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ON THE COVER: DEVIL'S LAKE STATE PARK.
PHOTO BY RACHEL HERSBERGER. ©TRAVEL WISCONSIN



EDITOR'S LETTER

Real Wisconsin

What's Wisconsin got to offer?

A whole lot, if this issue has anything to say about it.

We've got breathtaking views—and venues that embrace them. I think one of the best ways to create a memorable event, is to ensure it's in a memorable setting. Think Lake Michigan, lakes Mendota and Monona, and iconic venues (Lambeau!).

We offer great expectations—options perfect for incentives and rewards programs. From luxe lodgings, upscale and trendy restaurants and world-class and heritage attractions to unbeatable ballgame tailgates and hands-on activities, you can be sure to craft a memorable package for those deserving of pampering and fun.

And we offer a warm welcome. Not just in Wausau, as our Destination feature shares. But around the whole entire state. It's the Midwestern philosophy, and the Wisconsin way.

But then, those of us who live here already know that.

Let this issue be your guide of friendly and memorable experiences that can show and tell your out-of-state meetings and event clients that Wisconsin is a destination they don't want to miss.

Kate Bast

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WISCONSIN meetings

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IN THE NEWS

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WISCONSIN CENTER DISTRICT RELEASES EXPANSION PLANS

According to The Business Times, the Wisconsin Center District board was recently presented three options for expansion by a consulting firm they hired. Estimates for the three options range from about \$250 million to over \$275 million and would add approximately 160,000 square feet of space to the existing 266,000-square-foot facility. The report also notes that the expansion would require an additional 1,000 hotel rooms within walking distance in order for the project to be successful. The Wisconsin Center is in the process of establishing a new board of directors, which should be complete by end of summer, who would be responsible for making a decision on the plans.

MADISON CLUB COMPLETES RENOVATION



The Madison Club has recently completed a Georgian-inspired renovation and has expanded its meeting space on the lower level. The historic, member-only club in downtown Madison is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The new Five East Lounge & Tap Room will offer members a chic retreat to complement a formal, fine dining experience at Churchill's Restaurant and Lounge on the third floor. The adjacent Atrium space, featuring an expansive domed glass roof adorned with crystal chandeliers, offers sophisticated space for weddings, holiday parties and corporate gatherings with seating for more than 200 guests.

ABBEY RESORT OPENS NEW PAVILION



The Abbey Resort has completed a new outdoor space, the West Shore Pavilion. Providing all of the comforts of an indoor venue and set in a natural and relaxing outdoor setting, the pavilion features glass windows, a polished cement floor, an elegant ceiling with white drapery, six chandeliers and a canopy-covered ADA accessible sidewalk providing access between rest areas and the pavilion. It accommodates up to 600 guests. In addition, the resort has made a number of recent improvements to the adjacent harbor.

GROUNDBREAKING FOR PROPERTY IN JANESVILLE

Construction has begun on the new TownePlace Suites by Marriott in Janesville. Developed by Kinseth Hospitality Companies, headquartered in Iowa, the property will be located just south of Business Highway 14. The 87 rooms will feature fully stocked kitchens and separate work and sleep spaces. Guests will receive complimentary hot breakfast and Wi-Fi, and the property will offer an indoor pool and fitness center, among other amenities. The property is scheduled to open in spring 2019.

SLEMIN JOINS GMCVB



Nicole Slein has been named the new Senior Convention Sales Manager at the Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau. She joins a team responsible for securing new convention and meeting clientele that help contribute to the \$2 billion impact that tourism and conventions bring to

Madison. Her primary markets are medical/research, health and wellness, corporate and geographic areas including Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. Previously, she was director of sales for the Graduate Madison Hotel.

INGLESIDE OFFICIALLY REPLACES COUNTRY SPRINGS



Country Springs Hotel in Pewaukee has officially changed to The Ingleside Hotel. The name change comes as the hotel has completed approximately



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70 percent of a \$14 million property renovation. Waukesha Hospitality, which also owns the Madison Concourse Hotel and Governor's Club, purchased the hotel in February of 2017. The Ingleside Hotel offers 194 guest rooms and suites that were designed to make guests feel at home throughout their stay. All guest rooms and suites feature beautifully appointed bathrooms, flat screen televisions and refrigerators, as well as a work station with complimentary wireless internet. Renovations are complete on the majority of guest rooms and suites with the last phase of overnight rooms in the final stage of the process.



AIRLINES SEE INCREASES IN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Airline investments in newer planes, improved customer satisfaction with overhead storage compartments and cheaper fares have driven a seventh straight year of improved customer satisfaction, according to the J.D. Power 2018 North America Airline Satisfaction Study.

"The exception is in the in-flight services factor, which includes food, beverage and entertainment systems," explains Michael Taylor of J.D. Power. "Today's passengers expect trouble-free connectivity for personal devices and airlines are challenged to keep pace with the technology that can achieve that goal. This is important because passengers are far more likely to have a positive experience with an airline if they are entertained during their flight."

Among traditional carriers, Alaska Airlines ranks highest for the 11th consecutive year, while Delta Air Lines follows in second place. Among low-cost carriers, Southwest Airlines ranks highest for the second consecutive year; JetBlue Airways ranked second.



COMING TO A HOTEL ROOM NEAR YOU

Amazon has launched Alexa for Hospitality, designed to bring its voice assistant technology to everything from chain hotels to vacation rentals. The system can be customized to include key guest information, such as checkout time or restaurant hours; allows guests to request services like housekeeping or room service; and can be configured to control smart hotel room functions, such as changing the thermostat. Marriott has signed on to be Amazon's launch partner and will introduce Alexa at select properties starting this summer.

FOND DU LAC AREA CVB LAUNCHES REBRAND

Destination Lake Winnebago Region is the new, official name for the Fond Du Lac Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (FACVB). The new name is part of the rebranding of the FACVB as a regional destination marketing organization. This is in keeping with a well-established national trend amongst CVBs, as the organization continues to operate in a more regional capacity. In joining forces with neighboring communities the Lake Winnebago Region can stand out and offer more to potential event planners and meeting planners. "We know that tourists do not care about local borders," said Craig Molitor, president/CEO of Destination Lake Winnebago Region. "Our visitors to this culturally rich region want to experience everything the area has to offer from theater and arts to farm tours to incredible supper clubs and waterfront dining opportunities to museums and attractions to exciting festivals and events. We have the resources, the skill and the infrastructure to help increase economic development in the entire region." **WM**

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GETTING TRENDY

PUTTING A CREATIVE RESTAURANT SPIN ON CATERING OPTIONS

BY KRISTINE HANSEN

By mirroring trends found in restaurants, hotel event spaces are upping their game.

"We're really conscious of [trends]" says former Top Chef contestant Heather Terhune, now executive chef at The Journeyman Hotel, a Kimpton property in Milwaukee's Third Ward neighborhood. "We're trying to put more of a restaurant experience in a banquet space than we are [putting] a banquet in a banquet room."

From pickling to edible flowers to plant-based cocktails and plant-based proteins, trends in catering—just like at restaurants—are largely focused on health. According to ITA Group, a manager of global events and based in Des Moines, Iowa, so is destination-specific cuisine, with regional foods woven into menus. This especially appeals to meeting attendees from outside the area who are curious about local culinary traditions. Experiential stations—such as build-your-own cocktails or dishes, choosing from a selection of ingredients—are also popular at events, according to Af&Co., a catering and restaurant consulting firm.

Cauliflower steak—a vegan, gluten-free alternative to fish filets and meat cuts—is all the rage on cooking shows and restaurant menus. Kalahari Resort's catering menu in Wisconsin Dells features cauliflower steak served with sundried tomatoes, olives, arugula and quinoa hash. It's just one of many vegan and gluten-free items on the menu.

"We've received a lot of positive feedback on the additions," says Armando Monterroso, corporate director of food and beverage at Kalahari Resorts and Conventions.

"Guests are thrilled to see the variety of options to accommodate their personal preferences and health needs. Whether you're traveling for work or for pleasure, it's easy to stray from your normal eating habits. Requests based on dietary needs are increasing every year, whether it's to avoid gluten or food allergens or to meet the needs of guests who eat kosher, vegetarian or vegan diets."

At the Journeyman Hotel's two venues—The Outsider (rooftop lounge) and Tre Rivali (Mediterranean cuisine)—several items have been added based on customer requests. Plant-based cocktails such as "Cashmere Season" (fig, lemon, vanilla-cardamom and rose-hip mist, with sherry vodka) arrived at The Outsider when an employee's pregnant wife continually asked for mocktails.

