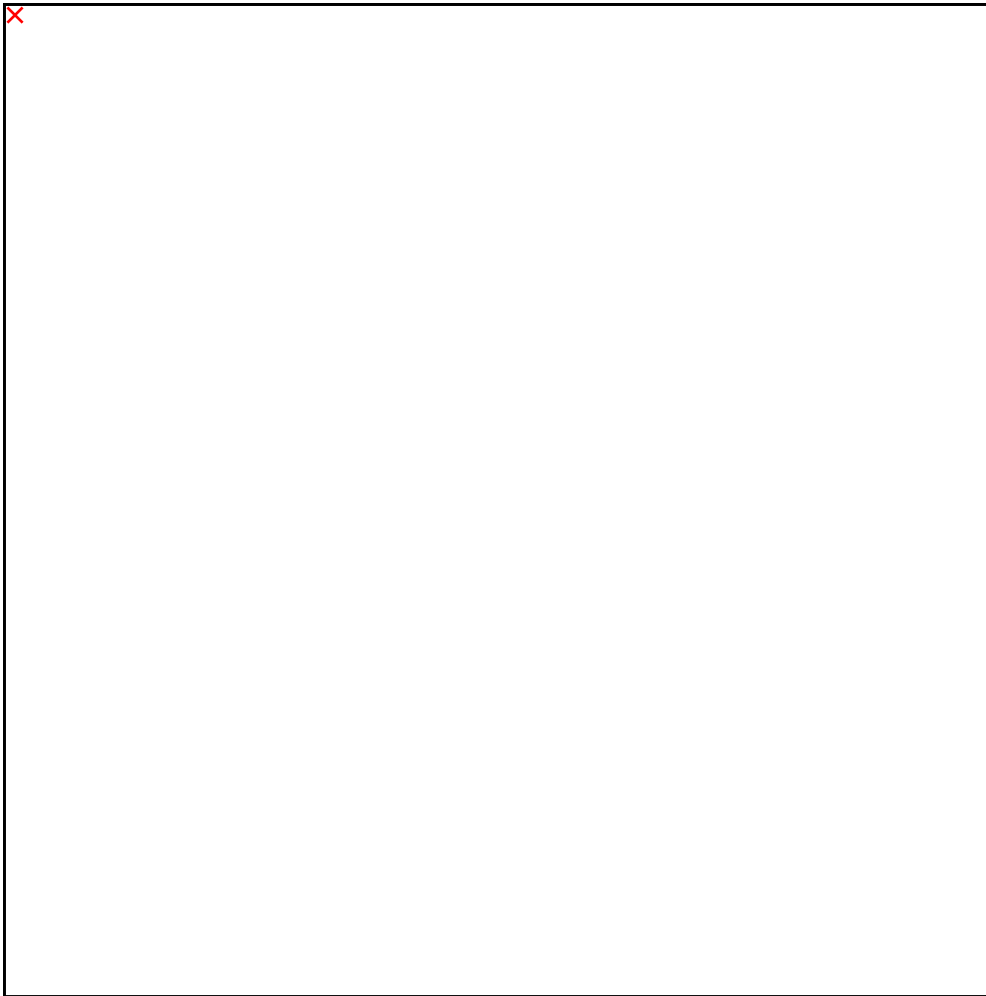


From healthy cuisine to team bonding, Benchmark shares top meeting trends

12/02/2022



Benchmark Resorts & Hotels, the independent division of hotel management company Pyramid Global Hospitality, has tapped the thought leaders of its more than 60 properties to gauge outlooks for meetings in 2023 and dig into the trends driving group plans.

“There has been a huge surge in group demand for short-term, last-minute bookings this year,” Eric Gavin, chief commercial officer of the luxury & lifestyle division of Pyramid Global Hospitality, said in a statement. “Pace for 2023 is equally strong and ahead of any of our historical records.”

Addressing hybrid and remote workforces, he added, “Evolved work patterns are creating more necessity for regional gatherings, which is also driving the short-term nature of bookings, and this is a trend we anticipate is here to stay. We’re leveraging local relationships to show planners the special experiences in their own backyard.”

“The two-year gap in traditional meetings has also led to a rush to make up for lost time, and we expect it will take through 2023 to get back to normal meeting cycles,” Gavin continued.

According to Benchmark, here are five top meeting trends driving group experiences are:

1. The four walls are dead

Group event sizes have condensed a bit, according to Gavin. “Smaller events have opened up creativity for alternative meeting set-ups tailored to more intimate experiences, whether that’s creating a living room design in a traditional meeting space or moving the group think tank to an outdoor pavilion.”

Many of Benchmark’s onsite specialists noted the increased demand for outside meeting spaces, where

important conversations and “out of the box” ideas can be inspired by an unexpected natural setting.

2. Healthy heads alfresco, and food should be an experience

Vegetarian and vegan cuisine needs are on the rise, according to most portfolio properties polled by Benchmark, with “healthy” a top noted request from planners. How healthy is defined appears fluid, ranging from preferences like raw and dairy free to fresh and locally sourced. It’s not just about the food, but the total dining experience. Meeting groups are drawn to something outside and memorable, like a visit from a Texas Longhorn during the dinner hour, or a tequila tasting that elevates the overall drink experience.

3. Team bonding is a mix of approachable and adventurous, and often philanthropic

After so much time apart, and now the urgency to be together, clients are building out programs for next year intentionally with more social time together. Overscheduling is out, with more free time for attendees and a pull-back to half-day team building activities. Several properties noted that outdoor experiences are a must, and approachability is key so that the activity appeals to the entire group (think build-a-boat challenges, coconut bowling on the beach and geocaching).

Getting active with experiences like ziplining, whitewater rafting, waterfall tours and tomahawk throwing is big. Some properties noted a strong focus on charitable impact events.

4. No forced connections: Social activations are less prescriptive

Groups are looking for more casual, mobile events where connections can happen organically, and moving away from formal awards dinners and the like. Karaoke is a surprise hit and a growing request, emphasizing together time that is focused on one another rather than a third-party entertainer, like a live band.

5. Hybrid meetings have waned, but onsite tech is still key

While the hybrid work trend continues, Benchmark has noted a clear drop in demand for integrating remote employees into onsite meeting, with an exception for companies with an international base. That said, investment in Wi-Fi bandwidth, audio visual equipment and guest messaging platforms as well as onsite personnel continues to grow to meet group demands.

Contacts

Jenna Bush

Mower

jbush@mower.com

Phone: (212) 284-9936