

INDUSTRY
VIEWS

ICCA on
association
meetings

ICCA's new strategic plan

Association meeting planners can rely on ICCA to help shape the value of international association meetings, writes **Esmaré Steinhöfel**.



ESMARÉ STEINHÖFEL is ICCA's Africa regional director. ICCA is the global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry.



ICCA REPRESENTS THE MAIN specialists in organising, transporting, and accommodating international meetings and events, and comprises over 1 000 member companies and organisations in almost 100 countries worldwide. ICCA specialises in the international association meetings sector, offering unrivalled data, communication channels, and business development opportunities.

THE BEGINNING

ICCA was founded in 1963 by a group of travel agents. Their first and foremost aim was to evaluate practical ways to get the travel industry involved in the rapidly expanding market of international meetings and to exchange actual information related to their operations in this market. This initiative proved to be well-timed as the meeting industry expanded even more rapidly than predicted. As a result, representatives from all the various sectors of the meetings industry globally applied for ICCA membership.

WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

ICCA is now one of the most prominent organisations in the world of international meetings. With its new strategic plan, launched in 2015, ICCA aims to get closer to association

meeting planners and make them truly part of the ICCA community. All companies and organisations that have a strategic commitment to provide top-quality products and services for international meetings should consider ICCA membership as part of their long-term plans.

International meeting planners can rely on the ICCA network to find solutions for all their event objectives: venue selection; technical advice; assistance with delegate transportation; full convention planning or ad hoc services. ICCA members represent the top destinations worldwide, and the most experienced specialist suppliers. **M**

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FAST FACTS

- ICCA's head office is based in the Netherlands. ICCA's regional offices are based in Malaysia, South Africa, the UAE, the USA and Uruguay.
- ICCA's mission is to be the global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry, creating competitive advantage and business opportunities as well as successful outcomes for association meetings.

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AIPC on
the role of
conference centres

A force for recovery

For **Rod Cameron**, meetings, conferences and exhibitions are some of the most potent weapons for fighting international terrorism.



Rod Cameron is the executive director of the Joint Meetings Industry Council and the faculty head for the AIPC Academy.



R**EPORTS FROM SOME** prominently affected destinations, such as Paris, Brussels and Istanbul, suggest that the strength of events and their associated attendees relative to other types of visitors show the kind of resilience formerly seen in connection with rebounds following global economic and security-related incidents. In fact, in some destinations affected by such incidents, meetings were barely impacted even as overall visitor numbers were significantly down.

These kinds of observations are not new. Both hotels and airlines have previously noted that the earliest signs of recovery following major incidents were seen in people travelling to attend events. Furthermore, this group tended to be among the biggest generators of economic impacts among various visitor groups.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

But another effect is being observed that may even further underline the beneficial influence that events have in the face

of terrorism incidents – namely, the role that such events play in restoring and demonstrating the stability of a destination in the face of such incidents. The fact that a city has managed to retain important and usually high-profile events in the face of incidents that may be deterring other visitors has a moderating effect on the overall image of a destination as a place to visit, and projects exactly the right kind of message about a city when it may need it the most.

This suggests a very specific tactic for cities that are unfortunate enough to experience terrorist attacks: do everything possible to retain these events. Not only are they demonstrably more likely to carry on with their original plans, but the fact that events are so visible to a wider audience suggests they can actually act as very effective promotional vehicles for a “business as usual” message to the world as a whole.

Understanding that meetings and conventions can be a potent force for economic restoration should give governments yet another reason to put a priority on growing and maintaining this sector. **M**