"You're really giving people a lot of layers of flavors," says Terhune. More and more meetings, she says, are building in 4 p.m. cocktail hours. "That's a great way to round out the day. You've been in meetings all day and listening all day." The "veggies in your drink" trend is also apparent at breakfast events: "People are asking for more pressed juices and green juices," says Terhune.

This artisan plant-based trend is not limited to boutique hotels. AC Hotel Madison Downtown opened in the spring of 2017. Sara Granados, who handles marketing and events, vowed to be different from other AC Hotels by "staying true to the Spanish origination of AC Hotels." (The brand launched in Spain.) For example, patatas bravas—a Spanish potato dish—is on the menu. Eno Vino opens at night to the public. But the Isthmus Room, within Eno Vino, serves as a meetings space by day. The European-style breakfast features croissants flown in from France as well as sliced prosciutto and cheese. A farm-to-table theme "gives us the freedom to always make sure we have the freshest ingredients," says Granados. Catering to dietary restrictions or desires is always first of mind, whether it's Greek yogurt at breakfast or artisan meat and cheese as a pastries alternative, which appeals to gluten-free diners. Instead of serving gluten-free diners a different lunch option, gluten-free sandwich bread or flatbread is substituted. "Everyone is enjoying pretty much the same thing," says Granados.

Like at AC Hotel Madison Downtown, The Charmant Hotel in La Crosse, open since 2015, adopts a farm-to-table philosophy. Two small meeting rooms and a seasonal rooftop—plus the option to buy out the restaurant—coax companies and universities hosting social events. "We work with a lot of small farmers," explains Michel Gabbud, director of food and beverage. Farm names are noted on the menu. Fifteen suppliers are located within a 40-mile radius. And even if it means hiking up the menu price, staff doesn't balk. "Our chicken on the menu does not cost four or five dollars a pound," says Gabbud. "It's obviously a little more. That's the vision of our chef. That's what he's been doing since day one." It's not uncommon, he says, for local foragers and farmers to offer harvested items like ramps and mushrooms in small quantities. A pizza oven supplies pizza to the rooftop bar. "A lot of banquets exclusively go



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for pizza," says Gabbud, alluding to another culinary trend at events.

Family-style dining is also, just like at restaurants, a popular request. "People are more into sharing and being more adventurous," says Terhune, than of ordering off a menu. They might be more apt to try octopus instead of sticking to the roasted chicken. "This sort of dining kind of loosens people up."

Above all, today's meeting planners expect customization. The Journeyman Hotel's build-your-own gin-and-tonic bar is a huge hit. Juniper berries, rose petals, pink peppercorns and strawberries allow for customization. Terhune was surprised to see most attendees didn't even add gin, satisfied enough with tonic and the fun ingredients. Similarly, the hotel's build-your-own breakfast bowl appeals to meeting attendees. "We're trying to have a lot of build-your-own options (for breakfast)," says Terhune, "so it's not just your standard bacon and eggs."

There's a conscious effort to develop recipes that easily accommodate food allergies or dietary requests, avoiding extra charges for

groups. "Most of our vegetable soups are vegan. We try to use coconut oil instead of cream," explains Terhune. "We use grains like quinoa so we don't have to think about it so much." For pasta substitutions, semolina is used. The Journeyman Hotel has also seen increased interest in vegetable-focused options, such as hummus with raw vegetables.

Similarly, The Charmant Hotel does not offer a set gluten-free menu but the chef can accommodate. Before food orders are even taken, staff goes around the room inquiring about food allergies. "There's definitely an increase in these requests," says Gabbud, referring to gluten-free and vegetarian requests. No additional charges apply for these requests.

Event planners should definitely inquire, however, and not assume a sample menu is the final cost. "We have customized menus based on group preferences, themes, dietary restrictions, you name it," says Jill Bishop, The Journeyman Hotel's conference services manager. "Sometimes it can involve an increase in price but many times it doesn't. We work with clients to create or modify menus to try and keep them within their

budget without risking quality or lack of food, which is the most important."

AC Hotel Madison Downtown handles food and beverage requests on a case-by-case basis. To kick off the process, Granados makes sure the chef can accommodate special requests. Pricing is determined next.

It's an exciting time to be in event catering, says Terhune. "We're seeing that people are looking towards the chef," she says. "Nobody wants their ordinary buffet anymore."

Granados, of AC Hotel Madison Downtown, couldn't agree more: "Guests expect a more premium food experience at their events, from farm-to-table ingredients to menus developed by professional chefs," she says. **WM**



Kristine Hansen is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee.

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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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IT'S A WORK IN PROGRESS

BY MOLLY ROSE TEUKE

Alarm clock blues, late morning slump, midday yawnies, post-work lethargy...we all flag at some point in our day—some of us flag multiple times each day.

Most of us reach for caffeine when we hit that flat spot. We rely on it for an energy boost to get us moving in the morning and count on it to keep us alert and ready to rock and roll all day long. It's the most frequently consumed central nervous system stimulant [most ingested pharmacologically active substance] in the world.

And it works. Whether your aim is simply to prop your head up and keep your eyes open or be at your best for a big presentation, caffeine usually does the trick. It heightens our attention and problem-solving abilities, gives us physical stamina, and puts us in a better mood (which itself gives us more energy). But caffeine can also leave us feeling jittery and make it hard to focus.

Science is revealing sustainable ways to boost our energy. Let's look at five domains where we can change our behaviors and feel more energetic.

FOOD AND DRINK

CAFFEINE When you want an energy boost, pouring a cup of coffee or tea—or popping open an energy drink—seems like a good idea. It can be, and there are ways to make it an even better idea. Drink it with food and it'll give you a more sustainable alertness than drinking it alone. Before you pour a second cup, give the first cup ample time to kick in—up to 30 minutes. Get to know how much caffeine your body likes and don't overdo it. Too much and you counteract the benefits.

Also beware of the added sugar in energy drinks, because it can cause a blood sugar spike and dip and leave you feeling decidedly unenergetic.

WATER The best beverage for fighting low energy over the long haul is water. Our bodies are up to 65 percent water, and there's ample evidence that by the time we get thirsty, we're already at least slightly dehydrated—and dehydration sucks the energy right out of us. Some research suggests that we're also grumpier when we're even a little dehydrated, and feeling grumpy is no way to boost our energy. How much water we need is individual; the eight-glasses-a-day rule doesn't apply to everyone. The simplest way to gauge whether you're sufficiently hydrated is a visual test: if your urine is very light-colored, you're getting enough fluids. If it's dark, you need to be drinking more water.

PANTRY STAPLES Much has been written about the best and worst foods for energy. Sticking to those foods you're likely to have around the house, here are four "magic potions."

1. Bananas have been shown to work as well as sports drinks at fueling your energy.
2. Green tea is a great way to get caffeine without the jitters, thanks to the ratio of caffeine (a stimulant) to L-theanine (a calming agent that occurs naturally in tea leaves). Buy raw leaves and brew tea yourself to avoid added sugar. There's also evidence that green tea gives us a cognitive edge.
3. Oatmeal is high in fiber, contains protein and has a low glycemic load, which means it will give you consistent energy instead of a spike and plummet pattern. As with tea, buy plain oatmeal over instant oatmeal packets to avoid added sugar (which ups the glycemic load).
4. Almonds (which technically are a seed, not a true nut) are a great snack that won't spike your blood sugar and yet will give you a reliable source of mid-afternoon energy. They're high in calories, which gives your body a boost, and they contain healthful monounsaturated fats and plenty of nutrients not found in other snacks.

On the flip side, anything that contains a lot of sugar (honey, candy, anything with natural or artificial sweeteners) will make your blood sugar spike, and when it plummets, you'll feel sleepier than before. Ditto for anything made with white flour, which is a simple carb and can make your blood sugar bounce erratically. Junk food—or any processed foods—will also leave you tired and lethargic.

EXERCISE

For a mid-day energy boost, try taking the steps instead of the elevator, or take a brisk walk around the block or even just down the hall and back. Sure, sustained exercise will

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increase your energy on a sustained basis, and who wouldn't want that? But in the moment, anything that gets your blood moving and more oxygen to your brain is going to help. In his book, "Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain," Dr. John Ratey says, "The real reason we feel so good when we get our blood pumping is that it makes the brain function at its best...I tell my patients that the point of exercise is to build and condition the brain." A side benefit is that exercise has been linked to a better mood, which itself increases energy.

SLEEP

Perhaps the most obvious reason for a mid-day slump is insufficient sleep. Most of us need seven to nine hours of sleep a night, yet some 30 percent of adults get less than six hours. No wonder our energy flags! The best way to increase your sleep time is simply to go to bed earlier—it will make you feel more energetic throughout the day. Keeping a consistent go-to-sleep and wake-up time makes it easier to get enough sleep, and has been shown to have a positive effect on cognitive stamina.

