHYTHM

Another element of the visitor experience is ITB Navigator, the digital platform included in the trade visitor ticket. Before arriving in Berlin, participants can use it to identify relevant contacts, schedule appointments and plan their time at the exhibition.

Online press accreditation for media representatives and content creators is available from early December 2026.

ITB BUYERS CIRCLE TURNS 15

In 2027, the ITB Buyers Circle celebrates 15 years of bringing together senior buyers and decision-makers from the international travel industry.

Around 1,300 buyers with significant purchasing and budget responsibility will have the opportunity to join the network, which covers leisure travel, business travel and MICE. Applications are now open and admission is subject to a selection process.

Members benefit from complimentary admission to ITB Berlin and the ITB Berlin Convention, early access to the exhibition grounds and fast-track entry. The Buyers Circle Lounge at Marshall-Haus provides a dedicated setting for meetings, networking and focused work.

The community is international: approximately 35% of its members come from Germany, while 65% are based elsewhere.

THE 2027 SCORE: ITB AROUND THE WORLD

- ITB Berlin — 16–18 March, Berlin, Germany
- ITB China — 25–27 May, Shanghai, China
- ITB India — September, Mumbai, India
- ITB Asia — 20–22 October, Singapore
- ITB Americas — 9–11 November, Guadalajara, Mexico

ITB BERLIN 2027: TICKET PRICES

TICKET	EARLY BIRD	REGULAR
Trade visitor: three-day pass	€75	€85
Trade visitor: one-day ticket	€52	€59
Student: three-day pass	€46	€50
Student: one-day ticket	€35	€37
ITB Orange Pass	€299	€399

Early Bird rates are available until 14 January 2027. Tickets are sold through the official ITB Berlin Ticket Shop.

CIMX 2026 CONCLUDES FIRST EDITION WITH 6,000 BUSINESS MEETINGS, BOOSTING GLOBAL MICE COLLABORATION

Three days of business, innovation and global connections marked the debut of China International MICE Exchange (CIMX) 2026, held on 3–5 November at the China National Convention Center Phase II in Beijing. The event brought together the Chinese and international MICE communities to explore opportunities and forge partnerships.

Organized by Messe Berlin China and supported by the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, CIMX 2026 welcomed 150 exhibitors, 350 carefully selected hosted buyers and more than 3,000 attendees from over 41 countries and regions. The event generated nearly 6,000 business meetings. Its program featured 120 conference speakers covering 40 industry topics, nine networking events and a post-show familiarization trip to Beijing and Tianjin. The inaugural edition established a new gateway between China's MICE market and the world, setting the stage for 2027.

INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Business matchmaking was at the heart of CIMX 2026, connecting international destinations, convention bureaus, airlines, hospitality groups and MICE service providers with corporate planners, agencies and professional buyers. Through pre-scheduled appointments and onsite networking, participants explored opportunities, exchanged market insights and established business relationships.

With 150 exhibitors from 18 countries and regions, CIMX showcased a diverse range of international MICE offerings, spanning destinations across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. China's MICE capabilities were represented by destinations including Beijing, Tianjin, Hainan, Shanghai Lin-gang Special Area and Macao, highlighting opportunities for corporate meetings, incentive travel programs and international events.

YANG JIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE AND COOPERATION DIVISION, TIANJIN MUNICIPAL BUREAU OF CULTURE AND TOURISM, SAID: "CIMX is a highly professional exhibition, organized by Messe Berlin China and hosted in Beijing. For Chinese companies, it provides a platform to connect directly with international MICE buyers without having to travel abroad, making business exchanges more cost-effective and efficient. For Tianjin, it also presents an excellent opportunity to showcase our destination to international buyers and raise its visibility in the global market."

Participating Chinese and international associations and organizations included the MICE Committee of the China Association of Travel Services, China Advertising Association Event Marketing Committee, China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), Sourcing China, Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), and Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE).

"CIMX has seen good support from the industry. I look forward to seeing the show growing from this point into its future years, and look forward to continuing to partner with CIMX and just being able to meet more people from the business travel and MICE community," **SAID ELLE NG-DARMAWAN, SENIOR DIRECTOR, APAC, GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL ASSOCIATION (GBTA).**

INDUSTRY DIALOGUE FOR EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF MICE

The CIMX Conference brought together 120 speakers covering 40 topics across six conference tracks and three specialized workshops and forums. Discussions addressed Chinese and global MICE trends, cross-border event development, destination showcases, incentive travel, artificial intelligence and the future of business events. Industry trends, insights and conference highlights will be shared through CIMX's official channels.



