



Inspired Incentives

Planning an International Incentive Trip or Event? Buyer Beware. . .

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Managing an international meeting, incentive, conference, or event (MICE) takes a lot of work. A LOT! You will undoubtedly confront certain challenges in the planning process, even with a domestic program. For those planning international events, there are some additional complexities. Take it from me: at HMI we organize MICE in destinations all over the world, and each time we're faced with a set of unique challenges that force us to bring our strategic "A" game. Based on these experiences, I've come up with a set of essential, common sense suggestions that should help prepare anyone interested in organizing an international meeting, incentive, conference, or event:

Planning an International Event: Essential Tips for Planners

1. **Make sure you have a basic understanding of your potential destination's local culture.** It's important to be aware of how business is done there – things like attitude and work ethic can vary quite dramatically from one country to the next.
2. **Plan your trip according to destination schedules.** For example, most of Europe shuts down during the month of August, and some countries don't open for dinner until 8:00pm. Becoming familiar with destination holidays and vacations is a must.
3. **Anticipate issues with language and currency.** There will always be some things that are simply lost in translation. Be sure local vendors and the hotel staff explicitly understood your instructions before moving on. Also, international currencies tend to fluctuate, so be prepared for this challenge. Some vendors/suppliers will agree to lock-in rates in USD.
4. **Seriously consider hiring a local company in the destination (e.g. Destination Management Company – DMC).** It is well worth the money to enlist the services of a local destination management company. Someone who understands your needs and goals and can navigate the local culture can be exceptionally valuable during the planning process. With that said, be careful in selecting the supplier – confirm financial stability, years in business, local reputation, etc. Get proposals from at least two suppliers to make sure you're getting fair pricing.
5. **Don't expect what you don't inspect.** Site inspections are particularly important when planning an international program. Anything can be made to look good in a picture, and a picture won't show you construction across the street from the hotel that starts at 6:00 am in the morning and causes traffic issues. That ballroom may be the size you need and have the right audio-visual capabilities, but the hotel might not tell you about the pillars obstructing the view of the stage.

As you can see, planning an international event is a complex process with many components to consider. If you're trying to decide whether or not an international destination would be right for your event, it might behoove you to contact a third party planning company with extensive international knowledge and experience. That way you can rest easy knowing that there won't be any last minute surprises along the way! For more information, call TIMBR today!