But we all have nights when we just don't get enough sleep. A power nap can get you past the yawnies. Just 10 minutes will make a difference, and studies have shown that a nap of from 10 to 30 minutes will increase your cognitive stamina by up to 40 percent. The key is that if you nap longer than 30 minutes, you risk waking up groggy. Napping isn't about sleeping so much as taking a quick cognitive break. Think of it as rebooting your brain's hard drive.

How you wake up in the morning can also affect your energy. If you hit the snooze alarm, you're telling your body "I was just kidding, it's not really time to wake up," and your brain stops producing the neurochemicals responsible for alertness. Result: what sleep experts call "sleep inertia," a morning grogginess that can last several hours—and isn't easily washed away with a cool shower.

ENVIRONMENT

Sometimes a minor tweak to your environment can help you beat the blahs. If it's a sunny day, move to a window. If it's a dark day, turn on some lights. Listen to some favorite music. Get some fresh air. Take a walk in the woods—there's plenty of evidence that being in nature (or even looking out the window at trees or flowers) makes us feel more energetic.



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Another trick to incorporate into your day (whether you think you need it or not) is frequent breaks. In his groundbreaking book, "WHEN: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing," Daniel Pink cites a study done by DeskTime, a company that makes software to track productivity. "What the most productive 10 percent of our users have in common is their ability to take effective breaks," the company says. Preliminary research findings suggest that working for 52 minutes and then taking a 17 minute break is ideal for maximum productivity. Even if that ratio isn't ideal for you, the message is clear: Give yourself a break.

A mid-day slump is sometimes no more than a symptom of boredom. Our brains love novelty. If you're nodding off at your desk, try shifting venues. Work for a little while from a coffee shop or library—anywhere that your brain perceives as a novel venue. If you're working alone, get social. Even a brief conversation with a coworker can help clear the cobwebs. Anything that makes you feel engaged will boost your energy.

Disconnecting from electronics gives us another simple energy boost. Always being tuned to your phone, notifications, and emails

can feel exhausting to your brain. Take an hour to disconnect. It'll all still be there when you reconnect, and you'll feel mentally refreshed.

TIMING

Brainpower gets depleted over the course of a day. Think through the timing of your day; if you have a task that will take a heavy cognitive load, do it when your brain is at its best. To sort out your best time of day (your peak), you have to know whether you're a lark, an owl or what Daniel Pink calls a "third bird." In his book, "WHEN," Pink offers a method for sorting out your chronotype (lark, owl or third bird), and says, "Whatever you do, do not let mundane tasks creep into your peak period."

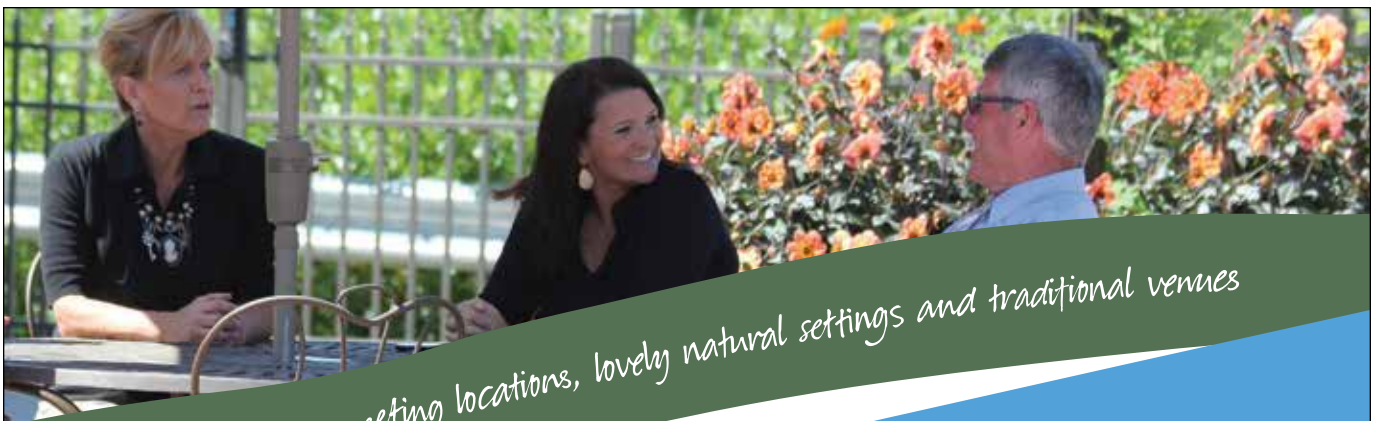
In "Two Awesome Hours: Science-Based Strategies to Harness Your Best Time and Get Your Most Important Work Done," author Josh Davis writes about a creative type who takes on the mundane task of answering all his emails (just to get them out of the way) before tackling a proposal he needs to write. "If he were a race car driver, it would be like taking his race car through city traffic to get to the race—not the fresh start he'd want." Make sure you're not squandering your own fresh

start by wading through non-essential task list before you start on mission-critical tasks.

When it comes to managing our personal energy, the best advice is "take a break—often." The second best advice is "know thyself." Take time to sort out when your energy flags and when your brain cells seem to be taking a break. As you implement ways to perk yourself back up, don't get discouraged if something doesn't work. Just try something else. Managing energy is a lifelong work in progress. **WM**



Molly Rose Teuke has an enduring curiosity about what makes our brains tick. She delivers a program for Nicolet College called Get Your Brain On Your Side, and delivers brain-based leadership training for the NeuroLeadership Institute, a global leader in the performance arena. She also hosts a weekly classical music program and a monthly audioblog called BrainWaves on WXPB-FM. You can reach her at mollyrose@mollyrosecoraching.com.



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Address: 34015 Washington Ave., Sturtevant, WI 53177
E-mail: eileen@realracine.com **Website:** www.aboutracine.com

COMMUNITY INFORMATION:

Population: 130,000
Number of hotel rooms: 1,300
Largest room block: 100
Largest meeting facility: 10,000 sq. ft.
Largest exhibit facility: 17,000 sq. ft.
Airport: General Mitchell International, Milwaukee

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Venues with a View

MEMORABLE SETTINGS MAKE
FOR MEMORABLE EVENTS.

By Mary Bergin



When the American Psychological Association reports that “green is good for you,” it is a reference to the power of nature to soothe and inspire. Not everyone gets to work outdoors or in a room with a beautiful view, but you compensate with a stunning landscape during business gatherings or corporate retreats.

Researchers say a room with a pleasant view helps reduce stress, tension and blood pressure while stoking productivity and a sense of well-being. That applies to meeting and event settings as well as the cubicle and boardroom.

Gorgeous scenery invites favorable vibes, builds positive memories and enriches any agenda. Consider these breathtaking settings for getting down to business in a unique, picturesque and rewarding way.





©KOHLE R CO.

THE IRISH BARN

In the tranquil Sheboygan County town of Mosel, population 490, is one of Wisconsin's biggest showstoppers: Whistling Straits, which will host the 2020 Ryder Cup, whose competitors are the best professional golfers of Europe and the United States.

Perched above holes 9, 10 and 18 of the Straits Course is a fieldstone barn that smoothly blends into the rugged terrain. Also within view, beyond the wavering fescue, dunes and bunkers: Lake Michigan. Eight holes line two miles of the lake's shore.

Two sides of the Irish Barn open or, in cool weather, stay covered with canvas panels that have windows. The structure accommodates up to 120 for buffet dining and has a built-in bar. Furnish it with picnic-style seating or tables with linens.

Add to the "wow" factor by renting the nearby Championship Locker Room for insider peeks at the spacious lounge that Tiger Woods, Bubba Watson, Jason Day and other golf greats have used. Locker nameplates show who's used what during each round of championship play.

The 36-hole, links-style Whistling Straits was designed by Pete Dye and is a Destination Kohler property, associated with the five-diamond American Club resort. The property is no stranger to elite golfers, having hosted the PGA Championship three times.

MONONA TERRACE

Revel or ruminate in the sunshine-filled and curvy convention center in Madison that Frank Lloyd Wright designed in 1938, nearly 60 years before the structure was built and two decades after the architect's death.

Marquee indoor spaces—Lakeside Commons (accommodating 224), Community Terrace (312) and Grand Terrace (360)—feature floor-to-ceiling, half-moon windows that face glistening Lake Monona and its boaters. Expect similar but condensed views in the Wisconsin and Dane rooms, executive board chambers that seat up to 15.

Also bookable is the structure's open-air, rooftop garden of 68,000 square feet. Face west for a front-and-center State Capitol view. Turn around, and there's lovely Lake Monona again. In between is the city at work and play. At ground level is a lakeshore bike path.