FLORENCE CHUA, MANAGING DIRECTOR, APAC, PCMA, SAID: "Through its conference, CIMX brought together MICE professionals, association members and business leaders from China and abroad to share diverse content. The conference covered a wide range of areas, from incentive travel to conferences and exhibitions, making the content very rich. As the conference of the inaugural edition, both the quality of the events and the caliber of the speakers were very high."

Beyond the main conference program, international associations and industry partners contributed to the CIMX–ICCA International Association Meetings and Destination Development Forum, the PCMA Corporate Intelligence Exchange Workshop and the GBTA Business Travel Forum, bringing international perspectives to China's MICE industry.

CIMX 2026 featured nine networking events, including the Corporates in MICE Luncheon, MICE² Macao × Hengqin Networking Luncheon, Singapore-Sponsored Luncheon and Shanghai Lin-gang · Dishui Lake Night. The CIMX Opening Dinner gathered 400 industry professionals and key stakeholders to celebrate the first edition.

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES: BEIJING AND TIANJIN FAM TRIP

On the final day of CIMX 2026, international buyers and media representatives departed on a 4-day familiarization trip to Beijing and Tianjin. Visits to key MICE venues, facilities and cultural highlights offered first-hand insights into the destinations' business events infrastructure and opportunities for future meetings, incentive travel and cooperation.

BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM OF CIMX'S DEBUT

REFLECTING ON THE EVENT, NIKOLAOS SWOCH, DIRECTOR OF CIMX, COMMENTED: "CIMX was created to turn China's MICE potential into international business opportunities — and to open new doors into China for the global industry. This first edition has put that mission into action, bringing decision-makers together to explore business, build trust and establish partnerships. Looking ahead to 2027 and beyond, CIMX will establish itself as the must-attend annual gathering for the Chinese and international MICE communities, driving business growth, strengthening global collaboration and shaping the future of business events."

CIMX will return to Beijing for its second edition from 2 to 4 November 2027 at the China National Convention Center Phase II. For CIMX 2027 information and registration, visit the official website.

MICE TRIANGLE: 120 PROFESSIONALS EXPLORED SRI LANKA FROM THREE SIDES

SL MICE Expo 2026 in Colombo introduced Sri Lanka to international buyers through three connected elements: business appointments, informal networking and a first-hand encounter with the country's culture and landscapes.



















HONG KONG: A CITY THAT WORKS AS AN EVENT

Five days in Hong Kong feel like a separate reality. Here, neon signs reflect in the water of the "pearl" Victoria Harbour, retro trams pass by glass skyscrapers, and a business meeting can be followed by a tea ceremony at a monastery or a cruise on a traditional junk boat with red sails.



ITB CHINA 2026 CONCLUDES SUCCESSFULLY WITH MORE THAN 23,500 ATTENDEES

The three-day event recorded continued year-on-year growth, welcoming more than 23,500 attendees. A total of over 44,000 high-value business meetings were facilitated during the show, highlighting China's continued appeal and strong growth momentum in global travel industry cooperation. Key trends shaping this year's conference included the rapid development of travel technology, growing demand for MICE and customised travel, and the continued expansion of the luxury travel segment.











2027 Event Calendar

14-16 FEB — **Central & Eastern Europe**
Krakow, Poland

7-9 MAR — **Associations Forum**
Innsbruck, Austria

18-20 APR — **North & West Europe**
Hamburg, Germany

13-15 JUN — **Life Sciences Forum**
Riga, Latvia

1-3 SEPT — **Events Club Forum**
Prague, Czechia

7-9 NOV — **South Europe**
Malaga, Costa del Sol, Spain

Events Club

Buyer and supplier registration is open at **eventsclub.com**

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EVENTMANIA FESTIVAL 2026: THREE YEARS, TWO STAGES, ONE INDUSTRY

DUBAI. September 8, 2026. EventMania Festival returns for its third consecutive year at the iconic SkyLight Gallery, Arjaan by Rotana Dubai Media City — and this edition marks a significant milestone. What began in 2024 with 300 participants, grew to 400 in 2025, now expands into a two-format event, welcoming the wider Dubai event community with new energy, new partnerships, and a new dedicated space: Wedding Mania.



JOIN OUR GLOBAL EVENT CALENDAR!



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