

# 10 TIPS

## FOR DESTINATION SELECTION SITE VISITS

One of the most important elements in event success is selecting the right destination and the site visit is an invaluable part of that process. Working closely with the Destination Organization can increase success and decrease logistical work for the Event Strategist. Considering the Destination Organization as an extension of your planning team and utilizing their assets can be a crucial part of event success.



# GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR DESTINATION SELECTION SITE VISIT WITH THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1 START WITH THE DESTINATION ORGANIZATION.

If you are planning a city-wide event or a small meeting in one hotel, it is always beneficial to include the Destination Organization up front. By including the Destination Organization, you can extend your planning team without extending the budget. With free services from the destination experts, you can identify the best assets the destination has to offer and eliminate the man hours it takes to solidify appointments. Use your RFP as an opportunity to set site visit expectations that will help the destination have a clear understanding of the number of sites anticipated, who will be in attendance, and the major decision factors so they can best budget and plan for your arrival. With an understanding of the site goals, they can create an itinerary that will exceed expectations.

## 2 ARTICULATE WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

Conducting a site visit through the lens of all stakeholders is an important step to ensuring overall event success. Prior to finalizing the site itinerary, schedule a time with the Destination Organization contact to review who the event stakeholders are (Boards, CEO, attendees, exhibitors, sponsors, etc) and what event success looks like to each group. With a mutual understanding of what value looks like, the destination can support you in identifying assets that will speak to those needs during your walk throughs and help you report success back to the stakeholders to continue to build their loyalty to the event.

## 3 THINK OF SIGNAGE AS MORE THAN JUST WAYFINDING.

It isn't uncommon for Event Strategist to ask for an understanding of the branding opportunities within a hotel or convention center. However, Those opportunities are often associated with wayfinding or advertising opportunities. Collaborate with the Destination Organization to understand if there are opportunities to utilize branding to meet accessibility needs or create a sense of belonging for all attendees.

## 4 EXPLORE THE DESTINATIONS INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL.

One way to really set the event apart and create a fresh attendee experience is to work with the Destination Organization to tap into the local capital. Use the site visit as an opportunity to better understand the local industry, cultural and individual capital that resides within that specific destination. Having a deeper understand of the opportunities to get the attendees into facilities or in front of thought leaders that impact their industry can enhance their career, create meaningful experiences, and uplift the industry the organization supports as a whole.

## 5 FACTOR IN THE VENUE VARIABLES AND THE DESTINATION VARIABLES.

One thing to keep in mind when conducting a destination selection site visit is that the Destination Organization is going to have a "bird eye view" that the individual entities within the destination may not have. Though individual hotel properties can give you an idea of any upcoming renovations in their property, it's just as important to understand from the Destination Organization what larger projects are planned for the destination, what other major events are taking place over the same dates, and other projected factors that could impact your event.



## 6 ACCESSIBILITY IS MORE THAN A CHECKLIST.

Unfortunately, often times even though sites and venues are ADA compliant, they still fail to meet the actual needs of the attendees. It is important to remember that even though ADA compliance is a very important factor, it should be the minimum. Conversations around attendee needs should extend well beyond a checklist. Helping the Destination Organization understand the needs of your attendees on a deeper level will allow them to connect you with providers that can assess those needs and create solutions that create a truly accessible space for all.



## 7 CREATE A SENSE OF SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR ALL.

When conducting the site visit it is important to remember that that safety and security looks different to all, whether its perceived or actual safety factors. Articulating to the Destination Organization what makes your attendees to make them feel safe can help them help you. Health and safety, weather, physical security, local or regional legislation, and other factors can be major factors in the decision to attend an event. Knowing where those concerns are, the destination can support in the education and marketing that will help you drive attendance and, most importantly, ensure a safe experience for all.



## 8 CONCESSIONS SHOULD BE STRATEGIC AND PRIORITIZED.

The destination selection site visit is a perfect time to reevaluate and prioritize the event concession requests. Once the Event Strategist has had the opportunity to walk the space, view the marketing and branding opportunities, and have meaningful conversation with the Destination Organization about maximizing the success of their event, they then have a clear picture of what concessions and amenities would most amplify their event. Understanding what the destination has to offer and working with the Destination Organization to tap into those assets most effectively can change the outcome of the attendee experience and impact the event bottom line for the better.

## 9 TALK THROUGH THE CONTRACTING EXPECTATIONS AND TIMELINES.

Contracting for an event can be a complicated process and often can vary from destination to destination and hotel to hotel, especially in the event of contracting a city-wide event with a convention center and multiple hotel element. Taking the time to understand from the Destination Organization what their typical contracting process looks like and working through timelines and liabilities can set the Event Strategist up for success in advance.

## 10 EXTEND THE SITE TAKEAWAYS TO THE PLANNING TEAM.

Once all destination selection site visits have been completed and sufficient information has been collected it is time to create a comprehensive summary of the visits and go over key findings with major stakeholders to decide which site is the best fit. Key decision makers are not always able to be in attendance for the site, and being able to articulate what is unique about the destination can be challenging when not experienced firsthand. Working with the Destination Organization to create comprehensive recaps and great presentations that will capture the other senses for people that were not on the site visit are a necessity for long term success.