Traditional exhibit, ballroom, theater and meeting spaces are available too, making a Monona Terrace rental intimate or spacious. Schedule an architectural tour of the building too.



©TRAVEL WISCONSIN

THE EDGEWATER

An historic hotel with modern amenities overlooks Madison's other liquid jewel, Lake Mendota, and special event spaces at The Edgewater accommodate small to mega gatherings. Sunset views are spectacular from this shoreline.

Major renovations at The Edgewater preserved the original 1948 building and added a new tower for a total of 202 guest rooms. Between the two structures is a plaza for music concerts, festivals, ice skating in winter and other community events.

The plaza also is a flexible space for private events, seating up to 500 in an open-air or tented environment that is a short stroll from the water and hotel pier. Adjacent is the Grand Ballroom, whose 16-foot-tall windows show off the lake; doors open onto the plaza and terraces.

It's easy to feel on top of the world here. Consider a reception for 100 or dinner for 50 at The Red Crown Club, a beacon with big windows that is perched on the original building. Or take a gander at the lake, State Capitol and University of Wisconsin antics from The Sky Bar, an indoor-outdoor space for up to 70 and atop the new hotel tower.



HINTERLAND BREWERY

Consider a different interpretation of "green" value, blended with gold. Hinterland, whose beer brewing began in a converted cheese factory, then a meatpacking warehouse, now calls the Green Bay area's new Titledown District home.

What does that mean? The window-rich brewery and restaurant with a Northwoods décor offers the greatest view of all, from the perspective of ardent Green Bay Packer fans, because Hinterland is next to Lambeau Field.

Private dining rooms accommodate up to 300; choices range from the Beer Hall with fireplaces in winter and garage doors that lead to a beer garden in summer. Or book a quiet group meal in the High Gravity room, for above-ground views of the stadium.

The brewmaster aims to please, arranging brewery tours and beer tastings, appetizer receptions, family-style dining. Windows in some dining areas show brewing equipment. Add access to an 80-inch television for business presentations...or the game of the day.

MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

The most famous pair of wings in Wisconsin may well be the *brise soleil* designed by Santiago Calatrava in his Milwaukee Art Museum addition, which opened in 2001 and quickly became a stylish symbol of the city. The butterfly-like sunscreen with a 217-foot wingspan opens and closes twice a day unless it's too windy.

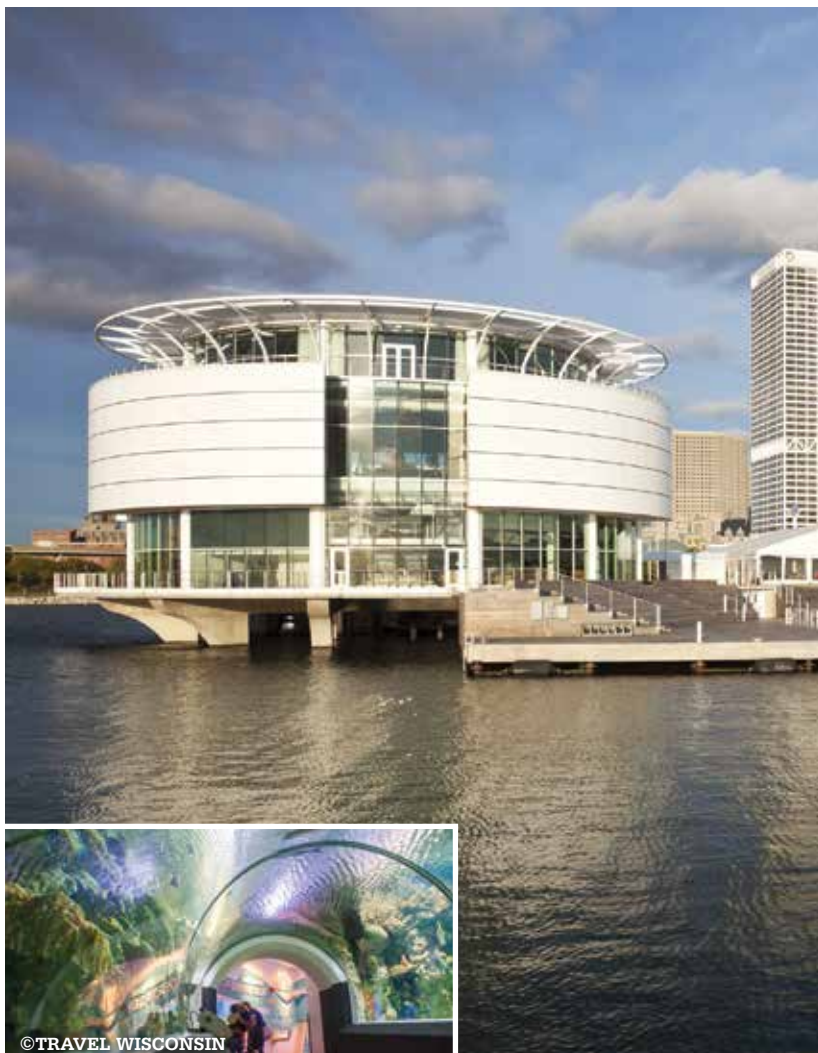
These wings are a defining feature of glorious Windover Hall, whose floor-to-ceiling windows reveal Lake Michigan, a recreational path that shadows the shoreline and boating activity at McKinley Marina. The structure's glass roof is 90 feet tall, making it a powerhouse of light and energy.

The magnificent space can be rented for private and after-hours events. Rates can include guided tours of the museum and, weather permitting, an opening and closing of the wings during your time there.

Calatrava's edgy masterpiece with 72 steel fins is his modern interpretation of a Gothic cathedral. Especially impressive are the museum's collections of decorative arts, folk and Haitian art, German Expressionist and post-1960 American art.



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DISCOVERY WORLD

A five-minute walk south of the art museum is a second lakefront attraction, which aims to entertain as it teaches children to adults. Science and technology are specialties at Discovery World, which opened in 2006 and is undergoing an \$18 million expansion and upgrade.

Additions will include a 9,000-square-foot pavilion with floor-to-ceiling windows on all sides; the venue for up to 800 replaces tents erected for seasonal outdoor events and should be completed before summer ends. Doors will open onto patios that have lake and city views.

Also fetching: the third-floor Pilot House, a circular ballroom with 360-degree views of skyline, shoreline and the *S/V Denis Sullivan*, a Great Lakes schooner with room for 50. Tour it while docked, or set sail for two hours.

Other subsets of Discovery World accommodate 20 to 2,000 guests during, before or after business hours. The Bartolotta Restaurants, one of the state's most respected names in the business, is the venue's exclusive caterer.

A second phase of Discovery World improvements will double as exhibit and program space, enough to add health and medical research exhibits. [WM](#)



Longtime freelance writer Mary Bergin watches warblers and finches from her home office in a woody part of Madison.

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WINNING IN A SELLER'S MARKET

Seven tips to save you money on your next meeting.

By Ronnie Garrett

When the economy changed so did the meeting and events world. The number of meetings and events grew, and more companies opened their wallets to send their employees to them. But as the numbers increased, the available space to hold them in tightened. It's a supplier's market out there. Planners need to be prepared to stay within the confines of their budgets.

"I am definitely seeing a shortage of space, especially with dates," says Kathryn Gleesing, president and CEO of the Destination Management Connection, a full-service destination management company designed to help clients put on events within their budgets.

She adds, "If a client or planner needs to book a venue or hotel within certain date requirements, it is increasingly difficult to do. We often need to book multiple years out just to get the dates they want."

Kevin Shanley, chief revenue strategist for Kalahari Resorts and Conventions, chalks the change up to a thriving economy. "Because of economic events, you have more people wanting to hold events than we have had in the past. Given the nature of our product—you don't build or add meeting space or event venues at the drop of a hat, we have more demand than available space," he says.

Kalahari, which operates in multiple states besides Wisconsin, recently broke ground on a new resort in Round Rock, Texas, to meet growing demand. In addition, it is in the midst of an expansion at the Wisconsin Dells property that will add 112,000 square feet of meeting space. "We have experienced more demand than we have been able to supply for some time, which led us to expand our convention center," he says.

What's a savvy planner to do in a market like this? Shanley and Gleesing offer seven tips on how to get the biggest bang for your buck, especially when suppliers have the advantage.



1 Know your budget

It's impossible to plan a major event without knowing how much money you have to work with. The work must start there. Gather information about the type of event you want and set a hard number for the budget. Then break the budget into categories. Figure out how much money can you spend on a venue, guest speakers, catering, decorations, awards, entertainment and incidentals.

