



Smart City

Turn to Taipei for international events in a prime location.

BY ELYSE GLICKMAN

GREEN MEETING:
Grand Hyatt Taipei event space

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COMPUTEX Taipei, Asia's largest annual IT tradeshow, attracts more than 1,600 exhibitors from around the world, including U.S. companies such as Intel, Microsoft, NVIDIA and Dell. Tesla was a first-time exhibitor in 2017.

"MADE IN TAIWAN." It is a phrase Westerners are familiar with; however, thanks to the efforts of Taipei City's government and business organization in the past decade, those words take on a whole new meaning, along with a lot of excitement and opportunity.

Numbers presented by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau provide the proof. In 2015 more than 10.4 million overall visitors came to Taiwan, which climbed to nearly 10.7 million in 2016. Those visiting for meetings, conferences or other business activities were estimated at 833,415 in 2015 and 812,548 in 2016.

"One of the biggest things Taipei has going for it is that it has a bit of everything in terms of Asian culture and business amenities," notes Peter Ou, communications manager, Grand Hyatt Taipei, whose large ballrooms and dining options make it a natural choice for international meetings and conferences. "Furthermore, North American companies and meeting planners who want to have a presence in Asia are going to see real value for their money. On average, luxury hotel accommodations and meeting spaces are going to be about 10 percent less expensive than counterparts in Tokyo or Hong Kong, which can add up based on the size of the meeting or presence at a convention."

Taipei City's location and network of trade and passenger routes also prove major selling points for North American companies looking to participate in meetings and conferences in Asia. Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport and the in-town Taipei Songshan Airport play important roles as gateways into Asia. Through Taoyuan, 5 million passengers fly into Taipei per year, with a volume of nearly 60,000 aircraft. Taipei Rapid Transit Corp. (aka Taipei Metro) and the Taoyuan Metro, meanwhile, make it easy for executive travelers to get to appointments and offer easy access to the city's museums, historic temples and year-round outdoor activities. Visitors can also explore the city on their own or as part of a retreat by bike, thanks to the city's YouBike program, launched in 2009.

"Taiwan is currently a leader in Asia's technology industry, and Taipei as the capital city and central business hub holds a significant position among Asian financial markets," says Brad Shih, director, Taiwan Tourism Bureau, Los Angeles office. "While Taipei is one of the fastest-growing cities and has a lot of potential for further development and growth within Asia, it presents many opportunities for Taiwanese businesses to connect with and collaborate with firms



IN ATTENDANCE:
*The Plenary Hall at Taipei
International Convention Center*

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CONVENTION CENTER

UNIQUE VENUES

Taipei Eats Tours is one of the most delicious ways for visitors to eat like a local while getting their bearings. Cofounder Tina Fong notes a tour not only familiarizes participants with the city's geography but also serves as an "icebreaker experience," as they get to interact with locals and explore neighborhoods they would not see in busier districts like the Taipei 101 area. Taipei East can design bespoke tours for business groups based on the food preferences or dietary needs of participants and the guides' intimate knowledge of Taipei City's hidden culinary gems in its legendary night markets and up-and-coming neighborhoods.

taipeieats.com

from the world. For these reasons, I project Taipei will increasingly establish a strong presence on an international level."

Industry-spanning conventions are staged at Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center Hall 1, a key landmark in Taipei for the MICE industry in the Xinyi neighborhood. It offers 490,000 square feet of exhibition space and capacity for more than 18,000 people. Opened in 2008, the center (also known as TWTC and TaipeiEx) was first to win ISO 20121 certification based on its sustainable practices on construction and its servicing of venues for conferences, exhibitions and events. Its Hall 2, meanwhile, is expected to open before 2020. Combining both halls, the center overall will have an exhibition capacity of 5,000 booths.

Xinyi is also home to the Taipei International Convention Center (opened 1989), hosting an average 850 major conventions, conferences and projects annually. It adjoins the Taipei World Trade Center, a comprehensive business venue launched in January 1986 by the trade promotion organization Taiwan External Trade Development Council. The Taoyuan Aerotropolis Vision Hall, less than an hour from the city center, is under construction, slated to open in the early 2020s as part of an expansive multipurpose development. According to Huang Shih-Cho, the project's chairman, it integrates technologically advanced green energy and "smart city solutions" to ensure it meets government-established guidelines of "three lows and one high" — low energy consumption, low pollution and low water usage, along with high

added value.

Taipei's cultural, historic and outdoor leisure destinations are tailor-made for corporate retreats and activities. Taipei 101 (as one would expect) includes a private event venue on the 101st floor as well as the prestigious Shin Yeh Dining restaurant. The National Palace Museum adjoins the opulent Silks Palace Restaurant, noted for its Imperial Treasures Feast modeled after its works of art. The Maokong Gondola, a four-stop, 2.7-mile cable car ride from Taipei Zoo to Maokong, ascends to a serene mountaintop village known for its tea plantations. Other sites with an environmental focus include Yoshan Tea Qingtian Club's interesting tea-making experience and the Elephant Mountain hiking trail at the outer reaches of the city limits.

Planners looking to stage events in hip urban settings will be inspired by what the Huashan Cultural and Creative Park and the Songshan Cultural and Creative Park — both composed of repurposed industrial buildings — have to offer. In addition to abundant meeting rooms, suites and executive lounges, The Mandarin Oriental, Taipei (one of the city's green hotels ranked by Expedia) makes a top pick for its restaurants, innovative cocktail lounge, astute concierge staff and creative afternoon high teas with conversation-starting nibbles. And, of course, there's the Grand Hyatt, another of Taipei's green hotels by Expedia, which has long worked in tandem with various trade organizations vested in bringing the world into Taipei City.

The Gaia Hotel, in the city's Beitou district, boasts many earmarks of a chic business boutique hotel. The 3-year-old property features a luminous and towering main lobby and library, superb Taiwanese fine-dining/banquet restaurant Quiyan One and an exceptional cellar and wine program. Its beautifully appointed terraces and meeting rooms offer panoramic views. However, what makes this spot a gem is the integration of Mother Nature into the property with its open-air public hot springs area, private soaking rooms and pool outfitted with a therapeutic area. The water is sourced from underground white sulphur springs generations of locals have sworn by for its health benefits.

thegaiahotel.com