

By Nicole Bonham Colby

Don't let the details become your devil. Good convention planning comes from allowing those behind the scenes to manage the hundreds of 'little things' that will make your next convention a big success.

Who

Considering a venue for your upcoming convention? Many visitors to Ketchikan, Alaska, perhaps only think of the community as a world-class cruise-ship and fishing port, or for its eclectic arts town status.

Those attributes aside – including the immediate transportation access, full complement of hotels and restaurants, and million-dollar scenery – Ketchikan is also a prime convention venue, serving groups from 50 to 500 with finesse.

Together with its wide selection of area wilderness lodges, full-service luxury and boutique hotels, and a multitude of bed & breakfast establishments, Ketchikan also offers spacious meeting facilities, organized excursions and activities, and the necessary planning support to take your next convention concept to fruition.

Why choose Ketchikan? For starters, consider that the Ketchikan Visitors Bureau offers the following:

- Professional, experienced staff to assist with bid solicitation, site selection, and event and itinerary planning
- Logistical assistance necessary to identify and locate equipment and meeting supplies
- Complete supply of custom delegate packets and nametags
- Publicity support to coordinate news coverage and pre-conference awareness

- Accommodation coordinators to satisfy the housing needs for convention attendees and staff
- Assistance in coordinating convention activities, excursions, and effective mixers

And consider the ease of holding a convention when the devilish details are smoothly resolved beforehand and throughout your stay by an experienced and effective staff already on site.

So who should be interested in a Ketchikan-based convention? Any group that enjoys a full-service meeting facility graced by spectacular wilderness views and immediate luxury-hotel access. Or, those who may enjoy the juxtaposition of world-class outdoors activities (fishing, kayaking, sailing, hiking) and high-end shopping (fur, jewelry, Native and other local arts). Regardless the interest or function of your convention, Ketchikan offers a cross-section of services and infrastructure characteristic of an established and popular visitor destination.

What

The bureau's website (www.meetinalaska.com) offers information and an opportunity to order the Ketchikan Meeting Planner to assist in your initial decision making. The guide details local amenities and activities pertinent to the interests of convention delegates.

Key amenities include the Ted Ferry Civic Center, a full-service meeting venue with expansion attributes useful for breaking into the small and large groups typical of a large convention. Adjacent to the facility is the luxury WestCoast Cape Fox Lodge, with its signature red gondola connecting the hill-top hotel and visitor complex with historic

Creek Street below. The hotel itself also offers meeting facilities and catering for small and large groups, alike.

Within immediate walking distance is the Ketchikan waterfront and historic district. The several-block area features a multitude of cafes and restaurants serving up culinary favorites from Thai and Chinese cuisines to fresh Alaska seafood fare and locally roasted coffee. In between meetings, convention goers may enjoy sipping a latte from a waterside table overlooking the kinetic crush of a working commercial fishing harbor.

Additional downtown hotels like the historic Gilmore and New York Hotel, as well as over-the-tunnel bed & breakfast establishments, offer delegates with cozy boutique accommodation, all within walking distance to local activities, meetings, and services.

Close to the Alaska Marine Highway terminal, the newly renovated Best Western Landing complex – with its hotel and associated two restaurants – provides for easy, on-site gatherings, while its 2005 expansion adds hotel rooms and meeting facilities to Ketchikan's inventory. The waterfront hotel The Narrows features drive-up boat access from a hotel dock and features a restaurant with over-the-water views.

Already comfortable with serving more than 900,000 visitors each year, Ketchikan businesses are savvy to the needs of the traveling public and strive to make each person's stay memorable. Such attention to detail also comes with the types of luxury services typically available at exclusive, larger resort properties. For example, despite the community's relatively small size, guests typically enjoy convenient shuttle service to area attractions. A water view is often the standard, not the exception. Many rooms are stocked with locally made products, like Raven's Brew Coffee.

Where

Easily accessible with several daily Alaska Airlines flights from the Pacific Rim cities of Anchorage and Seattle, Ketchikan also enjoys easy daily access from the regional communities of Juneau, Sitka, Wrangell, and Prince of Wales Island. At the tip of Revillagigedo Island along Alaska's famed Panhandle, Ketchikan is a key stop along the main cruise ship route for the Inside Passage and is served by a large number of regional air companies and the Alaska Marine Highway.

Adjacent Misty Fjords National Monument is available by tour boat or float plane from Ketchikan, along with excursions to area fishing banks and hidden wilderness coves and bear viewing areas.

In other words, though visitors to Ketchikan may feel a million miles away from the pressures of work and home, they are but an hour or two by air from the city and Lower 48.

Consider Ketchikan for your next convention – a mix of world-class infrastructure and service amidst Alaska history and wilderness.

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