Share all this information with the venue during the negotiation phase, adds Shanley. "The more information we have up front the better we can tailor something to meet their needs," he says. "We need to understand what the budget is and the flexibility they have to plan an event that meets their needs."



2

Share your plans and your history.

In addition to the budget, Shanley says it is necessary for planners to share what is most important to them and identify the areas where there is some flexibility. Perhaps a sit-down meal at an evening awards presentation is important and must be very high end, but events held during the day can be more budget friendly. "If we know this upfront, we can tailor our proposal, including menu recommendations and audio visual, to those requirements," he says.

Shanley explains that he also likes to know what has worked or not worked at past events. "This helps me ensure we are putting emphasis on the right things in their budget," he says.

Gleesing says it also helps if planners can bring a solid event history to the negotiations. Know how much food and beverage your meeting used in the past, how many rooms you picked up, and so on. "The more you can show that you have a lot of business to bring to the property, the more valuable you are going to be," she says. "If you have a strong history, the hotel is definitely going to want to deal with you."

3

Be Flexible.

Prices go up when the requirements for a meeting and event are narrow and inflexible. This can be as simple as being willing to change your dates. Could you hold the meeting during the week instead of over the weekend? Can you hold it during the hotel's off-season, rather than its peak season?

"If there is one word you're going to hear from me more than anything else, it is flexibility. As planners look to pick a date, select the space, determine the set-up, pick the food and beverage and so on, they need to be flexible if they want to save money," Shanley says. "If you can be flexible on the dates, whether it's the time of year or the days of the week, or if you can be flexible on the meals you serve, you can gain incremental savings that add up over time."

4

Book Volume.

Gleesing says planners that come in with one meeting are not as attractive as those that can bring in several meetings over the course of the year or in different years. "Volume can bring about deeper discounts," she says. "These are important things to keep in mind as you're negotiating."

5

Share resources.

Ask about the events being held directly before your meeting or event to see if there might be resources that can be shared. The meeting directly prior to your event might have used an audio visual set up for its general session, and there may be an opportunity to ask the venue to keep this equipment in place for your event, to lower labor costs. "We had a meeting at a venue in Boston, and the group before us put room darkening shades across all the windows in the general session area," Gleesing says. "We inquired about using those shades and were able to take advantage of that resource. They just left them up for our meeting."

6

Negotiate the price of the hotel rooms.

When booking room blocks, negotiate the price for those rooms as well as the number of comp rooms you receive. "If you have a larger room block, let's say 500-1,000 rooms, you often can negotiate one comp room per every 35 rooms as opposed to the standard one per 50," Gleesing says. "Those extra rooms will help you with the VIPs, speakers and staff you need to accommodate at the conference. Those savings will quickly add up."

This is another area where Shanley says flexibility is a plus. Ask the hotel if there are any times when its bookings are low. Planners can leverage information on when occupancy is low to negotiate a better deal. Selecting dates where occupancy is low can prompt the venue to throw in additional comp rooms, he adds.



7 Carefully consider food and beverage.

This is an area where costs can quickly add up, but Gleesing says it's also an area where prices can be greatly reduced. If a planner is willing to provide passed hors d'oeuvres instead of a sit-down meal during an evening event, Gleesing says "the cost savings can be quite substantial."

Flexibility comes in here as well, adds Shanley who points out if a planner is willing to change the menu, he or she may be able to parlay into what the previous group selected for food. "Instead of having to produce beef for one group and chicken for another, the venue can produce one menu for two separate group and get better prices," he says.

He also advises asking the caterer for the most economical food choices because the price of menu options can fluctuate. "We, as consumers, do not notice there are periods of the year, where certain foods are dramatically less expensive, but your caterer would know that," he says. "Believe it or not, there are times of the year where

the front half of the chicken is very expensive, but the back half is not. Chicken wings also tend to fluctuate greatly in price."

He adds, "Chefs can give you insight into where the market is at and what products have the best prices," he says.

Shanley points out that plated dishes versus buffet-style serving also can make a difference. He says though many people think a buffet will be less expensive, it often is not. "Though a plated event takes more staff to execute, it typically takes more food to produce a buffet," he says. "All things being equal in terms of menu, a buffet will be more expensive. You cannot control the portions in a buffet."

In real estate, a supplier's (or seller's) market gives the seller a clear advantage. But in the meeting world, if planners are prepared and know what to ask for in negotiations they can save money.

"Be flexible and don't be afraid to ask," says Shanley. **WM**



Ronnie Garrett is a freelance writer based in Fort Atkinson, Wis.



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— DESTINATION —

Wausau

YOU SHOULD MEET AT THE
GATEWAY TO WISCONSIN'S
NORTHWOODS, WHERE THE
WELCOME IS WARM.

By Melanie Radzicki McManus

Wausau might not be the first locale that pops into your mind when planning a meeting or conference.

But perhaps it should be. This mid-sized city of 40,000, smack dab in the middle of Wisconsin, is an easy-to-reach, affordable spot that offers plenty of meeting space and an eclectic mix of entertainment options you won't find anywhere else.

Wausau and its environs—neighboring communities Mosinee, Rib Mountain, Rothschild, Schofield and Weston—are home to more than 100,000 square feet of meeting space and 2,100 hotel rooms. The largest facility, both in the area and in all of north-central Wisconsin, is the **Central Wisconsin Convention & Expo Center**. The building contains 55,000 square feet of meeting space, more than 1,500 free parking spots and is within walking distance of 575 hotel rooms.

Andrea Stoiber, events director, says the facility hosts a wide variety of events, such as expos, conventions, fundraisers and weddings. Its sweet spot is serving groups of 500 to 600, a number that allows for a lot of breakout options. However, for the past



several years they have hosted the annual convention of the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, which draws 1,500. And in 2017, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump appeared at the center on the same day as the bear hunters' group, packing in an additional 5,000 people.

"Some of our top selling points are our free parking and the fact that we are one level, so there are no stairs or elevators," says Stoiber. "We're also directly attached to the Holiday Inn, so you don't have to go outside if you're staying here."

Other pluses are the special events that staff can pull together (casino nights are always a huge hit) and the friendly, accommodating

staff. "A pretty small team runs this whole building, so meeting planners usually know us well," she says. "We pride ourselves on our hometown feel, and that we make you feel like our friend, not our client. Not every convention center can do that."

Those looking for more intimate digs have plenty of other options, such as the Courtyard by Marriott, Fairfield Inn, Hilton Garden Inn and Westwood Conference Center, all managed by the Ghidorzi Hotel Group. The four properties together offer 278 guest rooms and 40,000 square feet of flexible meeting space.

The smallest meeting facility of the group is the **Fairfield Inn**, which has 4,800 square feet of conference space (largest room

capacity is 225), plus 87 guest rooms. The **Hilton Garden Inn**, which opened last year, contains 10,000 square feet of conference space (largest room capacity is 300), 108 hotel rooms, a restaurant and a bar. The **Westwood Conference Center** is the largest by far, with 30,000 square feet of conference space; its largest room capacity is 200. The **Courtyard by Marriott-Wausau** does not have meeting facilities, but offers 84 guest rooms.

Tim Van De Yacht, sales director with Ghidorzi Hotel Group, says each property features something special. The Fairfield, for example, recently remodeled its conference space. "And our breakfast, included in the room rate, is extremely highly rated by guests," he



©WAUSAU WHITEWATER PARK



CITY GRILL/© TRAVEL WISCONSIN



©LEIGH YAWKEY WOODSON ART MUSEUM

says. “Fairfield as a brand has gone through a transformation to be more health-conscious, so we offer granola, whole and chopped fruit, veggie sausage, and eggs and omelets on the line.” The hotel is also government-friendly, and will meet state per-diems.

The **Hilton Garden Inn** has 10,000 square feet of meeting space that can be split into four areas. Van De Yacht says the Hilton’s emphasis is on natural lighting; its conference area boasts floor-to-ceiling windows.

The **Westwood Conference Center** may not be attached to a hotel, but it features two amphitheatres and a ballroom in addition to its traditional meeting space. The property, which sits on a pretty, wooded bluff, is a good choice for day-long seminars or training sessions.

“A huge, huge advantage to all of our properties is that we don’t host wedding

receptions,” Van De Yacht says, which means there are no steep premiums for Saturday-night stays. “We are definitely in the minority in that regard. But it’s our group’s philosophy. We are focused 100 percent on the corporate traveler.”

