

Whistler to host prestigious meetings and incentive event



Whistler, B.C. – Whistler continues to make inroads in the important meetings and incentive market, establishing itself as a premier destination for conference group business, and securing one of the industry’s most influential events in 2019.

Tourism Whistler, in partnership with the Fairmont Chateau Whistler, successfully bid for the 2019 Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) Incentive Summit Americas (ISA) event. The exclusive invitation-only event will bring more than 100 incentive travel professionals to Whistler March 28-31, 2019. The annual event brings together an exclusive group of top buyers and suppliers for education sessions and networking opportunities and is an exceptional opportunity to showcase Whistler as a meetings and incentive destination.

“We are thrilled to welcome the important SITE event in 2019,” said Karen Goodwin, Tourism Whistler’s Vice President of Destination and Market Development. “We cannot stress enough the importance of bringing these groups to Whistler – these key buyers get to experience the resort first-hand and build relationships that can ultimately lead to very important – and strategic – business for the resort.”

For organizers of the SITE event, Whistler, seen as an iconic meetings destination, was a natural choice.

“Our Incentive Summit Americas event has become the crown jewel in SITE’s event portfolio, and I can’t think of a better destination to play host in 2019 than Whistler, which is truly a year-round destination of choice for incentive travel,” said Philip Eidsvold, Senior Director, One10 Client Services and President Elect for SITE.

The SITE event will include education sessions, networking and destination immersion, with plenty of time worked into the schedule for participants to enjoy the mountains and all of the activities that Whistler has to offer. "While delegates are enjoying Whistler, it is a tremendous opportunity to showcase the resort as a meetings destination, demonstrating first-hand the caliber of events Whistler can produce," said Goodwin. "The convenience of Whistler, with its pedestrian-friendly village providing easy access to venues, activities, dining, shopping and nightlife make a meeting planner's job easier," she said.

"We are so thrilled to be bringing the Incentive Summit Americas for the first time to Canada, and specifically to Whistler," said Kevin Edmunds, Vice President of Sales, AIC Hotel Group and SITE board member. "Incentive Summit Americas will bring the best of the best to Whistler where top-quality education and endless networking opportunities are at the forefront."

"Having used Whistler for incentive travel for many years, I am personally so excited to bring Incentive Summit Americas to this world-class destination so that all of our attendees – hosted customers and sponsors alike – can spread the word on the magic of Whistler," added Eidsvold.

"Incentive Summit Americas will bring many highly qualified incentive travel buyers and decision-makers to a truly iconic incentive travel destination. I am so excited to showcase Whistler to the SITE global community."

Growing group business is a key strategy for Tourism Whistler.

"Meetings and incentive business is a great way to help us grow shoulder season business," said Goodwin. "Conference and group room nights help fill mid-week and shoulder seasons effectively. This type of business helps to fill in some of those pockets in the calendar where there is opportunity for growth," she added. "As we look more and more to developing sustainable growth strategies, group business is a key part of that ... it helps us to level out the peaks and valleys, resulting in more consistent business levels throughout the year."

Conference and group business accounts for approximately 23% of overall summer room nights and approximately 14% of overall winter room nights in Whistler. Summer 2017 conference and group bookings in Whistler increased by three per cent from summer 2016 and were the second highest in the past 10 years. Nearly one in four summer 2017 room nights were conference and group bookings. It is especially significant in terms of driving business during shoulder season months, which helps to buoy overall results, making the resort's business levels more sustainable. In months like May and October, explains Goodwin, conference and group business accounts for a third of all room nights.

The Whistler Conference Centre is owned by the Resort Municipality of Whistler and operated by Tourism Whistler. The conference centre had one of its strongest years on record in 2017, hosting 73 groups and generating \$3.17M in revenue. In 2017, groups using the Whistler Conference Centre accounted for approximately 47,000 room nights.

As one of Whistler's key meetings hotels and host hotel for this 2019 SITE event, the Fairmont Chateau Whistler is an important partner.

"With over 3,000 square metres (32,000 square feet) of meeting space complemented by world-class hospitality and spectacular facilities, we were quite literally built to host events such as SITE," stated Norman Mastalir, managing director at Fairmont Chateau Whistler. "Whether organizing an intimate seminar for 10 or a global conference for 1,500, we seamlessly blend business and pleasure ensuring each and every event is an outstanding success. I'm confident Whistler will exceed the expectations of SITE stakeholders."

Growing group business is not just a priority for Tourism Whistler and meetings hotels. The Resort Municipality of Whistler is also a supporter of these initiatives.

"Conference and event business is core to the success of the Whistler economy and is supported by the Whistler Economic Partnership Initiative Committee as a key strategy of growing year-round business for Whistler," said

Whistler Mayor Nancy Wilhelm-Morden. "The Resort Municipality of Whistler congratulates our resort-wide team and our partners on their efforts to build this business for the resort," she said.

Meeting planners can visit Tourism Whistler's website at www.whistler.com/meetings to learn more about the variety of meeting opportunities in Whistler. The resort offers 5,400 rooms for accommodation and the Whistler Conference Centre has 65,000 square-feet of meeting space with multiple set-up options, while the resort offers more than 150,000 square feet of conference space in a variety of venues. Off-site meetings can also be easily arranged. Meeting options are available at all budget levels.

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Media can visit www.whistler.com/media for Whistler facts, media releases, story starters, local personality profiles and access to images and B-roll.

Whistler is Canada's premier year-round leisure and meeting destination located in the Coast Mountains 120 kilometres (75 miles) north of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Consistently rated the top ski resort in North America for the past 12 years in a row, Whistler was the Host Mountain Resort of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The resort offers an extensive range of accommodations totaling 10,000 bedrooms among 24 hotels as well as townhomes, condos, B&Bs and chalets. Whistler also boasts more than 100 restaurants and bars, 200 retail shops, 25 spas and countless activity options from world-renowned skiing and snowboarding, mountain biking and golf, to hiking, rock climbing, and watersports. The Resort Municipality of Whistler is home to a diverse community of more than 9,000 permanent residents.

Tourism Whistler is the member-based marketing and sales organization representing Whistler, operating the Whistler Conference Centre, Whistler Golf Club, Whistler Visitor Centre, as well as 1.800.WHISTLER and whistler.com – Whistler's official source for visitor bookings and information. As the convention and visitors bureau for the Resort Municipality of Whistler, Tourism Whistler represents more than 7,000 members who own, manage and operate properties or businesses on resort lands including hotels, restaurants, activity operators and retail shops.

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