

Destination Update

LONG ISLAND VENUES CREATE MEMORABLE MEETING SITES

By Kristen Matejka, Long Island CVB and Sports Commission

Well-known for its sandy white beaches and top-rated golf courses, Long Island is also rich in character and features noteworthy meetings venues in everything from gorgeous "Gold Coast" mansions to the exciting Belmont Racetrack, which recently celebrated its 100th anniversary.

"With free hotel parking, affordable rates and a moderate hotel tax rate, Long Island is close to New York City, but a world away," said Regina Zara, Director of Sales at the Long Island Convention & Visitors Bureau and Sports Commission (LICVB&SC). "And the LICVB&SC offers planners assistance with free RFP coordination, site inspections, pre-and post-convention activities, collateral material, incentives and other services."

Following are some of the unique meetings venues Long Island offers, in addition to its wide assortment of full and select service hotels:

Recently undergoing a major renovation, **Oheka Castle** is a 1920s French Chateau style castle considered one of the finest castles built on Long Island. On 22 acres of well-manicured property, with the Cold Spring Country Club and golf on the premises, this actual castle has 26 rooms and suites and over 10,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including a grand ballroom, library and dining room.

Another renovation was recently completed at **Hofstra's University Club**. Built in 1965, the facility recently underwent a major transformation into an elegant, yet modern style facility with three main rooms including a Grand Ballroom and two smaller conference rooms for private functions.

The historic **Belmont Racetrack** offers meeting planners a very unique entertainment opportunity. The Garden Terrace (12,000 sq. ft.) and North Shore Terrace (6,000 sq. ft.) at Belmont Racetrack offer meeting planners the opportunity to combine the excitement of a "day at the races" within a luxurious setting that can accommodate up to 5,000 guests.

MEET ME IN FORT WORTH

By Leigh Lyons, Fort Worth CVB

The 17th-largest city in the United States and still growing rapidly, Fort Worth continues to be one of the premier meeting destinations in the nation. Known as the "City of Cowboys and Culture," Fort Worth is an exciting meetings, convention and tourism destination. One of the biggest reasons is the transformation of the city's accommodations in its pedestrian-friendly and safe downtown. By 2008, the number of guest rooms downtown will double, thanks to new and renovated hotels, which will allow the city to host larger meetings than ever before.

Ground has been broken on the **Omni Fort Worth Hotel**, the new convention center headquarters facility. Expected to open in late 2008, this luxury property will feature 607 rooms and nearly 68,000 square feet of meeting space. The 294-room **Hilton Fort Worth** and 504-room **Renaissance Worthington Hotel** have both completed extensive renovations. The new **Embassy Suites Hotel Fort Worth-Downtown** offers 156



two-room suites along with meeting spaces that are ideal for smaller events. Opening in 2008 less than a block from the convention center, the **Sheraton Fort Worth Hotel and Spa** will offer 430 guest rooms and 22,000 square feet of meeting space.

Fort Worth's downtown has gained a reputation as one of the country's most lively urban settings. The 35-block **Sundance Square** entertainment district is home to a collection of restaurants, live music clubs, theatres, shops, exciting nightlife and the beautiful Bass Performance Hall.

No visit to Texas is complete without a stop at the legendary **Stockyards National Historic District**. Unique attractions such as the Fort Worth Herd daily cattle drive thrill visitors year-round. Top



Another unique meetings site is the **Cradle of Aviation Museum**. It includes the luminous Reckson Center Atrium, Red Planet Cafe, Hall of Honors, Sky Walk and the 300-seat Leroy R. & Rose W. Grumman IMAX Dome. The Museum's four-story Reckson Center Atrium is a magnificent backdrop for unique special events and can accommodate over 1,000 guests.

And fairly new to the Long Island area is **The Charles B. Wang Center at Stony Brook** with 120,000 sq. ft. of interior space and 35,000 sq. ft. of gardens. Well equipped with conference facilities, the Center holds two mid-sized lecture halls that are wired for laptops and the most current audiovisual presentations. The building is dominated by a 100-foot octagonal pagoda, a structure traditionally associated with Chinese temples.

Or add extra interest and excitement by holding your function at **Atlantis Marine World**. With room for 500 guests, the aquarium offers captivating exhibits including the sharks, penguins, sea lions, a giant moray eel and many other sea creatures. Atlantis recently introduced team building programs in partnership with *Motivate America* and will work closely to customize an experience to meet individual needs and budgets.

In addition, **Long Island Wine Country** is also home to over 30 wineries offering tastings, tours and meeting facilities, indoor and out. And for very large meetings and conventions, Long Island's **Nassau Coliseum**, home of the New York Islanders, offers a versatile, large-scale option with plenty of nearby hotels, museums and golf. **MPI**



country music performers play the stage at Billy Bob's Texas, the "World's Largest Honky-Tonk," and live rodeo takes place every weekend at Cowtown Coliseum, home to the world's original indoor rodeo. Shopping for handcrafted cowboy boots, hats, clothing and souvenirs is abundant in the Stockyards.

The Cultural District is home to world-class museums. The temples of culture that line the park-like setting of the district include the Amon Carter Museum, the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, the Kimbell Art Museum, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame. It's no wonder Fort Worth is considered the museum capital of the Southwest. **MPI**