Looking for a more unique meeting venue? Then check out **The Grand Theater**. First opened in 1927, the Neoclassical-styled theater underwent a restoration in 1987. Then, in 2002, it was connected to two other landmark buildings to create **ArtsBlock**, a visual and performing arts center. Meeting options include the theater, which can seat 1,214 within the main floor and balcony; the Great Hall, which can hold 400 and features a terrazzo floor, 14 gold pillars and a 30-foot ceiling sprinkled with stars; the Caroline S. Mark Gallery, the primary exhibition space for the Center for Visual Arts (capacity 100); and the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Lounge

and the Loft, both of which overlook the city’s open greenspace. The lounge holds 75, while the loft can handle 150.

Another option is **Granite Peak**. While widely known as a downhill ski area, you can also rent its two chalets, tucked into the base of the ski hill. “People love the views and the privacy,” says Vicki Baumann with Granite Peak. “It’s a very quaint area, very cozy, with rustic charm.” The Sundance Chalet can hold 300; guests love its floor-to-ceiling windows and the outdoor fire bar. The Historic Chalet seats 125. Planners can tap one of six different approved caterers for food and beverage service.

Every good meeting destination includes plenty of down-time offerings, and Wausau doesn’t disappoint. The **Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum**, housed in an English Cotswold-style home, is one of the area’s top tourist draws due to its impressive collection

of avian artwork—in oil, watercolor, graphic arts, bronze and stone. Last year, the Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded the Woodson Art Museum its prestigious National Medal, the highest honor a U.S. museum or library can receive for service to the community.

On the quirky side, a 25-minute drive brings you to the **"45-90,"** a geological marker flagging the spot that is halfway between the North Pole and the Equator, and one-quarter of the way around the earth from Greenwich, England. More precisely, it is one of four spots in the world where the 90th meridian of longitude bisects the 45th parallel of latitude. Visiting the marker lends you some caché, as two of the other four spots lie underwater, and the fourth is in China.

Of course, many people flock to Wausau for its outdoors offerings. Top among their choices is **Rib Mountain State Park**. It's home to miles of hiking and snowshoe trails and a 60-foot observation tower.

Ten minutes from the city center, the **Dells of the Eau Claire River** makes a perfect outing. The county park is created around a narrow, rocky gorge filled with volcanic rock formations. The river rushes through the gorge, tumbling over ancient stones and creating numerous waterfalls. Hiking enthusiasts can experience a National Scenic Trail here, too, as the 1,150-mile **Ice Age Trail** passes through the park.

Canoe and kayak enthusiasts may be surprised to learn that Wausau is home to a national-class whitewater kayaking site, **Wausau Whitewater Park**. When upstream dams release water, paddlers can experience Class II and III rapids along a three-quarter-mile stretch.

Put this all together, and Wausau is a place that has "big-city amenities with the look and feel of the great Northwoods, plus small-town hospitality," says Kent Perrin, marketing director with the Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention & Visitors Bureau. "That sums it up pretty good." **WM**



Melanie Radzicki McManus often writes about Wisconsin from her home in Sun Prairie, Wis. In 2015, she received a Lowell Thomas Grand Award as Travel Writer of the Year, honorable mention. Lowell Thomas Awards are considered the most prestigious travel writing awards in North America.



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MEMORABLE OUTINGS

DESTINATIONS AND EXPERIENCES THAT MAKE STEPPING
AWAY FROM A MEETING AN EVENT HIGHLIGHT

By Mary Bergin
Photos by Travel Wisconsin

A feeling of connection: That's what helps make an excursion unforgettable. We temporarily immerse ourselves in an activity or tour that sometimes involves all of our senses and may feel like we've temporarily escaped to another world.

Plan a memorable outing to break up a lengthy meeting itinerary, build upon a business theme, inspire teamwork or reward a job well done. The perfect choice will simultaneously amuse, invigorate and inform.

ALL IN GOOD TASTE

Burgers and custard? Brats and beer? Churches and chocolates? Ethnic indulgences? Bakery? Good food and drink are easy crowd pleasers, and guides at **Milwaukee Food and City Tours** blend tidbits about history and heritage with local culture and luscious calories.

Walk a neighborhood or use 30-passenger buses to tour a wider geographic area. The company, established in 2007, accommodates groups of up to 200.

Another option is a food excursion in Madison. How many can participate depends upon the location and whether you walk or use other transportation. Walk and eat via **Capitol City Food Tours**, which arranges appetizing, three-hour strolls around the Capitol Square. **Madison Food Explorers** navigates from one lakefront to another, nibbling and sipping along the

way, or develops tailor-made tours. A local food writer leads *Madison Eats Food Tours* on foot, bicycle or bus: The theme can duplicate a neighborhood tour offered to the public or be a customized spinoff.

The **Madame Kuony Demonstration Kitchen at Milwaukee Public Market**, named after a trail-blazing chef-teacher from France who made Wisconsin her home, is outfitted for hands-on and demo classes of up to 40 students. Featured chefs often are market vendors or from the city's finest restaurants. Kitchen-based events for team building can be arranged too, or reserve the market's second floor for a private reception or dinner for 160-180 guests. On ground level are dozens of market vendors who sell spices, candy, meats and more.

Madison intends to add an indoor-outdoor and year-round public market by 2020. Entrepreneurs will be a mix of permanent

and rotating merchants who make salsa to soul food, cured meats and artisan-batch cheeses to unique crafts and sundries. All will find a home at the corner of First Street and East Washington Avenue, whose plaza will make room for live music and pop-up fairs. Inside, plans call for cooking classes and room rentals for events.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Exercise both brain and body during a two-hour sail on the **S/V Denis Sullivan**, which resembles a 19th century schooner and is docked at Discovery World, on Milwaukee's lakefront. Sails take place rain or shine, but not in stormy weather.

The tall ship with three masts accommodates up to 50 passengers. Simply present it as a fascinating ride along Milwaukee's harbor, or use the time to help set sails, steer the ship or quiz the crew about nautical history.



S/V DENIS SULLIVAN SHIP DISCOVERY WORLD

In Door County, shipwreck exploration via kayak is possible through **Lakeshore Adventures**, Baileys Harbor. At least one dozen Lake Michigan shipwrecks from the 1800s are less than 15 feet under water. So two hours of kayaking turns into an eye-opening look at maritime history.

Not a paddler? **Apostle Islands Cruises** in Bayfield uses a glass-bottom boat to provide a 2.5-hour tour of shipwrecks, sea caves and lighthouses on Lake Superior. The vessel is available for private charter for 130 guests.

At **Devil's Lake State Park**, the state's largest and most visited, guided kayak tours of two hours explore geology and wildlife. Or stay on land for guided hikes to the dramatic, precarious quartzite outcroppings and 500-foot-tall bluffs of the beautiful Baraboo Range.

Uber adventurous? At least six outfitters in the Baraboo-Wisconsin Dells area arrange and lead rock climbing excursions in the state park, whose rangers neither prohibit or promote the activity. Translation: Proceed at your own risk.



DEVIL'S LAKE STATE PARK

ARTSY EXPRESSION

Plentiful in Wisconsin is the paint bar. Let each of your colleagues take a seat in front of an easel and follow a professional artist's step-by-step instructions to mix colors, execute brushstrokes and create a painting. These all-in-good-fun classes for groups typically last a couple of hours and might involve a cocktail or two. Everybody has an inner Rembrandt, and this is one way to release it while building camaraderie and simply unwinding.

Among the options: **The Farmhouse Paint and Sip**, Milwaukee (for up to 75 to make wooden signs or paintings); **Splash Studio**, Milwaukee (150 max for a painting class, with catering options); **A Stroke of Genius**, Waukesha (40 max at the studio, or staff will come to your location); **Pinot's Palette**, Appleton (max of 48—create individual paintings or have each person contribute to one large one); and **The Paint Shack** in Eau Claire, Black River Falls, Tomah (paint on canvas, a board, wine glasses, bags; class locations include a brewery, restaurant, art studio or location of your choice).

Hand's On Art Studio, near Fish Creek, is a converted farm with the equipment and materials to produce paintings, mosaics, pottery, fused glass, jewelry, metal sculptures



APOSTLE ISLANDS

and more. The roomy, funky farmstead is big enough for corporate workshops—or simply show up for a Friday night adults-only gathering for laid-back, freestyle art making. Some types of art projects aren't ready to take home until the day after class.

ICONIC ARCHITECTURE

How fortunate that Wisconsin can count Frank Lloyd Wright as a native son. Harmony between nature and these manmade structures represents organic architecture at its finest. Open for tours in the Madison and Racine areas are some of the wily architect's most celebrated accomplishments.

Private group tours of **Taliesin**, Wright's rural estate and architectural school near Spring Green, last one to two hours. Add lunch at Riverview Terrace Café, staffed by culinary apprentices whose priority is serious farm-to-table dining. Or book a private event—reception, meal, conference, lecture, retreat—on part of the 800-acre Taliesin estate, where up to 180 can be accommodated.

Less than one hour east, in Madison, are two other Wright beauties that are open for tours. Guided explorations of **Monona Terrace**, a convention center built almost 60 years after Wright designed it, can concentrate on the building, the architect or sustainable building design. Scavenger hunts with riddles and trivia can be arranged too. You also can add post-tour receptions with wine/cheese, champagne/cupcakes or other treats.

Four miles from Monona Terrace is the **First Unitarian Society Meeting House**, home to a longstanding faith community whose members included Wright. Trained volunteers lead tours of the award-winning campus, which includes the original National Historic Landmark and a 500-seat addition that opened in 2008. See how the sustainable design of this newer atrium syncs smoothly with the 1950s landmark.

In Racine are the 1939 **SC Johnson Administration Building** and 1950 **Research Tower**. Both Wright designs are at the heart of the company's global headquarters. Count the administration center among the 25 most significant architectural works of the 20th century.

90-minute tours of the campus also include a gallery devoted to an "At Home with Frank Lloyd Wright" exhibit and Fortaleza Hall, which opened in 2010 and delves into Johnson family and company history.



TALIESIN



THE BIRDWALK AT TALIESIN



JOHNSON WAX HEADQUARTERS



Add onto the outing with a documentary film, shown in the unusual **Golden Rondelle Theater** (built for a 1960s World's Fair and resembling a spaceship). Arrange an hour at **Wingspread**, too: Wright's largest Prairie-style house, built for the Johnson family, is merely five miles from the corporate campus.

WHEELS, WINGS

Meander among 100-some aircraft on display at the **Experimental Aircraft Association Aviation Museum** in Oshkosh, home to the world's largest annual gathering of experimental aircraft enthusiasts. Exploration begins with a showing of the film "Oshkosh: The Spirit of Aviation." Add a guided museum tour.

Exhibits cover the Wright Brothers to outer

space exploration. Flight simulators give non-pilots a you-are-there hint of what it's like to do a 360-degree aerobatic loop. Inside Pioneer Airport, a short tram ride from the museum, are aircraft from the earliest years of manmade flight. Flights in restored biplanes are possible, as weather warrants.

Invest a couple of hours, or much more. The EAA's unorthodox campus, on 1,600 acres, provides myriad settings to add a cocktail hour, meal or overnight retreat. Example: In Air Academy Lodge are 16 guest rooms (12 are bunk rooms with shared restrooms), classrooms, rec and dining areas.

If a whirl among wheels seems more suitable, consider **The Automobile Gallery** in a revamped Green Bay car dealership.

About 50 beautifully restored vehicles, most from one private collection, are arranged like art masterpieces.

The nonprofit gallery mixes the flamboyant, historic and ordinary. That includes a 1917 Milburn Electric car, 1959 Cadillac Coupe de Ville and 1957 Buick Caballero. Between two galleries is a catering kitchen and private space large enough for a 160-guest meal.

Upstairs, a 20-seat executive conference room with multimedia access has a wall of glass that looks onto the colorful showroom. Across the street is **Captain's Walk Winery**, which can accommodate up to 75 for private tastings in an Italianate Victorian house. [WM](#)

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Great Motivations

IT'S ALL IN THE REWARD. THESE OUTSTANDING INCENTIVES IDEAS ARE PERFECT FOR THE MAKING—RIGHT HERE IN WISCONSIN.

By Betty W. Stark





©TRAVEL WISCONSIN



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What powers a successful corporate incentive program? Vibrant towns and cities, of course. Stunning scenery counts too. Add wow-worthy, cushy lodging with an edgy vibe, or a rustic-classy cabin in a setting so serene that utter silence is the reward. Food, drink, sports, prime lodging, experiences—Wisconsin has it all.

How do you start? Think about the big picture, the overall package—especially the themes of opportunities that might seem exciting or fulfilling. Woven into an incentive tapestry, a unique and memorable program emerges with the following ideas—all available in Wisconsin.

Think “active.”

Tee off on a meticulously groomed golf course or paddle a canoe down an Up North river roiling with spring run-off. Slap on a helmet, slide into a go-kart and careen around a faster-than-it-looks paved and dirt motorplex. Cheer on a nationally ranked sports team from an exclusive skybox. Pilot a sailboat on a Great Lake with a your-team-against-the-other-guys agenda.

Meet the locals.

Connecting to a destination’s history, culture and people pays incentive program dividends. Explore Wisconsin’s music and arts venues, festivals that showcase diversity and the vast talent of locals. Join music fans moving to a rhythm, soothing and mellow or loud and ear-shattering. Peruse artsy creations and meet their makers in funky neighborhoods verging on discovery. Gallery-hop, exploring the works of established artists.

Survey the food-and-drink scene.

Seek out local fare with excursions into ethnic neighborhoods where tiny tucked-away establishments reveal culinary riches from the homeland. Sniff out mom-and-pop bakeries on side streets that lure with fresh-from-the-oven aromas too compelling to resist. Cruise local taverns and craft breweries to sample the latest launches. Look for the unique: For example, at Sobelman’s Pub and Grill in Milwaukee, order a Bloody Mary topped with a whole fried chicken for a ‘You-gotta-be-kidding-me!’ experience. (Dubbed “The Beast,” it’s \$60, serves 4). sobelmanspubandgrill.com.

Promote unique—or surprising—factors when arranging the specifics.

Madison-based Sandra Daniel, president & CEO of FIRE Light Group and Wisconsin Meetings & Events says there are so many qualities that set Wisconsin apart.

“You know what’s really special about Wisconsin—what impresses so many of my clients? Our friendliness! It’s a feel-good quality not always found in destinations and it makes Wisconsin incentive programs even more memorable.

“We are welcoming and gracious, down to earth. People remember that. I have heard that comment so many times. ‘Everyone is so friendly here,’ they say.

“Wisconsin is a very cool destination for incentives and meetings, especially in the spring, summer and fall,” Daniel continues. “Winter is beautiful, too.

“First-time groups unfamiliar with Wisconsin are often surprised at our sophistication—we’re more cosmopolitan than they expect. Take Madison, for example. We have dozens of great restaurants. So many choices, classy to casual, and a top chef, Tory Miller, who



HISTORIC THIRD WARD/©TRAVEL WISCONSIN



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beat Bobby Flay in an Iron Chef Showdown. His beautiful restaurant **L'Etoile** is a favorite for very special clients. The setting on the Capitol Square is amazing and so is the food. For contrast, food carts on the Capitol Square can be a fun food option, too."

Wisconsin offers classy digs, as well. "We have fine hotels and event spaces throughout the state," says Daniel. "For Madison groups I use the **Concourse Hotel**—a great downtown property, friendly staff that makes everyone feel welcome. For events and rooftop celebrations the lakefront **Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center** is a classic, and the rooftop space at **Ovation 309**—corner of Johnson and State streets—is a dramatic introduction to Madison's fabulous city views. The **Madison Club** makes a fine impression, too," she adds.

"North of Milwaukee, Kohler's **American Club** is perfection, an exceptional destination. Any Kohler PGA event there is a big draw. Even a round of golf on any of their courses is a bucket list item, a top award."

The food scene statewide is a big hit with our clients in both our small towns and big cities, Daniel points out. "Milwaukee is a star! Farm-to-table experiences, classic beer-cheese-and-brats pre-game tailgating at **Miller Park**—they do it like nowhere else. **Milwaukee's Third Ward restaurants** are a must, too, for local fare to fine dining. Milwaukee's ethnic, food and music festivals are outstanding," she says.

Go hands-on.

According to a recent study by the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), 42 percent of incentive travel managers are increasing

the number of "experiential rewards" in their portfolio. Today's attendees want to dive into the local scene—mix and encounter, not simply observe.

The **Kohler Experiential Learning Center** in the Village of Kohler offers more than 20 programs that focus on hands-on experiences. Their Sailing Synergy program requires not only participant teamwork but also facing the ever-changing natural conditions of Lake Michigan during pre-launch lessons and after-session regattas.

The Center's "Cookin' for Hunger" program lets participants get their hands dirty at a local farm by transforming fresh produce into a healthful meal big enough to feed themselves and people at a local shelter through a partnership with Nourish Farm to Family Philanthropy. kohlerlearningcenter.com.

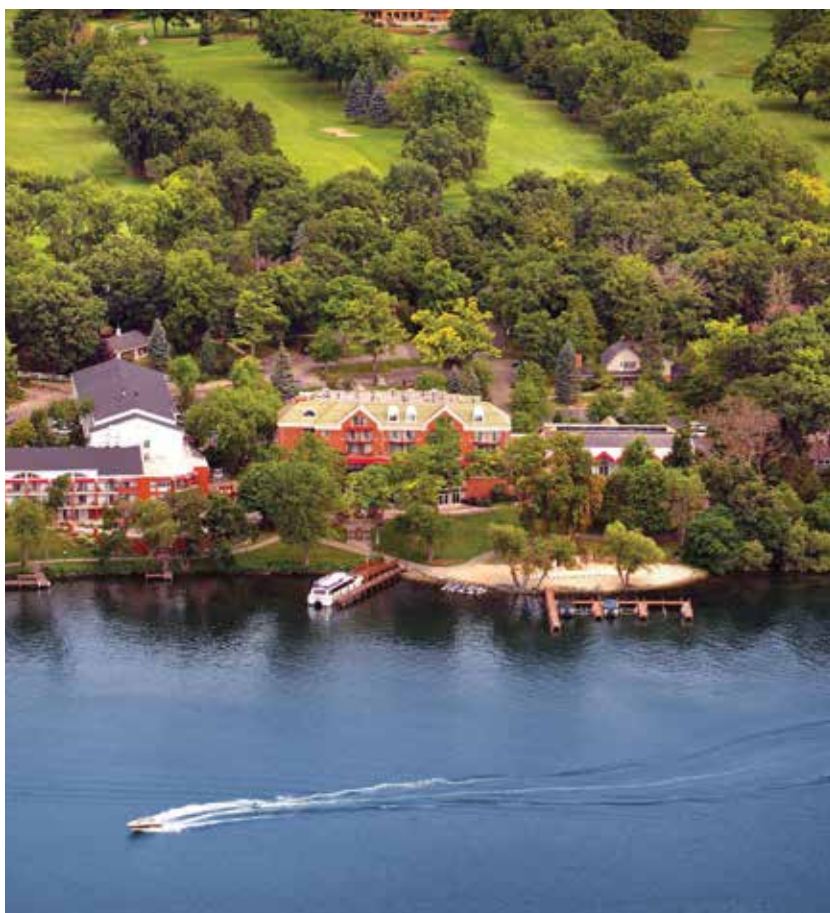
Sports and active options count.

For a memorable group outing, it's hard to top Wisconsin sports, a unique experience shared with fevered fans. Launch the party with a Wisconsin-style brats-cheese-and-brews parking lot tailgate party, and then take in a **Milwaukee Brewers game**. mlb.com/brewers.

Check out a smaller-town game-day experience, complete with a woodsy Leinie Lodge, at the **Timber Rattlers** baseball stadium in Appleton. Join the frenzy as red-clad football fans rock Madison's **Camp Randall Stadium**. For an unprecedented party perched high above the North End Zone, reserve Camp Randall Terrace; it serves groups up to 100.

Lambeau Field in Green Bay, home to the venerable Green Bay Packers, is a win-win-win option even on non-game days. Event spaces like elegant sky-high box suites and an expansive Atrium turned classy for stylish dinners and awards ceremonies make it far more than home to a revered team. Game day, the Miller Lite Party Deck offers a private bar, exclusive concessions and great views from high in the South End Zone. packers.com/lambeau-field.

For heart-pumping, one-of-a-kind excitement, **Road America** in Elkhart Lake offers a variety of activities for groups through its Adventure Program. Karting, racing and driving are popular with groups, but options for zip lining, geo caching and many other activities are available as well. roadamerica.com



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Where you lay your head at night counts too.

Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, La Crosse, Racine-Kenosha, the Lake Geneva area, Door County, Green Lake County—all, along with plenty of other Wisconsin cities and towns, offer fine lodging options. Milwaukee's elegant **Pfister Hotel** located just three blocks from Lake Michigan is an iconic landmark and architectural jewel. Green Bay's classy new **Lodge Kohler** holds down a prime location right across the street from Lambeau Field. Madison's new **AC Hotel** just off the Capitol Square is edgy-modern with a spectacular top-floor bar-restaurant and terrace showcasing wow views of the State Capitol.

Wisconsin's lodging options are as varied as the landscape. In the Northwoods, incentive groups can find serenity and luxury, with exclusive lodges tucked into pristine forests, sequestered lakeside Prairie-style cabins, and historic compounds on private islands.

Canoe Bay, a Relais and Chateau property, features 27 guest cabins on a picturesque spring-fed lake near Chetek. Designed by a protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright, Canoe Bay is about an hour north of Eau Claire. As an incentive award, it is unique in its woodsy seclusion, with a highly rated set-menu dining room and uniquely individual cabins. canoebay.com.

Stout's Island Lodge near Birchwood was built in the early 20th century on an island in the middle of Red Cedar Lake. Frank Deming Stout, a wealthy Chicago lumber baron, named the sprawling family retreat "The Island of Happy Days." Modeled after early upper New York State Adirondack camps, the Lodge is about as "Up North" as they come. Open from May to October, it is still a fine-rustic showplace, with four-inch-thick plank floors, cedar logs, massive carved beams, several cabins, a main lodge and a restaurant.

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Guests arrive by launch from the lodge dock. stoutsislandlodge.com.

Minnesuing Acres is tucked at the end of a gravel road off Wisconsin Highway 53 about 35 miles north of Hayward. The Northwoods lakefront lodge owes its existence to Curt Carlson, the founder of Gold Bond Stamps and a national lodging empire. It was long the Carlson family retreat. With 35 recently refreshed, individually designed guest rooms, a highly acclaimed food service, dedicated staff and plenty of gathering places, the Lodge, expansive grounds and access to all lake activities can be reserved exclusively, one group at a time. minnesuingacres.com.

Remember the bottom line.

There's another important reason Wisconsin is a strong contender for an incentives package. "Last but not least," Daniel adds, "my clients tell me they are surprised that Wisconsin is so affordable." Indeed Wisconsin offers experiences of value, in more ways than one. [WM](#)



Betty W. Stark is a freelance writer based in central Wisconsin.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

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JULY 18

MPI-WI Summer Social at Madison's Concerts on the Square

5 p.m.: Meet outside the Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau Office at 22 E. Mifflin St.; 5:15 p.m.: Depart from GMCVB and walk to the corner of East Washington Avenue and Pinckney Street; 5:30-7 p.m.: Social hour with provided beverages and appetizers; 7 p.m.: Concert begins. Sponsored by the GMCVB. For more information go to mpiwi.org. RSVP on the MPI - WI chapter Facebook page.

AUG. 7

MPI-WI Summer Social – Oshkosh

5:30 p.m.: Reception at the Oshkosh Convention Center (outdoor weather permitting); 6:30 p.m.: Music at the Leach Amphitheater by the "308s". Sponsored by the Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center and the Oshkosh CVB. For more information go to mpiwi.org. RSVP on the MPI - WI chapter Facebook page.

AUG. 16

MPI-WI Summer Social – Milwaukee

5-8 p.m.: Happy hour with light appetizers and drinks at the Kimpton Journeyman Hotel, 310 E. Chicago St., Milwaukee. Sponsored by the Kimpton Journeyman Hotel and Visit Milwaukee. For more information go to mpiwi.org. RSVP on the MPI - WI chapter Facebook page.

SEPT. 22

MPI Wisconsin Awards Gala

Join MPI-Wisconsin for a fun filled night of celebrating members, volunteers and chapter accomplishments. Hall of Fame, Meetings Industry Advocate, President's Award, Rising Star, Industry Partner, Team of the Year, Supplier of the Year and Planner of the Year will be some of the awards presented. Registration deadline is Sept. 12. Hosted by the Hilton Milwaukee City Center. mpiwi.org

OCT. 18

MPI-Wisconsin Monthly Member Event

The Ridge Hotel, Lake Geneva
Monthly membership meeting featuring educational seminar, networking and more. mpiwi.org

NOV. 4-6

Wisconsin Lodging Conference & Tradeshow

Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake, Wis.
Join lodging and hospitality professionals for their annual conference. Featuring a supplier expo, reception, seminars and more. wisconsinlodging.org

NOV. 4-6

Great Lakes Education Summit

Monona Terrace, Madison
The 5th Annual Great Lakes Education Summit, to be hosted by MPI Chapters of Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin, boasts outstanding educational programs along with networking opportunities for its attendees. This one of a kind regional event is coordinated and organized by our three dedicated chapters. With the involvement and influence of the chapters' leaders, this annual conference will grow not only into a successful event that offers great educational programs, but one that also offers a fantastic network of industry professionals. This network will be a tremendous value to members of the host chapters along with other attendees throughout the region. mpigreatlakes.org

NOV. 8-9

Wisconsin Fall Tourism Conference

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